

2004—International Symposium on Online Journalism

Saturday—Panel 2: The State of Blog Journalism

Panelists:

Mark Tremayne, assistant-professor, School of Journalism, UT Austin (moderator and discussant)

"Blog, blog, blog: web log learning experience in journalism classes" - **Eric M. Wiltse**, senior lecturer, Department of Journalism, University of Wyoming.

"When the Audience is the Producer: the art of the collaborative weblog" - **Lou Rutigliano**, graduate student, School of Journalism, UT Austin.

"Blogging the Story" - **Sue Robinson**, graduate student, Temple University

"Weblogs and the Search for User-Driven Ethical Models" - **J. Richard Stevens**, graduate student, School of Journalism, UT Austin.

"Citizens or Journalists? Legal and ethical rules governing journalists' personal Web logs" - **Kathleen K. Olson**, assistant professor, Lehigh University

MARK TREMAYNE: Hello Everyone. When we put out the call for research papers in January, I anticipated we would get a paper or two concerning blogging, we ended up getting quite a number of papers on blogging enough that we have a whole panel about blogging and about the issues raised about blogging. So I thought I'd better present some information on blogging and exactly what it is. I am assuming that most people here know what blogging is and familiar with it, but perhaps a few may not. So I thought a very quick, brief history of blogging might be in order. What is a blog? My information comes from a blogger, by the name of Rebecca Blood, whose been doing it for a number of years. Another blogger named **John Barger** is credited with coining this term back in 1997 – late 1997 when there were very few blogs. The next '98 there were still very few. In 1999 Peter **Merholtz** is credited with changing the word a little bit to "wee blogs" because there were starting to be quite a number of them and so he decided to call each of the individual ones a "wee blog." This was shortened by bloggers to "blog," so there's your etymology of blog.

In 1999 we started seeing a number of free software become available by different companies for individuals to create their own blogs. **Petus.com**, then **Pyro.com**, Blogger.com, and so by 2000 there were thousands of blogs. Enough that by the time of September 11, 2001 you had a pretty active, what is called "blogosphere," already in place. And so that story, September 11 and the war in Afghanistan and then the war in Iraq, became quite prominent on blogs and indeed many blogs were created or changed to focus specifically on terrorism or the war in Iraq.

What do blogs look like? Typically they appear as a long column of dated entries in reverse chronology with the most recent item first. Some are very personal in nature, really more like diaries, individual people's personal journals with little events in their lives. This type of writing style I think will be expanded upon by Eric Wiltse in his paper, which we'll hear about in a few moments.

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Other blogs engaged specifically in current events and trying to have public discussion of current events. And also bringing different perspectives than you might get from traditional journalism. Links to source material and stories on traditional media websites are common in blogs. Some blogs allow readers to post their responses to the blogger whose got the site will post information, and some of these blogs will allow readers to post their responses to that information. One term for this kind of blog is a "group blog." Another presenter, Lou Rutigliano, will talk about group blogs.

Some questions raised by blogging in the last few years: Is blogging journalism? I think our panelists will have, perhaps, competing answers to this question. Do traditional journalist and amateur bloggers go about their work in similar ways? One of our presenters, Rick Stevens, will talk about the ethical norms that journalists follow and whether or not these apply or will apply to bloggers. Can an employee or a newspaper or a broadcast news outlet run their own blog on the side and not get fired? There are many individual people who would have to say "no" because they have gotten fired for that. And one of the papers today, by Kathleen Olson, will focus on this issue, and the legal ramifications of journalists as bloggers.

Should traditional media outlets use blog style on their websites, and what are the ramifications of this if they do? Sue Robinson's paper addresses this issue and concludes that perhaps blogging will, you know, in a sense, change traditional media outlets.

So, without further ado I would like to have our presenters come up, and our first is Eric Wiltse. His paper, "Blog, Blog, Blog: Experiences with Weblogs In Journalism Classes..." You'll find it in this list right here.

ERIC WILTSE: Just through a lit review became aware of the blog phenomenon fall semester when one of my students in my online journalism class did a presentation on journalistic blogs. And I said this sounds like something that I need to know more about and my students need to know more about so let's experiment with them. And these are some of the results of what I've done in the classroom.

