

***Web and Mass Media Campaigns by
Political Candidates, MoveOn.org and
the Democratic Party in the 2003-04
Presidential Primaries***

Struggling for Votes and Unity in a Year of Web Innovation

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The 2003-2004 Democratic presidential primary season was the year of Web experimentation. This is because it was a year that brought growth in the number of individuals who used the web for political information, and web activism. From the news point of view, we can compare Gallup/CNN/USA Today polls figures for January 2004 with January 2000, both presidential primary years. If we examine how often individuals go to the Internet for news or information about politics or the presidential campaign, the *frequently* answer rose from 16 to 28 % while the *occasionally* answer grew from 15 to 21 % . The number of individuals who used the Web in 2003-2004 in the top two top categories grew to 49% as compared with 31% four years previously. This does not equal the numbers of Americans who gain their political information from mass media. However, it is a significant rate of growth, and this is an important important transition year. (Gallup/CNN/USA Today polls, January 2000 and 2004)

Scholars at the Institute for the Internet and Democracy at George Washington University argue that this year of web activism. Their research 69% of the individuals who accessed the web site of a political party or candidate from November 26 to December 31, 2003 are “influentials”. This means that they are like the ten percent of the U.S. population who engage in two-step-flow, or tell their neighbors “what to buy, what politicians to support, where to vacation” (Keller and Berry 2003) Influentials are engaged in one or more of the following ways: making a political contribution to a candidate or political party, reading political email, forwarding it on, visiting a political web log, participating in a political chat room or visiting a news site for political information. A far larger percentage of them than the public at large is concerned that interest groups wield too much influence in the political process. (www.gwu.edu/~research/Centers2.htm Institute for Politics, the Internet and Democracy)

Here we focus on the question of how effective the efforts of such Web “influentials” -- Democratic outsiders, not sponsored by major political parties, or traditional Democratic interest groups -- might actually be. Can a web innovator, such as Howard Dean challenge the mainstream news media by using the web in ways which can help win an election campaign? Can Moveon.org, which has already demonstrated that it can use the web to structure petition drives, and lobby Congressional offices, organize innovative online events, and new forms of participatory political advertising, which can influence shape press coverage and voter perceptions of political candidates?

Is it possible to build a political campaign around contributions given by small donors, whose help you also rely on for grassroots organization, given funding limitations? All fundraising involves dialogue, and in this case might dialogic expectations, although helpful in the long run to the cause of participatory democratic politics, simply overwhelm a candidate with multiple competing tasks given the more traditional obligations of a campaign? How important is leadership on the part of a Web innovator?

What lessons can we learn from this transition year? It is possible that, despite all of the difficulties for them in a time of media transition, web innovators might play a helpful role in opening up new avenues for information exchange and commitment? Is it possible that increased information exchange in a transitional year might help a Democratic party -- which after the 2002 election found itself in a minority, out of power in the White House and Congress? When we look at all kinds of Web sites, and email exchanges -- not just Dean's, but those of his 2003-2004 presidential primary competitors in the context of campaigning using both web and traditional media and grassroots efforts -- is it possible that the Web overall can contribute to a strengthened political party, as well as a stronger presidential nominee? Are there differences between the Democratic and Republican parties in the area of web campaigning?

This paper is based on extensive research during the 2003-2004 presidential primary season in the United States. This includes analysis of the web sites for all the Democratic political candidates, and the two major political parties downloaded between November 2003 to March 3, 2004 the date of the ten-state Super primary. Emails to supporters and press were examined for Howard Dean and John Kerry, the two most durable Democratic party candidates from late November to March 3, 2004, and for John Edwards from January 17 to March 3. In addition, political ads for the candidates were examined for the entire campaign (www.gwu.edu/~action/2004/ads/04). Dean and Clark supporters were interviewed, two Democratic and two Kerry Meetups attended, and the major campaigns observed on the ground in Northern Virginia, Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina during the week before the February 3 South Carolina primary. Campaign news coverage was examined on in the New York Times, the Washington Post and CNN from November 1 to March 3, 2004. All of the emails from MoveOn.org relating to its ad campaigns were examined from October 10, 2003 to March 15, 2004, as well as political ads selected as finalists in its *Bushin30Seconds* ad campaign. Its impact on the Internet Echo chamber, web blogs, and news reports, was examined through contemporaneous coverage in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and CNN, as well as Google blog and news records, and news media postings on its web sites and in its email messages.

Online Web Politics

When he began his campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination, Howard Dean had a number of problems. He was the ex-governor of a small New England state. He had essentially no national name recognition. He had little funding and only a modest political organization. And his was a voice from the Vermont wilderness, loudly decrying the war against Iraq and opposing the economic, environmental and trade policies of George W. Bush. But his campaign manager, Joe Trippi, had a revolutionary idea: using the Internet to tap into similarly-minded voters for financial support.

