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America's Oldest Journal Covering the Newspaper Industry

Thursday, December 10, 2009

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COMPUSErVE's JFORUM ENDS OPERATION

By Jim Rosenberg

Published: May 17, 2001

Computer Bulletin Board Once Served Thousands

The Journalism Forum on CompuServe ceased operating Thursday after its merger with CompuServe's PR Forum. JForum and PR Forum were merged into a new service, MediaPro, available on CompuServe and on the Web at <http://go.compuserve.com/MediaPro>.

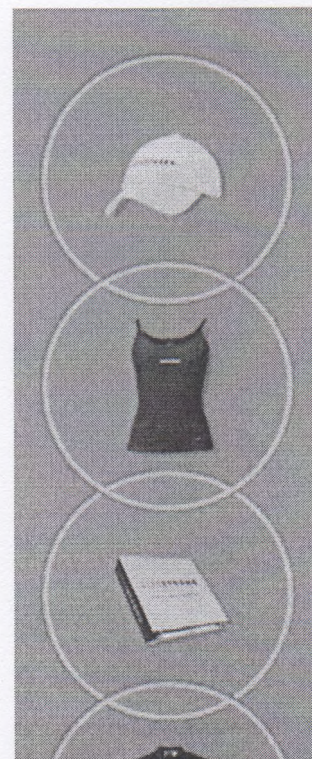
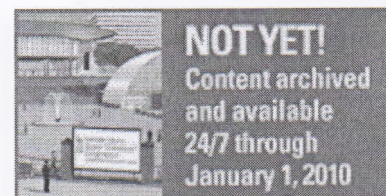
Launched on a Radio Shack laptop in 1985, the then-300-baud journalists' computer bulletin board eventually served thousands of members worldwide, with job listings and messaging in four languages on a variety of topics.

The first online home of the Society of News Design, National Press Photographers Association, Investigative Reporters and Editors, and other organizations, set a legal precedent in the early '90s when a U.S. judge found CompuServe not responsible for messages it was unaware of that were posted in JForum.

Former NBC News manager Jim Cameron said he "founded JForum ... for the dwindling number of radio news people to share survival tips." He also credited section leaders and assistants "who really ran JForum as editors."

Among them, former journalist and Central Newspapers technology executive Howard Finberg most remembered that in the days before easy Web communication, "You really had to commit to be a member of this community. At that point, you realized the possibility of community was not a geographical issue ... It was about shared interest." Besides jobs, said Finberg, members found sources through JForum to do their jobs better.

"This is a passing of a forefather of a lot of what is going on right now," he added. "This was an educational experience for the digital pioneers. This is where we went to school. We learned from each other."



Cameron will remain in an interim capacity, though MediaPro will be operated by PR Forum's Mike Bayer.

Jim Rosenberg (tech@editorandpublisher.com) is a senior editor covering newspaper technology for E&P.

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Jim Rosenberg

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