Just through a ? review identified a few different types of blogs. The real personal one are also called a Micro-Journal - notebooks which are more like journaling or journal writing that we do in a lot of writing classes.

Filter Blogs include hyperlinks to related sites, as well as possibly photos. And then related to the Filter Blog, the Web Journal, which is the most common type that you see written by journalists in which they express their opinion on an issue and then have links to sites supporting that position and sometimes to sites rebutting that position. And, if they're interactive, the Web Journal Blogs also allow readers to comment on the author's positions and argue or agree with them.

So, what I was looking at, how do journalism students learn to create blogs? – not only setting up the blog itself but then creating content for it. Second, how can we use blogs as a new form of instructional technology? – a delivery tool for learning. And, in particular, how can we use blogs to help students learn about various mass media and communication topics?

I used methodology called the Ethnographic Educational Evaluation, and it's a qualitative research design. Participants in the study – 48 students in two classes that I teach - and for data in ethnography used field notes that I took from observations in the

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classroom. Email interviews with the participants and the weblogs they created themselves were a good document to use as well.

In addition, I used a course evaluation at the end of the semester and kept a reflective journal of things that I probably could have done differently, and plan to do differently in the future as I repeat these studies.

Some of the things that I found: Students learn about blogs by modeling, and modeling comes in several forms not only providing good examples that you would like them to emulate to use as models, but also instructor feedback on the blogs themselves - what you expect from them, what you would like to see the blog accomplish, as well as comments on the writing in the blog.

One thing I found out was that blogs, as a form of instructional technology, seem to be effective for helping these students learn about web design by allowing them to critique different types of websites and then enter into a discussion on their blog with other students about the strengths and weaknesses of those websites. And that's also an example of some of the social interaction that took place that also helped them learn.

Ok, group projects: The opportunity to interact with other students on their blogs as well as with me and, potentially, and it hasn't happened yet, with anyone out there in the blogosphere who find their blogs and want to participate in the discussion.

Basically, what I found, these results, really supported Bandera's Social Cognitive Learning Theory, which basically says that there's various motivations that affect behavior. For example, grades would be one kind of incentive. Positive comments from instructors and other people are another incentive, as well as providing good models for them follow, which could include other students.

You know, when they see what works for other students, what doesn't work for other students they're going to try to follow the successful models and reject the unsuccessful ones. But ultimately, their own personal value of writing is what's going to determine how effective their blogs are, I believe.

Data analysis found three things. Some students had difficulties creating the blogs themselves on the free blog hosting sites we used. Time management was another issue. Students just didn't feel that they had enough time to update their blogs - to go onto other student's blogs and comment on those.

Communication was a big theme that I found across the data as well. And that included the opportunity to discuss various issues with other students, and sometimes not discuss them in one group that really failed to collaborate together.

And, also, communication with the instructor. I found that that students were very open on the blogs that I set up to gather feedback on them on how these projects were working and I got a lot of useful comments, way more - way more useful, than the traditional on-paper teacher evaluation that you get at the end of the semester. There's something about the atmosphere on a blog that really promoted candor on the part of the students, I found.

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And writing quality - many students struggled with trying to figure out how to write effectively in this new medium for them. Not only writing style, but finding good content – or successful content to put on those.

Technical difficulties: Most students used Blogger.com, a free blogger hosting site. And even though I, and many other students, found the instructions on Blogger to set up your own weblog to be fairly easy to follow, some students did get hung up on it.

As I've said before, a lot of students did claim that they didn't have enough time for the blog project. One common complaint was that we did the end of the semester rather than early in the semester and at the end of the semester they were jammed with assignments for other classes, so they felt that the timing could have been better.

And a lot students wanted more modeling, more detailed instructions on how to go through the steps to actually set up a blog, which again some students did not have problems with that.