Financial support from a broad network of small donors would draw press attention that would develop campaign momentum that would mean ever increasing

funding and then it would be up to the governor to carry it on to the White House. By the time he ended his candidacy after the Super Tuesday primaries on March 2, 2004, Dean had raised nearly \$50 million over the Internet. Unfortunately, the governor did not have a governor on his campaign expenditures, and the first \$40 million or so was spent so rapidly and often wastefully that he had little money left for the end game.

Internet fundraising for political purposes had been utilized in the 2000 Republican primaries by Senator John McCain, who was, like Dean, a political outsider. After winning the first primary in New Hampshire he was crushed in South Carolina after a campaign in which George Bush questioned the patriotism of a rival who had been held a prisoner for seven years in North Vietnam. This brought a premature end to McCain's noble experiment. Dean's subsequent Internet campaign exceeded all expectations. But the true begetter of political cause-related Internet fundraising was MoveOn.org, an online activist group begun in 1998 to advocate an early end to the Clinton impeachment process so the country could move on to other matters of concern.

Moveon.Org Voter Fund is a liberal "527" political group, constituted under the Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2002. (Moveon.org 2004) Such groups can raise unlimited amounts of money from domestic donors, as long as they do not specifically advocate the election of a particular candidate. Both MoveOn.org Voter Fund (subsequently MoveOn.Org here) and the nascent Dean campaign energetically embraced the idea of dialogue and debate within the political landscape and uncovered vast constituencies who were energized by this process. The widespread dissemination of hard facts, such as those related to the justification for the war in Iraq and the Bush administration's tax and deficit policies, began to take control of the communications process by the time of the Iowa caucus in mid-January, and this broke up a pattern of largely deferential traditional media war coverage of Bush which occurred during the year following 9/11 (Norris, Kern and Just 2003) and then again which following the Iraqi War.

By changing the media landscape, likeminded cyberspace Democrats and independents, together with the increasingly visible Howard Dean, also set the public policy agenda. In this, Princeton professor and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman proved to be a constant source of virtually irrefutable argument regarding Iraq and the troubled domestic economy, according to liberals and an increasing number of moderates reached by his best-selling book The Great Unraveling (Krugman, 2003) Given this new information environment, nearly three months of largely civil debate among the Democratic candidates and an accelerated primary schedule produced a single strong party candidate for the presidency an unprecedented eight months before the election.

However different in their purposes, MoveOn.org and the Dean campaign pioneered in using Web networks to create cyberfora fostering information exchange and public debate. Information was shared and critically evaluated. Arguments were developed with passion, using moral as well as logical arguments that would make communications theorists Howard Rheingold, Benjamin Barber and Pippa Norris

(Rheingold 2002, Barber 2004, Norris 2001). Individuals are committed to the whole, as acts were selected, contested, and disseminated in an expanded web context, building, from this optimistic perspective, social capital, or enhanced connections between people and groups. This year the 24/7 news cycle driven by growth in cable and online news timetables, certainly created more information, and the online innovators sought to inform and activate their members, and bring them together in the real world.

Both the Dean campaign and MoveOn.org exemplified the potential for a new form of participatory online politics which makes it possible for individuals to engage in the same political activity wherever they are in time and space, throughout the United States and the world. Both operated in this arena with increasing confidence and success, drawing on and disseminating arguments and positions relating to political change, using serious and frivolous symbolic languages – making the case to their audiences that change can be both creative and patriotic.

Both exemplified the possibility of using the web to raise money online. They also were successful in creating a mainstream press echo chamber. In the case of Howard Dean, his Internet movement led to heavy frontrunner press attention, which was followed by success in the public opinion polls, and endorsements by labor unions and major Democratic leaders, including former Vice President Al Gore. MoveOn.org grew to prominence in 2002 and 2003 as an organization which specialized in on-line petitions, supported by contributions averaging \$37. In October 2003, its Voter Fund, which focused on political campaigns, accepted matching funding from Democratic Open Society investment banker George Soros. At that point it expanded its efforts, using the Internet to create a participatory online ad contest and air political advertising during the month after George Bush's State of the Union Address, which was a vulnerable time for Bush, according to his principal advisor Karl Rove (Woodward 2004) David Kay, the chief Iraq weapons of mass destruction inspector, testified before Congress that he had found no weapons of mass destruction, raising questions concerning the Bush administration's credibility. Moderates and conservatives were also increasingly concerned about the Bush administration's spending, some of which was hidden from legislators who voted for a vast Medicare and prescription drug overhaul, and began to question unspecified prospective war expenditures. Public opinion polls confirmed that approval of Bush's handling of key issues, including the War, had plummeted (Morin and Milbank February 13, 2004).

