

Thousands of bloggers here for DNC

By Mark Washburn

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. One of uptown's oldest buildings is hosting the future of media.

Inside the renovated Packard Place on Church Street, the 1928 home of a Packard auto showroom, a grass-roots organization called The PPL had set up a complex for hundreds of bloggers and new media enthusiasts.

At the 2000 conventions, a handful of bloggers showed up. At the 2004 conventions, about a dozen bloggers were accredited as media representatives for the first time. At the 2008 conventions, about 300 bloggers were accredited. By then, many were well-known, respected pros.

Thousands of bloggers, from the mainstream media and independents, are expected for this week's convention. Hundreds have paid to be part of The PPL's workspace, which includes work rooms, a roster of speakers including Huffington Post's **Arianna Huffington**, and a bohemian happy hour. Ustream.tv is carrying video of all their events.

"This is where all the cool Internet kids are," said **Desiree Kane**, one of the organizers of The PPL, a group of new media entrepreneurs from Charlotte who set up the facility.

About 30 percent of the bloggers at The PPL are accredited news media types who signed up because of the convenient workspace. About 15,000 media members are expected, says DNC press secretary **Joanne Peters**, but there is no breakdown on how many are traditional reporters and how many are bloggers. Many news organizations, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal, send both kinds of writers, while new media organizations such as Politico or The Hill are primarily distributed on the Web, making distinctions difficult.

Jose Martinez-Diaz with the labor organization Service Employee International Union was one of those settling in at Packard Place on Monday. "We are getting the message of the 99 percent out," he said.

Former Wisconsin Sen. **Russell Feingold** stopped by for a tour. He is now running a grass-roots PAC, Progressives United. "This is cutting edge," said Feingold, "appropriate to what's happening in North Carolina – very forward looking."

Upstairs, **Daniel Kreiss**, who writes on social media and political advocacy, talked about the advances made in social media and how they are being applied to political campaigns.

Back during the "air wars," when television would reach most voters, campaigns began to ignore their ground efforts on influencing voters, he said. "But then, consultants noticed the media fragmentation. Now the

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Romney campaign estimates 30 percent of the electorate isn't watching TV," he said.

This has led to a resurgence of ground campaigning based on personal contact and social media. "We see new tools yoked to the old methods of campaigning," Kreiss said.

Social media was also under the microscope at a discussion held at the McColl Center for Visual Art sponsored by National Journal, The Atlantic and CBS News.

Adam Sharp, head of government, news and social innovation for Twitter, says his site has changed the political discussion to an instant national conversation.

"We've switched from the 24-hour news cycle to a 140-character one," he said.

Before **Clint Eastwood** even left the stage during his 12-minute rant at the RNC, Sharp said, there was already an "#invisibleobama" hash tag on Twitter.

Daniel Sieberg of Google's politics and elections unit says they track searches during speeches. During Mitt Romney's acceptance speech, for example, searches for AC/DC spiked seconds after he mentioned his AC/DC playlist.

"I don't think we've ever seen a political cycle where the second screen has played such a role."



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