What I did was gave them an assignment to evaluate four different types of websites on their blogs, and this was a group project. And they had to evaluate the strengths, the weaknesses of each site, how they might redesign it to make it a more effective site. And then all four members of the team on each blog would discuss each other's comments, build upon them, disagree, etc. And, as I said, I found them very open in the conversations I had with them on the blogs that I set up to gather feedback.

On the Notebook Blog project, which was a form of journaling, students were required everyday to update their notebook blog in which at the beginning of class a student would give a class presentation on various aspects of online publishing, and the other students in the class would update their notebook blog with summaries of what that student said in his or her presentation and reactions to it. And I found even though there was the opportunity for students to comment on each other's notebook blogs, I didn't see that take place.

Writing quality varied. A lot of students intuitively treated blogs as a form of email and produced a lot of fairly sloppy writing, lot of abbreviations, lack of capitalization, poor punctuation, etc. like you would see in an informal style of writing in email. Some found a very active personal voice - really established strong identities for themselves as blog writers, and it was interesting to see those voices emerge over the course of the semester.

The content and critical analysis was weak in some of the notebook blogs. A lot of them were basically, "I like this," without really going into saying well, why did you like it, perhaps.

And the Filter Blogs, which were a web critique, really took on a discussion format among the team members in the first class in which I used blogs.

Some recommendations for anyone thinking of using blogs in their class – do good modeling. Not all students are going to need it, but some are going to so I would provide more detailed instructions on – actually setting up the blogs and the requirements – what I expected out of them for blog projects.

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Provide good examples of blog writing, and there's a lot of them out there written by journalists in the field – my paper has links to several of them. And you have the option of making blogs private in which only invited an audience can participate, or opening them wide open so that anyone with an account on Blogger.com, for example, can comment. And I would encourage you to make the blogs public so if there is an audience out there, and students are aware that they're writing for an audience.

And invite professionals in the field to join in on the blogging project. And they could be reporters in the community for news writing classes. If you have a blog in a graphic design class you get local designers. For a web design class or online journalism class, you could get professionals in those areas to bring, hopefully raise the standard of writing by the students, when they're aware that there are people in the audience who are experts in that field.

And maybe to clear up some of the writing problems – first, have the students write in Word, perhaps, write their entries and do spell check and grammar check – all those crutches – before copying and pasting it into their blog.

Grading: Probably don't wait until the end of the semester. Give them some feedback several times over the course of the project. Let the students self-assess. What do they want to accomplish? What could they do better?

Have a clear rubric that grades both on the content and on the writing quality. And become a part of the blog yourself. Enter the student's blogs and perhaps use that as an opportunity to assess the content and writing during the process that the students are creating their blog.

Future uses: If anyone's teaching an opinion writing class, a student could create a blog in which they link to pro and con articles and then take a position for themselves in their editorial.

Current events courses: One thing you should be sure they know how to do is evaluate websites that they link to for credibility and they can even discuss that in the current event and graphic design classes.

Thank you.

MARK TREMAYNE: Thank you, Eric. We'll have time at the end for questions for the whole panel – probably about 15 or 20 minutes if things go well. Next up, Lou Rutigliano and the paper is called, "When the Audience is the Producer: The Art of the Collaborative Weblog."

LOU RUTIGLIANO: ...Just want to thank all you guys for coming out today and the Symposium for the invite and also Mark and Rosental, who have been my advisors on this research since I started looking into weblogs in the fall of last year. Usually when you are doing this sort of research you find yourself using words like "blogosphere" in conversation or referring to people with names like "Commander Taco," whose actually the founder of one of the sites I'm going to show you, and people give you a real concerned, confused expression, but these guys were always very interested and wanted to find out more.

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But anyway, I've changed my presentation a bit after yesterday. I was really struck by some of the things that came up from the mainstream media websites. Gary from AOL was talking about finding ways to build community while still maintaining a pretty high level of discourse.

We heard from Michael from MSNBC who wants to encourage more feedback from his audience and find ways to draw them into the stories and keep them on the site so that they can retain more of what's up there. And others who have also mentioned things like the audience leaving their mark on the site. Steve from Poynter mentioned "**OhMyNews**" in South Korea, which has 26,000 citizen reporters and has really been an interesting phenomenon.