It was during this period that MoveOn.org aired the *Bushin30Seconds* ads which were the only political ads on the air with a predominantly anti-Bush message, although there was no endorsement of a candidate. These ads were developed through a competitive online process, which involved one million decisions from online individuals all over the world concerning the "best" ads created by amateurs, public relations specialists and political junkies. The requirement was that these focus on the issues. Their message dovetailed, and in best advertising theory, with news of these issues, as well as the final phase of the Democratic primaries which focused on Democratic candidates. (Kern 1989, 1996; Just, Crigler, Alger, Cook, Kern and West, 1996). Moveon.org argued in emails that its testing indicated that the ads which aired in swing

states, were effective, while the president's poll numbers dropped precipitously. Stanley Greenberg, a Democratic media consultant, tested the effect of the ads in swing states, and announced particular impact for the MoveOn.org health care ads. MoveOn.org's frustrated attempts to get them aired on CBS during the Super Bowl, along with critiques by the Republican party concerning George Soros' sponsorship and a few alleged "hate" ads which accidentally wound up in the Internet database sent out to the public for criticism, generated significant attention and debate in the news and the web echo chamber.

MoveOn.org would continue its efforts in the general election, along with a growing number of Democratic 527 groups, including Act for America and The Media Fund. The Republican National Committee is currently contesting the status of such 527 groups before the Federal Elections Commission. (Justice and Rutenberg, March 10, 2004) The issue has become complicated however, because many charitable organizations, such as the evangelical church groups which leaflet during elections and play an important role in supporting Republican candidates are also entitled to electioneer in an unlimited fashion. Important free speech issues are involved in both cases.

Traditional and Web Based Campaigning

Dean won only his own state in the Democratic primaries. Dean's primary rival, John Kerry, lost his pre-primary frontrunner status in the summer of 2003, but changed campaign managers, bringing on Ted Kennedy staffer Mary Beth Cahill in mid-November and energizing his campaign just as Howard Dean stumbled. Part of this shift occurred as the insider adopted some of the rhetoric and concerns of the outsider. Kerry was critical of the Iraq War, but cautious because he voted for the legislation authorizing it, and so focused on issues relating to its unilateral implementation. By November, his stance hardened, and he sharply warned that the war was a diversion from the real war on terrorism, which should be waged directly against al-Qaeda. Dean had tapped into strong voter opposition to the Iraq war, and Kerry responded more vigorously and creatively to the voice of the electorate on this issue. Similarly he began to use the term "special interests", pioneered by Dean, in his political advertising and elsewhere. Unlike Dean, he used the term to refer to Republican lobbyists, and campaign contributors to President George W. Bush's reelection campaign, rather than his fellow Democrats. Here too the voters spoke after a public dialogue of democracy, which produced a consensus. Polls indicated that Democrats wanted an electable candidate first and foremost, and were willing to switch if their first choice did not win the nomination.

Two key decisions, relating to traditional media, helped Kerry win the Iowa caucuses. The first was not to run attack ads in a political environment which was strongly driven by this voter concern. Voter "backlash" is a real possibility in the case of such advertising. (Just et al, 1996, West, 2000) Voters were concerned this rhetoric could only help the Republicans. In addition, Dean's ads were repetitive, and normally used a talking head style which appeared wooden by the time of the Iowa caucus. The second was that unlike Howard Dean, Kerry made a traditional choice in regard to direct voter contact. This meant that he relied on professional organizers, along with labor and

veterans groups, rather than the volunteers reached through the Internet, many of whom proved to be young, inexperienced and counter-culture in the Midwest. A later campaign will build on Dean's Web based approach, combining the possibilities for experimentation and grassroots participation which arise due to Internet availability with experienced ground organization, with better training and more centralized management.

Dean's difficulties were well highlighted by some of his supporters, who in the new Web environment had the opportunity to express their views loud and clear on a blog, the *DailyKos*, in the context of heated discussion concerning where Dean had spent \$40 million dollars raised from them in small sums.

In regard to ads **bogred1** commented that the "ads in Iowa were too plain. It was just Dean standing in front of a camera talking. The Kerry ads skillfully wove images from Vietnam and vets talking about Kerry. He also had an ad with women talking about trust and experience on behalf of the candidate. I just think that people looked at the Dean ads and took them as an indication of the rest of the campaign's savvy."

bigred1 commented: "Dean reminded me of Ed Sullivan" He had absolutely no facial movement or expression AND the ads were on at every commercial break. A huge waste of money. But he was also not helped by the job Gephart did on him. His commercials were devastating."

In regard to getting out the vote an exasperated **Radiotony** commented "kids were running around like cheerleaders but not doing the important work of winning". And in New Hampshire "What the hell were they doing heckling the Clark campaign? They should have been on the phones, doorknocking, etc" (www.dailykos.com/story/2004/1/29/163829/446)

Criticism could be tough for the candidate. The *DailyKos* was influential for liberal Web activists. But it too was part of a pioneering dialogue which may have helped the Democrats attain the holy grail: a movement, as described by Internet optimist Anthony Wilhelm (Wilhelm 2000) which will create a new (in this case partisan Democratic) culture which will be better because it will contain more variety in unity – it will be a tapestry in which more strands have been woven together. The tapestry included not just plain talk, but action, as greater numbers of young people participated in politics (Pew Research Center January 11, 2004). Still, they were not able to produce the record turnout among young adults and others vital to victory for the Dean campaign (Harwood 2004) Overall, voting turnout increased significantly in the competitive Iowa caucuses, and New Hampshire primaries, however, which can be attributed to the competitiveness of the contests amidst the widespread airing of issues.

