

Citizen Journalism

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 [1315_](#) [2]

Since 1991 the godfather of the world wide web Tim Berners-Lee has been telling everybody that his creature is much more a social rather than a technical invention: it was intended from the very beginning...

... as a tool to enable people to collaborate in the creation and exchange of information.

Some 15 years later, it should not come as a surprise that the one field most affected by this momentous change is journalism. The phenomenon of "citizen journalism" is now ubiquitous, displacing old-style media thanks to an endless network of blogs and audio- and video-sharing websites.

What we are trying to do with i-Italy is to convert the social potential of the web into a powerful communication and collaboration tool for Italian Americans, Italians who live in the U.S., and Americans who have an interest in Italy. Our challenge is to connect worlds that rarely meet, and hardly know each other. Lack of knowledge and superficial interaction is at the origin of so many stereotypical perceptions: e.g., Americans as ignorant cowboys without history, Italians as paesani immigrants with mafia connections. If there were ever a way to put an end to these foolishly distorted images the old media keep disseminating about Italy, America, and Italian America, it is through i-Italy.

A group of innovative journalists and public intellectuals are willing to embark upon this path together. But we can only succeed if we are able to transmit the challenge to our readers, making them an active and important part of our enhanced editorial staff. To this end, i-Italy will give everyone the opportunity to collect, tell, discuss, and spread information about their life, culture, and heritage. A journalist in the 21st century must be able to gather with humility the input from the net's grassroots contributors. As for myself, I offer not only my professional experience as a writer, but also my personal experience as an Italian who has been living in this country - and among its Italians - for many years and loves it.



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Links

[1] <http://newsite.iltaly.org/files/1315>

[2] http://newsite.iltaly.org/sites/default/files/slideshow_pro/1315_