But what we're going to look at today are Group Weblogs, which really in format are much like the individual weblogs, which are considered traditional now. They have the posts that are arranged in chronological order, with the most recent at the top. They have links to original source material from the mainstream media mostly. And then they have comment areas for reader feedback.

But the difference is really in the philosophy here. It comes from more of an open source background, and a lot of the people who have created these sites are open source computer programmers who believe in sharing resources and sharing expertise among a larger crowd of people to develop a better product. And it's more of an idea of two heads are better than one, but in this case maybe 10,000 heads are better than one or 50,000 heads are better than one. And they've applied that to this blogging format.

So the trick is though when you invite that sort of participation from your audience you have to find a way to control the chaos that's going to unfold. So, they've applied some tools that have really come out of the theory called Emergence Theory, which is based on the idea that in the absence of a central authority the group will police itself and self-organize and be able to regulate itself – its own behavior.

So let's take a look at these guys. I'm going to skip over a couple of these slides. So they all apply these, this openness and the strategies for controlling their audience to different degrees.

This one is Meta-Filter. It has 17,000 members and as you can see, this is a good introduction because it's arranged almost like an individual weblog. Posts dominate the layout of the site and they follow that chronological that's standard.

Typically Meta-Filter gets about 30 posts a day, and I don't know if you can read it, but they vary from links to mainstream media sources, maybe a particular multimedia project that stands out from the New York Times. Or, back in November I believe, they link to the enterprise reporting from the Toledo Blade that went on to win a Pulitzer Prize.

But then they'll follow that up with something that's completely ridiculous - the weird stuff that we were talking about at the end of the day yesterday, which is more worthy of The Daily Show. But they combine it all together and it's really interesting to read. What happens is that after someone posts it, that's really just a platform for the audience to take the ball and build upon that story.

Here, this is from a story that was about electronic voting and someone proposed that this is scandalous – look at this article, this whole system's flawed. Then people would post to other sources to counter that claim. Someone said that they were an eyewitness to a

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similar story because they worked for an election bureau, and then other people will counter it with sources from all over the web. They refer to themselves, not Meta-Filter, but all group weblogs sort of as an army of fact checkers and pride themselves in testing the validity of the main source.

Now Meta-Filter has closed its membership, which in the weblog community is frowned upon because they feel that it's become so inclusive and non-interactive, as the mainstream media's considered, just by doing that despite it's 17,000 members.

Plastic is laid out much differently than Meta-Filter. It's almost more of a news site where you have sections down the left-hand nav bar and a main story in the middle. They have 41,000 members and counting, each of whom can submit news to the site. The way that they control that is through a really rigorous editorial process where stories have to go through the review and comments of other members and then are even edited by editors who are selected who are maybe veteran members of the site.

Now this, in a lot of ways, has slowed the production. I think you can control it too much and it suffocates participation because, you'll see on Plastic, that on the briefs on the right-hand side don't even allow comments. They're completely non-interactive. And the posts, the sections that Plastic is broken into, sometimes go for days without a post. Sometimes posts go for hours without a comment from the readers and I think that in some ways they've almost exerted too much control upon their audience.

This is where things start getting interesting. Corrosion was created by a computer programmer who wanted to have the ideal, open, democratic, participatory media. The readers really controlled everything at first. They submitted all the stories, they decided what gets the most play and they even had a diary section, which you see on the left, which is just their own unfiltered version of Corrosion.

Linked to on the homesite, sometimes, there would just be something ridiculous but this became something really popular and Corrosion built an audience of more than 200,000 views a day, and it's had a lot of offspring that have used the open source software as built on to follow in its footsteps.

What happened with Corrosion is that with that openness came some vulnerability, and they call users that will exploit that vulnerability "trolls." And the trolls will come in and antagonize the rest of the readers, and it doesn't take that many to completely spoil the party.

So Corrosion has had to turn around and stop anonymous commenting and only allow people to join if they're referred by another member. And like one of the users said in response to this plan, "Well, there are no trolls in North Korea either." So you can see that this is met with some resistance.