From the perspective of mid-April 2004 Democrats rallied around a common goal, defeating the Republican incumbent, without the sharp divisions which have weakened the national candidate in past elections. Diverse strands came together when Howard Dean and John Kerry pledged to work toward a common goal in the fall general election, after eight months of campaigning against each other. All of the candidates

contributed to a common new fundraising effort, as did the Democratic National Committee. Internet fundraising continues to play an important role in the emerging general election campaign environment.

John Kerry integrated outsider web perspectives into his general election campaign. He recognized the role of Howard Dean in pioneering the field, and hired a member of the MoveOn.org team, Zack Exley, who helped the fledgling Dean campaign in the early days, as when he dipped into the Internet waters. Although independent candidate Ralph Nader declared his candidacy, a major fear of the Kerry campaign, that he receive the support of Howard Dean, did not come to pass. This important in Democratic politics, given the role which the Nader campaign played in states such as New Hampshire and Florida in tipping the electoral college to George W. Bush.

The chair of the Democratic National Committee, Terry McAuliffe, worked hard for party unity. Earlier he had presided over a party which had neither a broad grassroots organization, nor an extensive Internet presence beyond Web sites. The latter changed as a result of the Dean campaign.

Web Innovation: An e-Primary and Political Meetups

During the last week of June 2003, MoveOn.org decided to experiment with using the Web as a platform for a new form of political engagement. It sponsored an online Democratic political primary, a good seven months before the first actual Democratic presidential primary. The primary generated positive publicity for MoveOn.org, because it was a lively story, involving web innovation. It offered online communication and fundraising support to candidates who wanted it, and Dean accepted the help, because, unlike “insider” candidates such as John Kerry and Joe Lieberman, he did not have access to previous major Democratic contributors.

In this e-Primary he won 44 percent of the vote, a total which was less than the 50 percent threshold required for MoveOn.org’s endorsement (Hazen July 1, 2003)

The MoveOn.org primary had an impact. At the end of June, Dean’s campaign spokesperson, Trish Engler, reported that there had been a surge in donations and that a quarter of that came from MoveOn.org members. Overall, she said, seventy-six percent of Dean’s fundraising total came from the Internet (Hazen 7/1/03). Seven days later, the quarterly fundraising figures showed that Dean had raised \$7.5 million in the last quarter, half of it during the final eight days before the June 30 filing period. This far surpassed that of any of his rivals, and generated significant news attention for both Dean and MoveOn.Org.

The liberal commentators came on board. Dean's campaign manager, Joe Trippi, was lauded by *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne as an “evangelist for the gospel of online politics”. His “gospel” was that of changing politics through online fundraising. Trippi’s goal, Dionne said, was to replace the large Democratic contributors, then the major fundraising base of the Democratic party and its candidates, with small ones.

According to the old system 100 people giving \$100,000 quickly becomes \$10 million. The alternative, Trippi argued, was to encourage one hundred thousand people to give \$100, using his new approach. A strong advocate of campaign finance reform, Dionne, concluded that this argument made sense. (Dionne, 7/08/03)

Dean's email traffic level was the highest of the major candidates studied for this project, and his Web Site, with its lively blog, which related his comings and goings, was a best seller. Like the Republican party Web site, it was listed as one of the top 20 web sites in the world on a major one blog ratings web sites in early January.

Political Meetups were an idea introduced by the Dean campaign in the summer of 2003. They made use of MeetUps originally arranged by a commercial firm for organizational use, and were adapted for all sorts of social groups, including poodle owners, following the inspiration of Harvard professor Robert Putnam, the author of the best-selling book *Bowling Alone* which advocated such face to face meetings of individuals with a common interest as building stone of an eroding civil society. The other Web active campaigns followed suit, along with the Democratic and Republican parties. In early January 2004 political Meetups were on television. Attention focused on the Dean campaign, which led nationally -- both in terms of numbers of Meetups held, and numbers of attenders at each Meetup (Meetup Web site, January 13, 04)

Cable Network News (CNN) was the news outlet for political and media agenda setters, because it covered the 2004 elections extensively. (Rendell April 2004) On January 13, 2004 they featured a MeetUp story, featuring the Dean campaign. The focus was on young people in a New York bar, eager to share not just a drink but political dialogue and possibly romance. A click on the Dean web site revealed MeetUp locations in both in the DC area, and nationally. What type of people might one find at Meetups? Would they be primarily young people seeking a date? Would the social capital or connectedness of civil society be part of the experience? Researchers for this project visited Dean's Meetup URL which was idealistically entitled "The Commons". It pointed us to a Prince George's County location where the visitor could find "Dean supporters in my area". Surprisingly, it was possible to find names of organizers listed by locality on the Internet, mentioned on line with phone numbers. This must be a sign of social connectedness.

