



Webby salute for Pritzker library



SCI-TECH SCENE | Online military programs land in top 10 of 8,000 applicants for Webcast excellence

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The Pritzker Military Library has won recognition from the Webby Awards for its online programming that offers a powerfully intimate look at veterans' experiences and lets viewers ask questions via text messaging.

The library's Webcast programs landed the not-for-profit organization in the top 10 of 8,000 applicants for a Webby Award, which recognized it for cutting-edge use of the Internet to tell veterans' stories and military history.

The programs include a lecture or one-on-one interview with an author on a military theme, regular interviews with Medal of Honor recipients and "Front and Center With John Callaway," Chicago's only monthly panel program on military affairs.

Each program is Webcast before a live audience at the library at 610 N. Fairbanks Court, and archived in video and audio podcasts at PritzkerMilitaryLibrary.org.

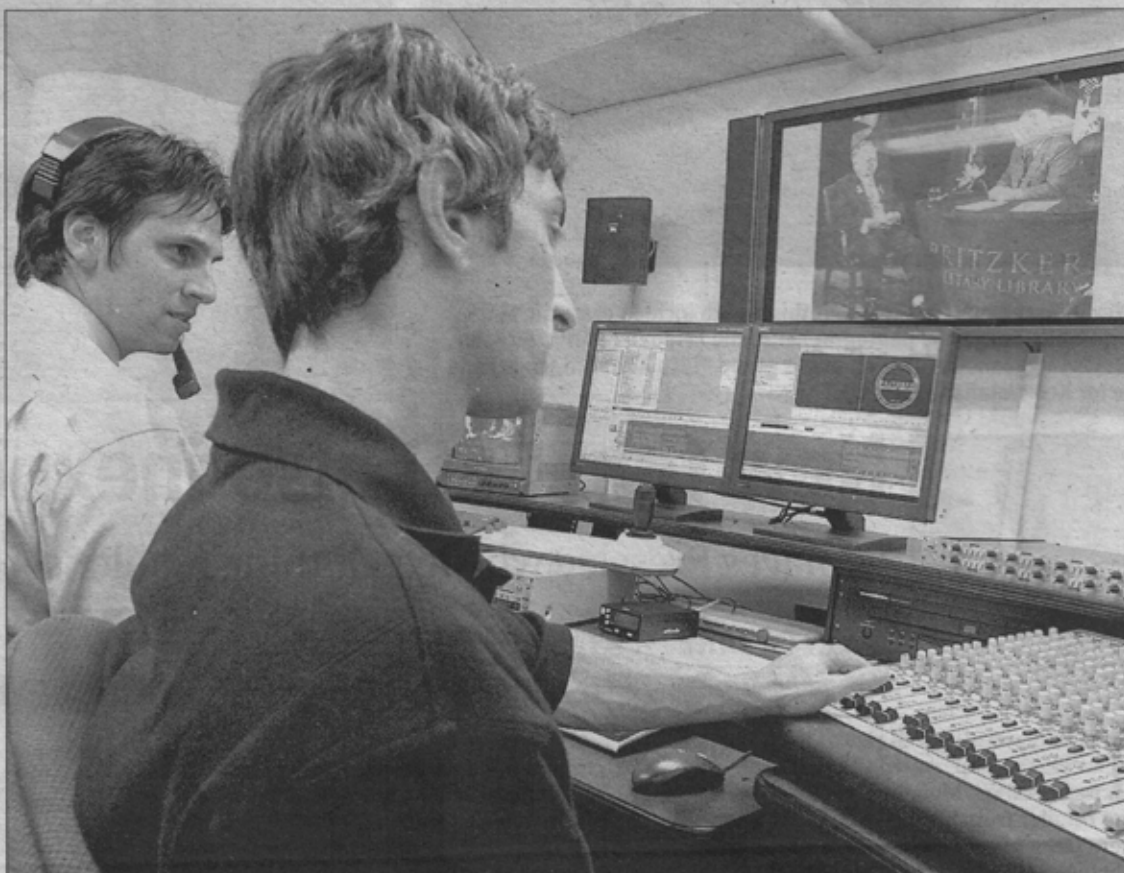
The audio podcasts are being downloaded at a rate of 2,000 per month per program.

Internet viewers, as well as program partners at remote locations across the country, can view the live programs and participate in the question-and-answer sessions online. The library has produced 160 programs, more than 60 of which have been broadcast on WYCC-TV in the past year.

Each broadcast lasts 55 minutes, followed by a 30-minute "live" question-and-answer period from the online and in-studio audiences.

"When we aired our first broadcast in October 2003, it was rudimentary," said Edward Tracy, executive producer of programming and executive director of the Tawani Foundation that provides financial support for the library. Nevertheless, the Webcast served as a precursor to YouTube, the popular video-sharing site, with viewers able to see library events in real time. Since then, they have continued to develop the library's state-of-the-art studio with broadcast-quality equipment.

The 2007 Webby Awards an-



Pritzker Military Library Medal of Honor series director David Cannek (left) and audio technician Bradley Guidera work inside the studio as war hero Ronald Eugene Rosser is interviewed onscreen. | CHRIS SWEDA/SUN-TIMES

nouncement cited the library's work for "setting the standards for the Internet."

A season comprised of more than 54 programs costs \$300,000 a year. The money is raised from sponsorships and donor gifts in order to ensure that the programs are free to the public.

The library's Webby Award submission had three clips: An introduction to an interview with Winston Groom, the novelist best known for his book *Forrest Gump*; a poignant moment in Callaway's interview with Apollo 13 astronaut Jim Lovell, and moving comments by Gary Littrell, a Medal of Honor recipient who fought for four days to defend a hill in a Vietnam War battle.

The Webby judges chose honorees based on Web site content, interactivity, functionality, structure and navigation and overall experience.

The Pritzker library, which employs 12 full-time staff and seven part-timers who work behind the

scenes and has been self-sustaining for the past year and a half, won recognition alongside Web sites such as CBS Sports, the U.S. Tennis Association and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

The Webby Awards have recognized organizations of all sizes and financing, ranging from 2005 blog winner beingboing.net to 2007 lifetime achievement winner eBay.

Mukul Krishna, global manager for digital media at Frost & Sullivan in San Antonio, said the Pritzker library's programs exem-

plify how people's online viewing habits are growing as video quality improves.

"[Online video viewing] won't replace sitting on the La-Z-Boy watching shows on an 80-inch high-definition TV, but it serves as a complement," Krishna said. "It's the concept of any time, anywhere content."

The library's next project is a literary award, recognizing lifetime achievement in military writing. The winner, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and historian James M. McPherson, was announced July 16 via Webcast.



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EDWARD TRACY

Executive producer of programming