On the other hand is Slashdot. Now Slashdot was started by a student in Michigan who wanted to just have a bulletin board for his friends to share rumors about Star Wars movies. Now, last year in an article he said they get about 2 million views a day, 50,000 regular contributing members and the site is just constantly updated. Posts go up there, as you can see down the middle - every hour there's a post. And as soon as the post goes up there'll be dozens of comments. People are just so engaged in this website that they will not only comment but they'll - it's almost as if they stay on the site and follow their comments. It becomes a game of, like, one-ups manship, debating other readers.

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And these guys are up there for much longer than 15 minutes or whatever we talked about yesterday.

But Slashdot's secret really is that users have to submit stories to an editorial group that will select what's posted. Then they let the comments provide the freedom and they have a system that ranks comments from a scale of (-1) to (5) and allows members to vote on which are the most informative, which are the most well written, so that you can screen the comments. I mean, if there's a thousand comments on there it's impossible to read them all. You could just look at the (5's) and that would still give you about a hundred.

Also, that allows you to filter out the trolls, because they will come. If it's open like this there'll still be people that will just go on there and write, basically, online graffiti. But with this system you can just overlook them, while still giving them the option to participate.

So basically - I know I gotta wrap it up. In conclusion, I think that for media organizations that are looking to increase interactivity and participation from their audience, while still avoiding, you know, getting burned by total chaos and confusion, these groups are developing the tools that are trying to solve these issues and I think, besides the implications for communications research, there's a lot that can be learned from professionals in looking at these sites.

And the beauty of it is that Slashdot and Corrosion are actually built on open source software. So you can go to SlashCode.com and download this system and implement it into your own site. And Commander Taco was actually asked about this on the site. Someone said, you know, "Aren't you concerned that someone will come along and use SlashCode and out do what you've done?" and he just said, you know, "Go for it." So. That's it.

MARK TREMAYNE: Thank you Lou. Ok, next up is Sue Robinson from Temple University, "Blogging the Story."

SUE ROBINSON: Ok, I'm Sue Robinson and I'm a first year Ph.D. student, and I should probably also tell you that I'm a very traditional print journalist as well. And I'm going to be talking about the traditional norms that I was schooled in today because I've been really interested with this whole blogging phenomenon, particularly on the mainstream journalism sites. And I also want to say that this is a complete work in progress, so I'm looking for any kind of feedback or comments that you guys might have.

A cross between a column, a news story and a diary, the journalist weblog, or the J-Blog, has started to serve as daily news in the mainstream online press. I wanted to look at whether these pieces showed that traditional journalistic norms like objectivity, independence and a dedication to truth were morphing like a Kafka character to meet the needs for a new post modern society. At least, that was my original thesis when I started looking at these things.

My four research questions were: Do blogs rate as journalism? How might the non-linear nature of online writing in these particular blogs affect news delivery? How are truth, independence, credibility and authorship established in J-Blogs? And then finally, how do journalists negotiate and reinterpret traditional news norms in the online medium?

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I investigated these issues through a textual analysis of 114 J-Blogs, all of which I found on CyberJournalist.net, which I'm sure most of you guys are familiar with. It's, I think its media center. It's a basic journalist blogging website. And I picked out 15 or so. I'm still actually looking at some of these 15 and scrutinized them for their implications on journalism.

I decided to use Kovach and Rosensteel's "Nine Elements of Journalism," just because I needed something formal and I used it as a very, you know, rough guide. But they're your basic obligation to truth and independence – all the things that I try to keep in mind when I'm writing my print stories.

Through these standards journalists end up setting the agenda for societal debate. That societal debate helps reinforce the dominant hegemony of capitalist America. As Solosky here notes, "Although journalists do not set out to report the news so that the existing political economic system is maintained, their professional norms end up producing stories that implicitly support the existing order."

Not only do journalists frame societal hegemony in their writings, but there is also a dominant framework of reportage shaping the news. They change in those professional norms in the way in which we frame would necessarily alter that existing order that Solosky talks about.