No other candidate, or political party, matched this level of web personalization and interactivity. We will examine Dean's Meetups presently.

Party Meetups and Other Web Activities

By the end of 2003, the Democratic party had adopted Dean's Meetup idea. We decided to visit two Democratic party Meetups, in different states in the Northeast, one in late January in Washington, and one in early February in East Brunswick, NJ. Connectedness was certainly on the agenda. Party unity and inclusiveness was the primary concern of the Democratic National Committee web site, which we visited frequently to determine whether it was adapting any of the techniques pioneered by the

Dean campaign. The party was planning ahead for Unity galas after March 15, even while the candidates were still squabbling. The Meetup was a fine place to promote this idea. It could be announced on Web sites, with reminders sent out by email, and serve as the physical expression of the party's ideal: emerging from the campaign as a united group, with an agreed upon candidate, unencumbered with public memory of harsh campaign rhetoric which had contributed to party cleavages in the past.

At the Meetups we attended, Democrats working for all campaigns met and debated not only the merits of their own candidates, but whether attacks on other candidates, and an extended campaign season, would help or hurt the party. Party chairman Terry McAuliffe, who had devised a front-loaded primary schedule, which was rushing the process of choice along, attended the first Washington DC MeetUp in early December to make his case and seek an early end to the campaign season. This would give the party nominee time to raise funds for advertising and grassroots operations to take on a George Bush who was "ready to roll," flush with a reported \$140 million. The value which he established and promulgated – first, do no harm, was important. In general campaigns with high aspirations ignored his advice at the beginning, but eventually, support dwindled for candidates who excoriated each other, and the electorate rewarded the frontrunner. Candidates dropped out well before the March 15 date established by the party chair, and posted on the campaign Web site. That night the long-awaited "Unity" gathering was held in a grand ballroom, along with Meetups in multiple locations.

The Democratic Party web site was also being used in new and more aggressive ways to appeal to small donors. From both the Senate and the Congressional Democrats activist web sites supplemented by email messages were also emerging, which could be linked up with Blogs. The party chairman appeared on talk shows, answering Republican charges, and in one case supported film celebrity Roger Moore (producer of *Roger and Me*) who said, when speaking alongside his candidate Wesley Clark, that he wanted a real war hero, not a president who had "gone AWOL". This launched an extended spin cycle on news, talk shows, and Blogs, concerning the definition of military service, and Bush's Texas Air National Guard service record.

McAuliffe's Republican counterpart, Ed Gillespie, was also touring the country, following the Democrats around to be part of post-primary news and talk show cycles seeking to define Democratic events. His party Web site, along with that of GeorgeWBush.com updated friendly blog URL's – and advised visitors on how to download information and send it out to these and other blogs. Overall, the Web site was more controlled, and therefore more uniform in partisan presentation, than the dialogic Dean blogs, which, as we have seen were open to all visitors. The Republican Internet effort was far more extensive than that of the Democratic party. Passcodes were required, and expired and changed.

The crown jewel of the Republican Web site was an extensive volunteer recruitment effort, which solicited e-captains, with actual rewards, cups, mugs and the like, requesting that visitors and e-captains send messages on to friends and relatives, and

thereby gain rewards. George Bush was featured on all of the sites, interacting with supporters from various demographic groups. It was possible to establish contact with Republican leaders concerned about these groups with the click of a mouse.

One of the great strengths of the Republic party volunteer (e-captain's) site was its presentation of weekly activities for Web activists. E-captains were advised concerning issues to raise with their local talk radio host. Talk radio was a format which was increasingly centralized under Clear Channel Communications, which owned eighty percent of all stations, and was owned by a Republican friend of George H.W. Bush from San Antonio. Talk radio for its part, displayed a link to the White House prominently on its trade association Web site, enjoyed regular briefings by the White House, and the offer of timely administration and Congressional interviewees. Popular subjects were "outrageous" remarks by prominent Democratic presidential candidates, which could damage the presidency, and George Soros' support for Democratic 527 groups such as MoveOn.org. News media letter writing campaigns were encouraged, and fact sheets were abundant and well prepared.

Another key to the Republican Internet campaign effort was learning about visitors, who, even if they did not become activists, termed *e-captains*, could be individually targeted with messages, providing an answer to one of the major problems with targeted web email messages. (Cornfeld 2004) This will undoubtedly be highly significant in regard to voter registration efforts, which have already begun with considerable fanfare, and voter turnout in the fall. Immediately after the end of the Democratic primaries, the Republicans claimed their web email list had grown, to six million people. The figure was large, from the perspective of web activism research. The only contemporaneous online non-candidate domestic activist organization which had comparable figures was MoveOn.org Voter Fund which announced in March, that it was becoming a political action committee. Its two million figure for members in the United States however, was one third that of the Republican National Committee.

Although the Republican party Web Site followed a different, non-dialogic model, it encouraged outreach by Web activists into the world of public debate, and contributed to public engagement during the 2004 Democratic presidential primaries.

