

For the political dish, check out the blogs

By RACHEL YOUNG
The Texas Journalist

By day she is a mild-mannered reporter covering the Texas Legislature. But by night she is the "mistress of the media kingdom's... writhing political snakes." Once she's off the clock as a journalist, Kimberly Reeves turns to her Internet identity "Alittlepoliyanna" to tell the real story of what she sees deep in the political trenches of the Texas Legislature.

Web logs, or blogs, ranging from music to events to daily life, have become a new source for Internet readers to get a personal view of a topic. Where journalism meets activism the political blog

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is born. These online personal journals give a gritty and editorialized view of the Texas political circus and are becoming the go-to place for lobbyists, legislators and writers such as Reeves.

"I've worked at a Capitol building before," says the anonymous author of Pinkdome.com, a tongue-in-cheek blog whose name references the landmark's pink granite. "Capitol buildings are boring, and when you're done doing the word jumble, you don't have much to do.

"Political junkies love to read about politics, but newspapers can't put in a lot of the most interesting stuff: who has a toupee, who's having an affair. Blogs also give us a public opportunity to say it when someone is an idiot," he says.

Since the beginning of publication in December, Pinkdome.com reports 100,000 different site visitors. The Capitol building is the No. 1 source of e-mail.

The author writes conversationally, using the slang BFF (best friend forever) when describing Gov. Rick Perry and Rep. Mike Krusee, D-Round Rock, the chairman of the House Transportation Committee, and their push for toll roads.

It's the anonymity of the Internet that allows Pinkdome.com to speak so freely.

"Editors are beholden to corporate interests, so being owned always limits you," Pinkdome.com's author says. "Most of the things we write wouldn't pass for

a standard periodical. Besides, posting anonymously means people don't get so bogged down in who the author is."

Evan, of the blog PerryVesuviusWorld.blogspot.com, also keeps his identity guarded.

"I didn't start this blog thinking that I was 'publishing', but rather that I was 'cataloging' things for myself," Evan says.

Evan's only formal qualifications in politics are a college degree from Rice University and some experience as a campaign worker.

Despite their research and insider information, blogs are not formal news and in the end are subject to the discretion of their authors rather than editors or fact-checkers.

Last February, Perry singled out the blog BurntOrangeReport.com when he denied rumors the site had published about a supposed affair and divorce.

When the Austin American-Statesman published Perry's statement in March, the rumors had been circulating online for a month.

"Even though bloggers don't have editors, the nature of the blogosphere is that it is self-editing," Evan says. Reeves knows well that what starts in blogs often pops up in print soon after, since she looks to blogs as a source for lead ideas.

"News and exchanges of ideas like this shape policy," Reeves says. "News relies on how immediate you can be, and the Internet allows people to write and post as they go."