

## Carl Lindemann

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**Sent:** Sunday, October 14, 2007 9:40 AM  
**To:** Mark Tapscott  
**cc:** SPJ Ethics Committee Members (e-mails redacted)  
**Subject:** Disregard previous - typo RE: Your letter regarding Bob Cox

(TAPSCOTT) And your relationship with Sen. Collins' previous opponent was what?

Dear Mr. Tapscott,

Excellent! I see by your question that you recognize the importance of knowing the identity of sources. It would seem that you should be able to answer your own question about the importance of context and how it can alter the validity of even "completely factual or accurate" statements.

Here, are you suggesting that such information "identifying" me would, in any way, negate the ethical shortcomings of Mr. Cox's piece and the gross misrepresentation in a plain reading of his assertion that "...Google has banned advertisements critical of MoveOn.org..."?

In any case, it is fair to ask what my relations/connections, if any, may be here. I thought to provide such information as a good faith gesture in the previous e-mail, but had already gone on at some length. It seems that you may already have discovered that such information is available online. Please check the link below to my blog entry dated September 1. You will find the information there. I mention a campaign donation to Senator Collins' opponent in 2002. If you have not already, search the FEC database. You will find that single contribution listed under my name - for \$250. You may also be interested in the details provided regarding the issue that motivated it, specifically the incumbent's reaffirmation of her pledge to limit herself to serving only two terms. Now that I have answered your question, does this help you in arriving at an appropriate remedy for the failure to make the proper, ethical disclosure about her campaign's operative/author's associate that is the "source and subject of this piece"?

In any case, as you review this material, I sincerely hope you will appreciate my good faith efforts to be faithful to the SPJ code of ethics, specifically the call for journalists to:

- *Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.*
- *Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.*

I trust that you will now reciprocate by answering my concern about your relationship with Mr. Cox. In terms of your question, I believe that is important because there is no means for me to obtain independently verified information on this matter. So - anything above and beyond your editor/writer relationship? And what of your IRE membership?

Of course, what's more important is whether you will be printing my letter as well as your determination as to whether a retraction, correction or clarification is appropriate to remedy the ethical shortcomings *et alia* of Mr. Cox's piece. Regarding the gross misrepresentation in the opening sentence, you should also note that this forms the basis for your headline: "Google Bans Anti-MoveOn.org Ads". An examination of the reader comments show that a significant number mistakenly believe the plain meaning of this unfounded assertion. Many are Google customers and express that they now feel alienated from the brand as a result. Aside from perhaps providing prima facie evidence of demonstrable damages, this points to yet another ethical violation here under the SPJ code:

- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.

I look forward to your reply.

-CL

<http://www.truedialog.org/blog.html>

For your convenience, see text below. Note that the hyperlinks shown as underlined copy do not work. Please visit the site for the fully functional posting.

### (From Sept. 1 2007 posting - disclosure addenda)

I will be writing more here (and elsewhere) about Dutson's conflicts of interest as a "citizen journalist" soon. In the meantime, let me share how I worked through a similar situation. First, let me take this opportunity to disclose my previous connections to this story.

In 1996, I was working as the morning host on now-defunct WCDQ-FM in Sanford, Maine. As it happened, the Portland Press Herald was sponsoring a local debate with the candidates in the Senate race as part of its "civic journalism" initiative. I covered the event for my morning newscast. Then-candidate Susan Collins made a pledge to serve only two terms if elected. I saved the tape - I like to see if candidates keep such pledges.

Fast-forward six years. I wrote Senator Collins to see if she planned on keeping her pledge. In a letter dated September 6, 2002, she confirmed that she did:

"I am proud of the accomplishments I have made during my first term, and I hope to have the opportunity to serve the people of Maine in the Senate for another six years. I intend to serve only two terms as I indicated in the Sanford forum six years ago."

I wrote an op/ed piece about the significance of her commitment that was published in the Portland Press Herald on October 7, 2002. Based on some of the reasons expressed in that piece, I decided to make a campaign contribution to her opponent in her reelection race on October 24.

Now, this history sets the stage for explaining how I handled a journalistic conflict-of-interest. While I was involved in my "citizen journalism" public discussion of the Senator in 2002, I was doing occasional on-air fill-ins on a news-talk radio station, WGAN-AM in Portland, Maine. I also did occasional news pieces when they wanted to enhance local coverage. Election Eve is an "all hands on deck" situation at any news-talk station. I was expected to help out. The tough question was - which campaign headquarters should I be assigned to cover? I fully apprised the news director of my connections to the Collins/Pingree Senate race and we agreed that both campaigns were off-bounds. Instead, I drew Peter Cianchette's, the GOP candidate for Governor. How did I do? No one complained about my coverage. In fact, the WGAN team was honored by winning the 2003 Maine Association of Broadcasters news award for best election coverage - besting the powerhouse NPR affiliate. This makes for an interesting footnote, given my current issues involving the Maine Heritage Policy Center - MHPC is made up of many former Cianchette staffers who were at the event.

With my professional work in broadcast journalism, trade writing, and high tech public relations, I have managed similar ethical issues. I've turned down lucrative, high profile work because of possible problems. I try to be cautious and conscientious. Are there conflicts of interest?

It appears that bloggers, not knowing what the boundaries are for professional journalism, have no problem jumping back and forth from "reporting" to PR and promotion. Rather than raising the bar by demonstrating the value of "independent" media, this demonstrates (to paraphrase Dutson) "the hearty pandering of Maine's new media."

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