On Air, Web, and Ground: Politics by Traditional Means

The South Carolina primary, on February 3 was the third most important primary. Change in the Democratic presidential primary calendar increased the importance of the state, which sends a signal to Democratic voters concerning whether political candidates can appeal to independents and African American voters in the South. A review of ads for the presidential primary candidates revealed that four candidates extensively there: Howard Dean, John Edwards, John Kerry, Wesley Clark and Joe Lieberman. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2004/ads04>) The previous September John Kerry had announced his candidacy in South Carolina, on the deck of an aircraft carrier, to make the point that he was the candidate who had real combat experience in contrast to George W. Bush.

John Edwards, the candidate from the South, relied heavily on his campaign biography as the personification of the American dream, while developing a theme concerning two Americas, one rich and one poor. He was the major candidate to gain from the nineteen presidential candidate debates, in Iowa, when the *Des Moines Register* endorsed him just before the caucus following his performance. He subsequently came in second in Iowa, doing far better than expected, raising news media expectations concerning his candidacy.

He did less well in New Hampshire on January 27, tying for third place. Thus South Carolina, one of the February 3 primary states, was particularly significant for him. He campaigned frequently in the state where he was born, and ground operations, helped. He invested heavily, and had the homestate advantage. Edwards had an attractive Web site, which included references to fundraising and volunteers, but it was not certain how much of his support emerged online.

The John Kerry headquarters in Charleston, South Carolina represented the second best ground operation in the state. Members of the research project visited his campaign there four days before the primary, as volunteers were first arriving for a weekend-long on-the ground operation. He did not invest heavily on the ground in South Carolina. Kerry's web site, as always, was used to locate volunteers and build community among essential target groups, including women, African-Americans, Latinos and, perhaps most noticeably, veterans. During our visit to his headquarters, former U.S. Senator Max Cleland, who had arrived that day with out of town volunteers, was wheeled to the elevator on his way to address military retirees at a Veterans Administration hospital. We were told that he frequently accompanied Kerry on campaign trips. The extent of his injuries in Vietnam, where he lost three limbs, was clearly visible, in person if not on television, and observation made it clear why he was an effective spokesman for the party at the Veteran events which were held in most states where Kerry campaigned.

No less than the Florida ballot controversy in 2000, the story of Cleland's 2002 loss in his Senate reelection bid was very personal to many active Democrats. His defeat was due to last minute Republican political advertising which morphed Osama Bin Laden's face onto that of his own. Ralph Reed, who coordinated his opponent's successful campaign and defended the ad, was now a key Republican regional campaign strategist. His argument was that the ad focused on Cleland's vote against the Patriot Act in terms ethically appropriate according to political advertising theory and practice. Cleland had wanted the Act to be amended to afford clearer civil liberties protections. Democrats naturally disagreed with Reed and viewed it as an unethical attack on the patriotism of a grievously wounded Vietnam war veteran.

Kerry's operation featured a "Band of Brothers," including one who had served on the boat under his command, which was attacked by the Viet Cong. He paid a surprise visit to Iowa from his home in Oregon, helping to revitalize the Kerry campaign, and intensifying not only the focus of his traditional advertising wars on endorsements, including those from Veterans; but the ground wars as well. Max Cleland figured in many of these events, coordinated through an events facilitator who contacted the press,

via telephone and email. The Massachusetts Senator's web operation was a fireball of messages to the press concerning the candidate's speeches, issue positions, immediate response to charges by opponents, and development of new ways to offer comments on topical issues of the day. All of these efforts were the hallmark of an operation designed to radiate information out from the center to the press, for self and opponent definition in a world where the press still largely sets the public agenda.

In Charleston we found Democrats who suffer from a lack of morale and organization in an increasingly Republican state. Due to a lack of visible signs, we had difficulty finding a John Kerry rally on the local college campus featuring the author John Grisham. Nor was it on the Kerry Web site. Grisham's writing career was built on tales of corrupt lawyers and politics. On the evening of January 29, he spoke of idealism and the need to work for a cause: that of finding a good and electable Democrat to send George Bush back to Crawford, Texas. It was notable that such Democrats in the early primary states were already speaking to the common values and interests of all Democrats. Students who asked questions focused heavily on Grisham's writing, however. The next day all of the Democratic candidates – Kerry, Dean, Clark, Gephardt, Edwards, Kucinich and Sharpton -- spoke at a People's Agenda forum in Columbia, the state capitol. The forum was announced on the Web, and drew an enormous audience of delegates and interested persons from all over the United States, and national and international media attention.

The Clark and Edwards campaigns were also adept at press messaging as well as interaction with real individuals at organized campaign rallies, which were particularly frequent this year in the early primary states. The Edwards press operation was particularly notable, and he received consistently positive coverage. His press secretary, Jeremy Van Ess, has since been hired as general election press secretary for the Kerry campaign.

