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Issue Date: February 2007,
Look Who's Talking

News flash: Some of the bloggers behind Chicago's newsiest bookmarks haven't been to journalism school; heck, they don't all consider themselves writers. So who are these arbiters of information? Chicago asked around.
by Jennifer Wehunt



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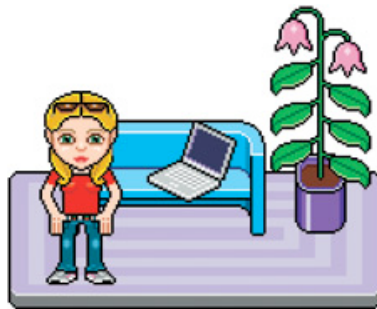
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Double Door getting its lease renewed. Scott was in the courtroom at the time and text messaged me immediately." **Personal soapbox:** "Politics: it's so shady. We can pretty much write about Chicago politics and the CTA every day."

chicagoist.com

Editor: Rachelle Bowden, 31 **Stats:** About 150,000 unique visitors monthly **What is it?** Part of a network of sites that originated with gothamist.com (run by friends of Bowden), chicagoist.com launched shortly after Bowden's move from New York to Chicago in 2004. Now a coeditor, Scott Smith, and some 25 freelancers help post on city news and oddball local items. **Day job?** Web designer and developer for **FeedBurner**, a feed management company that helps bloggers and podcasters promote content. **What makes you a reputable source?** "Because I've been blogging for so long [since 2001], I've got a feel for what will be well received and what won't." **Ever break a story?** "We broke the story about the

gapersblock.com

Editor: Andrew Huff, 31, with Naz Hamid, 28, creative director **Stats:** About 93,000 unique visitors monthly **What is it?** A stable of 25 contributors who post on city events and news; Huff spends about four hours a day editing. **Day job?** Huff is a freelance writer and professional blogger; Hamid is a self-employed Web designer. **What makes you a reputable source?** Huff: "It's not just one person doing this; it's 20-plus people. Our basic MO is, if it's interesting to us, it's interesting to others as well." Huff has a journalism degree from Ohio State. **Ever break a story?** Huff: "We were first to write about this University of Chicago student who had done an analysis of Pitchfork Media's music reviews. We wrote about it, and then it was on *The Morning News*. From there it went to the *Reader* and then into *The New York Times*." **Personal soapbox:** Hamid: "The touchy subject of weird segregation that goes on in the city. I would love to see less of a disconnect."



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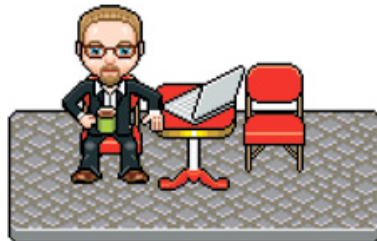


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chicago.metblogs.com

Editor: Fuzzy Gerdes, 36 **Stats:** Not available **What is it?** Like Chicagoist, Metroblogging began elsewhere, with an L.A. site. When founders expanded the network (now 50 cities), Chicago was one of the initial four. Gerdes, whose official title is "city captain," writes and keeps loose tabs on ten or so participating bloggers. **Day job?** Graphics technology specialist in *Playboy's* IT department **What makes you a reputable source?** "I have a degree in computer science from Purdue, but I've been lots of things. I've done a lot of theatre; I've done rounds at I.O. and



Annoyance; and I have my own production company, FuzzyCo." **Ever break a story?** "I don't know." **Personal soapbox:** "The CTA is such a mess. Chicago has always struck me as a city that had corruption, but we got something for it. I'm not nostalgic for corruption, but I would like to get back some of the competence."



Chicago SHOPS

beachwoodreporter.com

Editor: Steve Rhodes, 41 **Stats:** About 7,000 unique visitors monthly **What is it?** A dozen or so regulars, mostly locals, ruminate on subjects like music and books, in addition to Rhodes's five-days-a-week front-page post. **Day job?** "This is all I do," says Rhodes. **What makes you a reputable source?** "My background [in newspapers and magazines, including six years at *Chicago*] gave me an advantage in that my name was at least a little bit known, but I wouldn't say that qualifies me. The thing about the Internet is you don't really have to be qualified, in terms of credentials." **Ever break a story?** "I'm sitting on a dozen great stories that could rock the city's newsrooms if I had the time to do them." **Personal soapbox:** "You can't afford to live here anymore. There's no artist enclave; condos are popping up like weeds, and that makes Chicago a pretty plastic place. I'd like to see it reversed, but good luck."



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ctatattler.com

Editor: Kevin O'Neil, 51 **Stats:** About 10,000 unique visitors monthly **What is it?** What began as O'Neil's outlet for ruminating on his Red Line commute has become a public forum for Chicago Transit Authority issues. Bonus: A new wireless alert system, thanks to a partnership with the CTA. **Day job?** Marketing operations director for the American Medical Association. **What makes you a reputable source?** "I went to Penn State and have a bachelor's in journalism. But I've never really been out front [on the blog] to say, 'Hey, look at me; I'm a journalist.' I like to think I'm using some of

these skills: being able to report, to gather facts, to write something pithy that has some life and draws people to the site." **Ever break a story?** "Yeah, no question. Especially with the new wireless alerts." **Personal soapbox:** "I would like to see the city and state commit more funding dollars to the CTA. I don't think their funding level has risen in 20 years."

Illustrations: Nana Rausch



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