

Haiti: when the nets leave the Net takes over

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Haiti pic from @firesideint

Across the world editors in TV studios and newspaper offices are looking for something else to lead on apart from Haiti. I know, I've been there. It's the biggest story in the world, but it's been around for a few days and it is starting to fit into the pattern of all disaster stories. If we want the viewers/reader/listener to pay attention we're going to have to headline something without the words 'Haiti' 'Aid' or 'Death'.

So the big US TV networks will be the first to leave, while everyone else will scale down their presence and perhaps rely on the agencies. The story will slip down the running order or the page. This is how news works and it's not wrong.

Mainstream news can't headline the most important or most deserving issue in the world every day. Otherwise the top story would always be Global Warming. So don't get too pious or upset if new stories get to the top of the agenda.

We all know about Haiti now and the assistance is there. The important thing is what happens in the longer term. Will the world's attention and effort still be deployed after, say, the flurry of first anniversary stories in January 2011?

This is the point where the Internet and Social media becomes more important. The fact that platforms like Twitter, Facebook and digital mapping websites have [played a part in the initial alert and humanitarian action](#) is great. Take the example of the Twittering media development worker @firesideint whose photo adorns this page. They were in Haiti when it hit, they are chronicling the effects and they will be there when the international media departs.

And that is the important task for social media.

We can't expect everyone in the world to keep caring about Haiti forever. But online networks have an ability to reach the right people and allow them to maintain their involvement in a co-ordinated way. This will be the real test of the Net for Haiti.

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