Clark, the only other candidate to survive the early presidential primary process, due to a victory in Oklahoma on February 3 suffered from the start due to problems caused by traditional media. He, unlike Kerry or Edwards, had little experience dealing with the press as an insider/outsider with a military career. He suffered immediately after entering the race from a press focus on apparent inconsistencies in his positions in regard to the Iraq war. He said that he would have voted for the war authorization bill, but nevertheless opposed the war during the campaign. He experienced similar difficulties with the abortion issue, and was rattled when confronted with criticism from a military superior who questioned his integrity as a military officer. He found his message late, displayed frequently in ads, and campaign appearances which focused on his biography, and his campaign theme "Faith, Family and Inclusiveness" -- all of which pointed to the need for a "new kind of leadership".

However, John Kerry won the Iowa caucus which he avoided. Kerry offered leadership, based on his own personal war experience and further benefited from political momentum generated by his unexpected Iowa caucus win. Clark's web site was attractive and informative, but not particularly geared to volunteers, since he worked with

professional grassroots organizers who believed that the web is helpful for some aspects of organization, but not for motivation or persuasion necessary for ground organization. This must be done on the interpersonal level. There was no automatic set up which would facilitate referral of information from the web site about those who said they would like to volunteer to the ground operation (Wiljanen interview, January 24, 04). His Web site, however, was not as helpful as Kerry's in honing in on issues in regard to his press operation.

We visited Clark's Northern Virginia headquarters, following a January 19 Washington DC Democratic Meetup, and found that the ground organization did demonstrate motivational skill on the ground. The volunteers appeared to come heavily from U.S. military families and friends, present in the Northern Virginia area, as well as a military prep school, on the afternoon of our visit.

On the air, the web and the ground, we found politics by traditional means alive and well during the Democratic presidential primary contests. Some candidates, such as John Kerry, however, used the web in ways which helped significantly in increasing information flow and supported a limited, but interactive ground operation.

Web Leadership and the Dean Supporter Next Door

As we have noted, the Dean campaign was unique in posting of the names of one's "neighbors" on it's Web site. It was helpful to find such a person, a woman who was idealistic enough to have her name on the Web to encourage others who might wish to become active to contact her beginning in the summer of 2003. In this she was like many other who joined the Dean campaign during its early Web efforts. She and her husband were in their own ways Web "influentials."

We went to meet her in her home (Coolen interview, January 19, 2004) She was the MeetUp coordinator and volunteer co-organizer of the Dean campaign in Prince George's County, Maryland, adjacent to Washington DC. Mary Jane Coolen worked in tandem with her husband, Ed Terry, who she described as "the technical power in our relationship as well as at least half the brains." In early January she was busy teaching horseback riding classes for a living and organizing MeetUps and other Dean activities more frequently in conjunction with established Democratic leaders from Maryland, who were signing on with Dean. At the time of our mid-January interview, she had a busload of Maryland Dean supporters to call and send off to ice-cold Conway, New Hampshire, the weekend before the Democratic primary. Her husband, a college information specialist, got his troops out for a Democratic party straw vote a few weeks before the Maryland presidential primary, despite his professed lack of organizational talent. (Terry interview, January 24, 2004)

At the time, neither one had time for much of a life beyond their work for Howard Dean, which began when they met the candidate while in Vermont on holiday in June. They were motivated to work for the first time within the electoral process. Mary Jane Coolen's previous job, working as a researcher for *Congressional Quarterly*, had

encouraged political neutrality, so she had never before become politically engaged. She was a Democrat, but without strong partisan feelings prior to the controversial 2000 presidential election. She was propelled into action by unease with conservatism and the Iraq war policies of the Bush administration. The real catalyst, however, was a meeting with Howard Dean, in Vermont in June 2003. They were tremendously impressed with his leadership qualities.

Their team's commitment grew, and the group increased from two Green party activists at the beginning to twenty-six regular MeetUp attenders who believed in Dean's campaign and supported it financially, encouraged by the fact that vast numbers of supporters were doing the same across the nation. They knew this because changes in dollar amounts were posted on the Web site, following a call to "swing the bat," or to knock the ball, their fundraising total, out of the ball park. The bat remained on the web site as a thermometer of giving as the Dean totals grew. The rallying cry on their campaign's blog was the populist one "go to bat for Dean," and Prince George's County had its own bat thermometer. Other campaigns adopted this idea, with the Kerry campaign adding a hammer rather than a bat to his web site soon after the Dean campaign raised his first million dollars.

Theorists speak about the new potential of the web for political action in a decentralized media environment, which does not depend upon the center of the wheel. Mary Jane Coolen and Ed Terry exemplified the creativeness of "spokes on the wheel", but fundamental for them was Dean's leadership qualities, exemplified in his telephone, film, and Internet based conversations with Meetup groups, including theirs. Interviews with activists in Washington, DC, Maryland, and East Brunswick, New Jersey, confirm this as their lived experience. Leadership for all was key to the Dean effort and much of the content and dialogue on its Web Site and blogs was about the candidate himself, and the major problems which he encountered. Participants continually gave advice. The message from the center was that this is "your" campaign, not "mine" as we work together to reclaim America for its people, and it rang true.

