One of the Biggest changes in media in recent years is the advent of...

**Citizen Journalism**

... a phenomenon also known as ‘public’, ‘participatory’, ‘democratic’, ‘street’, or ‘guerrilla’ journalism.

Pinning down a definition of Citizen Journalism is difficult because the phenomenon works differently in different environments. It’s more subversive in an authoritarian regime, than in a liberal democracy, but remains a ‘game changer’ in both types of government.

Broadly speaking it’s where the: “collection, reporting, dissemination (spreading), and even analysis of news and information is done by the general public, usually by means of the internet and social media.”

...where ‘Consumers’ of news, also become the ‘Producers’ of the news...

**Key Characteristics of Citizen Journalism**

- Those involved are usually unpaid, untrained, often are involved accidentally by being ‘in the right place at the right time’. Oftentimes, the ‘fame’ experienced by the CJ is ephemeral (passes quickly), with many CJ’s only ever involved in one (or maybe a small handful of) stories. Often, the CJ can lack credibility and can be naïve.
- It is a decentralized, bottom-up structure and process that is self-organizing. While it offers a wide range of viewpoints, the focus tends to be on rapid publishing, rather than thoughtful editing. Its immediacy can be seen as a strength or weakness, depending on your perspective.
- Traditional media increasingly relies on CJ to provide ‘User-Generated content’. In particular, the 24-hour news cycle needs to be filled with something. CJ provides Tweets, status updates, and videos that update quickly and regularly to give the veneer that the normal news reporting is fresh each time.

**Strengths of Citizen Journalism**

1. You can get the views of regular people, particularly in areas where no reporters are present.
2. It adds a richer dimension to reporting by democratizing the process. The “agenda setting” function of large media conglomerates can be bypassed.
3. It empowers local communities, by bringing people together to make a positive change in their communities.

**Weaknesses of Citizen Journalism**

1. It eliminates trained, experienced reporters from the process, meaning that a layer of judgment is removed.
2. It provides a mechanism that malevolent actors can use to disseminate ‘fake news’ because they know there won’t be any kind of rigorous fact checking.
3. Lower standards of content and ethical practices mean you don’t know where you (or the reporter) stand.

**Research 2 Examples of Citizen Journalism Done Right**

1. Guardian journalist Paul Lewis uses CJ to counter London police propaganda to solve the murder of Ian Tomlinson in 2009. (See Guardian article attached)
2.

**Research 2 Examples of Citizen Journalism done wrong**

1. Breitbart and Alex Jones use tweets about hacked Wikileaks emails from the US Democratic party to spread conspiracy theories about Hillary Clinton during the US election (see Intelligencer article attached).
2.

The ‘Upshot’ for your own behaviour: Given that you now know about some of the ethical issues about the ‘responsibility’ of the media, you should always think twice before circulating any news story you see online. In many ways everyone with a camera phone and a social media account should view themselves as the editors of their own newspaper, where your actions have the potential to help society, but could also hurt yourself, your subjects, and even society in general.