



**JournalismJobs.com:** What's your opinion of blogs and the citizen journalism that has come out of it? Are blogs here to stay or just a fad?

**James Bettinger:** A blog is just a tool. The issue is which blogs, which audiences, and what use they have. Part of what they represent is good: a real time running commentary on real events. Good bloggers are good aggregators. They are good at gathering lots of information, but they don't do a lot of original reporting. Other functions they do very well. The definition of citizen journalism is still evolving. To the degree that it refers to using the resources of the community, it is good. There must be a distinguishing between this kind of reporting from the anything-goes kind of reporting. Bloggers are able to do everything much more quickly than the traditional news media, which is an ongoing problem. The news media gathers information and gives an authoritative assessment. But by the time we do this, the online people have already posted a story and relied on others to either corroborate it or modify it. This is different and hard for the traditional journalist.

**JournalismJobs.com:** On another note, why did you leave daily journalism for the academic world?

**James Bettinger:** I spent 20 years in daily journalism, and I really liked it. I had been a fellow in this program in the early '80s. I thought the program had great possibilities. When the number two person retired in 1989, I decided to apply for the position and I was fortunate enough to get it. My attraction to the program was a desire to work with great journalists as they were trying to reshape their careers and improve journalism. I consider myself a journalist in academia, not the reverse.

**JournalismJobs.com:** How have your experiences as a reporter and editor influenced your teaching style?

**James Bettinger:** I treat my classes as though they are writing workshops. I always have my students work on writing publishable stories. I make comments on them and rather than just returning them to the students and being done with the process (like a traditional academic class) I focus them on doing rewrites. I orient my classes around the notion of story conferences. I try to make it a collaborative process-they do individual stories but the process is collaborative.

**JournalismJobs.com:** Any regrets on being a journalist? Would you do it again?

**James Bettinger:** I would absolutely do it again. There have been times that I've been discouraged by elements of journalism, but there's nothing else that excites me in the same way that journalism did, or does. I have a strong feeling that journalism is public service. Through journalism people can hold their government or sources accountable. And also it [journalism] is fun.

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