On the grassroots level local leaders were motivated by Dean's accessibility and willingness to take questions and enter into dialogue. He set the example from a social capital perspective. Elsewhere on the campaign trail his press following proclaimed his front runner status based both on his fundraising and the response of Dean's supporters on the ground who followed him across the country, and reported how things were going for him on the Web blog. Samantha Shapiro of the *New York Times*, who covered him, declared that "young people compare him to a favorite uncle, and speak tenderly about his frayed sweaters and raincoats.... He behaves in recognizably human ways. He talks with real emotion and seems to respond to events (if sometimes poorly) as they come." She noted the unease in the Democratic electorate about the war and the economy which propelled the Democratic primary process, and concluded "In this election season Dean's responsive, even angry, voice has political resonance" (Shapiro 2003) Dean received positive coverage early in his campaign, in spite of the anti-conglomerate media views of many of many of his supporters, reflected in some of his public comments.

There was a passionate dialogue between Dean and his supporters as he repeatedly stated that he took his inspiration from them. But, almost inevitably in a mass mediated world, the open candidate -- or perhaps one should say, the tired candidate, or the "Dr." in Dr. Dean -- told a campaign heckler in Iowa to "Shut up" in early November. Dean felt the heckler was rude, and interrupted his dialogue with supporters, but this was one of several events which fed news stories questioning Dean's personal qualities relating to his ability to govern. He had criticized "Washington insiders" since the beginning of his campaign for their stands on the Iraq war, along with their support for Bush's No Child Left Behind education initiative. He became upset about an ad aired by a 527 funded by supporters of Richard Gephardt and Bob Kerry supporters which made use of a visual of Osama Bin Laden and asked whether he had the experience to govern in perilous times. A review of all of the candidate ads made it clear that Dean's himself included more attacks on his opponents in his ads than any other candidate -- although most were talking head ads, and eschewed personality issues, and should not therefore be termed "negative." And an ad which he aired criticizing all of his major opponents for their position on the Iraq war backfired in the press, contributing to a decline in his poll numbers. John Kerry, Joe Lieberman, and Richard Gephardt all implied that he did not have the personality for public office.

After some critical press coverage, Dean curtailed interviews with individual reporters, which irritated significant segments of the press corps. Howard Kurtz of the *Washington Post* described the internal battles in the Dean campaign over a very traditional campaign issue: "managing" the press, or in the view of one major campaign advisor who traveled with Dean and was frequently at odds with campaign manager, Joe Trippi, that Dean should be "protected" from the press. (Kurtz, February 26, 2004) Dean did not stay touch with his campaign manager at all times.

The stress in the face of the wooden-faced, of Ed Sullivan-like Dean of his final campaign commercials, which we described at the beginning of this piece, reflected real tension in a campaign which was not able, whether by philosophy or experience, to handle the stress of a frontrunner presidential campaign. The problems were apparent before the press contributed to a meltdown of his campaign after the Iowa caucus though its coverage of the "Scream" during his final rally with supporters.

Conclusion

Dean, a governor who ran for election twice in a small state was not prepared for the problems which he would encounter in the world of traditional presidential level campaigning, and unable to balance his dialogic obligations to his huge Web following, with his obligations on the ground, and in the air, the real world of traditional campaigning. 2003-04 was a transition year for media, but traditional media still played a major role in political campaigning.

As a cyberworld innovator Howard Dean demonstrated only moderate success in challenging the mainstream media. Still, his dialogic and his fundraising approach are currently being widely copied in the Democratic party, and his positions have had an

enduring impact on the stance of Democratic politics in the 2004 for general election campaign.

Campaigns on the air and on the ground are still important. A traditional conservative approach to advertising, such as that of John Kerry, in a crowded candidate field, won the day. The press and political ads are still powerful, and there are limits to the success of Web outsider “influentials” in the election process. Still, Dean contributed greatly to press coverage of issues which became important not only within the Democratic party, but the press as well: the War and the deficit. Debate was particularly intense in regard to the War because of the Dean campaign, which fed on, and inspired grassroots Democrats. And his example of activism is inspiring an emphasis on this direction on the part of both traditional Democratic party related organizations, and activists who are being recruited in record numbers by a 527 group Act for America.

MoveOn.Org continues to be a leader in Web campaigning. It’s creativity inspired the e-primary which brought the party the Dean campaign. It contributed to raucous debate, within a large echo chamber, on President Bush’s handling of issues important to the Democratic party: the war, the deficit, and health care.

Still, the Republican party holds the field advantage in the 2004 world of online politics. Going into the general election, it benefits from its prior Web organizational efforts, which coordinate with a talk radio echo chamber; its command of the White House and Congress which opens up significant opportunities for press coverage which can frequently counter opposition attacks from any direction on any subject; and the memory of 9/11, amplified in press coverage and electoral politics which are favorable to Bush.

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