



## **Citizen Media Law Project Launches Legal Assistance Network for Online Journalists**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cambridge, MA – November 19, 2009 – The Berkman Center’s [Citizen Media Law Project \(CMLP\)](#) announced today the public launch of its [Online Media Legal Network \(OMLN\)](#), a new *pro bono* initiative that connects lawyers and law school clinics from across the country with online journalists and digital media creators who need legal help. Lawyers participating in OMLN will provide qualifying online publishers with *pro bono* and reduced fee legal assistance on a broad range of legal issues, including business formation and governance, copyright licensing and fair use, employment and freelancer agreements, access to government information, pre-publication review of content, and representation in litigation.

“Unlike established media organizations that have the resources to pursue important reporting in the face of legal challenges, many online ventures lack the expertise and financial resources to protect themselves and thrive in an uncertain legal environment,” said David Ardia, director and co-founder of the CMLP. “In order for these new media ventures to survive and flourish, they need a legal safety net, and OMLN aims to provide that safety net with the help of lawyers interested in promoting a vibrant online media environment,” Ardia added. Jay Rosen, [a blogger, professor of journalism at New York University](#), and [CMLP advisory board member](#), concurs: “This network is trying to level the playing field for independent online producers. That’s why it matters. That’s why I support it.”

OMLN will make it as easy as possible for participating lawyers and law school clinics to identify appropriate clients. OMLN staff will pre-screen prospective clients and prepare matter summaries so that network lawyers can quickly decide whether they are interested in taking on a question, case, or transaction. These summaries will be sent out to network lawyers via a bi-weekly email newsletter and will be available at any time on [the password-protected OMLN website \(beta\)](#), where members can search and filter client and case information based on client location, type of assistance needed, and legal expertise required. For more information on how the network matches lawyers and clients, see the [How OMLN Works](#) page.

OMLN received its initial funding from the [John S. and James L. Knight Foundation](#), and the first corpus of clients is made up of journalism projects that have received grants through the [Knight News Challenge](#). These Knight grantees include some of the most promising ventures and innovative thinkers in online and digital media, ranging from local community blogs to multi-national news aggregators.

With today's public launch, OMLN is accepting applications for legal assistance from online publishers and media creators who meet the network's criteria of viability, adherence to journalistic standards, innovation, independence, original reporting, and public interest. For details on these criteria, see the [OMLN FAQ](#).

“We are proud to launch OMLN and look forward to collaborating with lawyers and journalists to help ensure that journalism thrives on the Internet,” David Ardia commented.

### **About the Citizen Media Law Project**

The Citizen Media Law Project, which began operations in May 2007, provides assistance, training, research, and other resources for individuals and organizations involved in online and citizen media. CMLP endeavors to serve as a catalyst for creative thinking about the intersection of law and journalism on the Internet. Through the project's website, the active engagement of lawyers and scholars, and occasional sponsored conferences, project staff are working to build a community of lawyers, academics, and others who are interested in facilitating citizen participation in online media and protecting the legal rights of those engaged in speech on the Internet. For more information, visit <http://www.citmedialaw.org>.

### **About the Berkman Center for Internet & Society**

The Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University is a research program founded to explore cyberspace, share in its study, and help pioneer its development. Founded in 1997, through a generous gift from Jack N. and Lillian R. Berkman, the Center is home to an ever-growing community of faculty, fellows, staff, and affiliates working on projects that span the broad range of intersections between cyberspace, technology, and society. More information can be found at <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu>.

### **About the Center for Citizen Media**

The Center for Citizen Media, which is co-sponsored by the Berkman Center and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, aims to enhance and expand the emerging field of citizen media, with a focus on quality journalism. More information can be found at <http://www.citmedia.org>.

### **About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes journalism excellence worldwide and invests in the vitality of the U.S. communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Since 1950 the foundation has granted more than \$300 million to advance journalism quality and freedom of expression. The Knight Foundation supports ideas and projects that create transformational change. For more information, visit <http://www.knightfdn.org>.

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