When reporters write stories that fall outside the dominant frame, traditionally the industry is engaged in what we've called "News Repair," by criticizing the report as not good journalism and then correcting the original impression by establishing credible sources in officialdom.

Some would argue that these norms have already started shifting with the advent of New Journalism, Infotainment, periodic rise of personal journalism. We keep seeing these kind of themes, but I would argue that, you know, I've been in the industry 10 years and I'm still doing the traditional stuff, so it's very much alive and well.

Jameson, he's a post-modernist, he deconstructs news stories as having multiple meanings according to their timing and their readers. And if you're not familiar, post-modernity, I'm not really sure I can explain it cause it defies categorization - that's the whole point of it - it allows for multiple meanings. It plays with our perceptions of time and of space. And I'm pretty, I'm sort of, even though I'm a traditionalist, I'm really intrigued by this idea of post-modernity and the idea that we can get multiple meanings out of something.

Online post-modern journalism is in its element. Murray attributes kaleidoscope powers to computer, and that just means that we can use hyper-linking, interactivity, multimedia and some of the other computer attributes to see multiple patterns in narratives.

Audience agency: That is the extent to which the reader or viewer helps construct the story in it's meaning. Online is unlike any other medium in that readers are both audience and journalists.

Hyperlinks allow readers to change endings, and even extend them indefinitely. Journalists have called J-Blogs the ultimate news. And **Wendland** here notes that blogging consists of "News that is happening now, almost in real time. Not filtered, edited or delayed-delivered."

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Their very inclusion on the mainstream journalism websites and their use of journalistic terms such as “off the record” implies that a lot of journalists consider this journalism. So I couldn’t help but think, where does this leave traditional norms and values?

Kovach and Rosensteil acknowledge that truth is a fluid, amorphous thing whose meaning is theoretical and whose reality is subjective. And yet, our job as the press is to attempt truth. I found that in the blogs the whole purpose of the blogs, and when I’m talking about blogs I want to make it clear that I’m talking about mainstream journalism blogs such as we find on USA Today, the New York Times now has one, the Washington Post.

All right, so, I just picked out some of the examples from my textual analysis. Of course, there are a lot more. The New Republic’s **Ryan Lizen** writes a blog about the presidential campaign and he links to other mainstream publications such as The Chicago Tribune and The Boston Globe, but he also links to independent blogs such as **Daily Kos** and the Little Green Footballs, which are full of rumor and innuendo according to leftist and right-wing perspectives and involve a lot of reader feedback. This presents as many truths as possible, the accumulation of which is constructing the story now.

Lizen works hard in his daily blog to fix the truth and in the process I found that the journalist engages in what we call News Repair by reestablishing the distinction between the independent blogs, such as the Drudge Report, and those blogs sponsored by mainstream journalism sites.

This is kind of a long entry. I’m not going to read it, but basically what he’s doing is Lizen is jumping into this journalistic fray between a Boston Globe reporter and Matt Drudge. Basically he’s establishing the Boston Globe reporter as having done good reporting and Matt Drudge as not. He’s redefined the traditional norms of double checking and reporting the substance of what happened, in other words reporting the truth as it was understood by the mainstream journalism.

Journalist reporters, in particular, must be objective and free from ties in order to perform our watchdog function. Seattle Post Intelligencia Reporter M.L Like was embedded aboard the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln in January in 2003. She also contributed hard news stories to the print publication. And I tried to, in my paper, understand when that was happening because blogs, of course, are opinion.

Independence, a primary creed of journalists, disappears as Like became absorbed by the military culture around her. She was given a nickname by the troops; she participated in raids on the ship’s store with the troops. Her blog often uses the first person plural “we” to include herself with her sources. That didn’t happen in her print versions.

Other entries in the blog indicate that she too notices there’s some sort of shift going. And I found this particular entry very interesting. This is of the ship’s captain on the bridge, and he noted that the media’s stories have softened after a few weeks on board.

“We’re getting to know the crew,” he said. “True, we’ve met amazing, dedicated people aboard, but that word, “soft,” it worries me. There’s such a dearth of hard news on the Lincoln.”

Here she too, I would argue, is engaging in a News Repair of the dominant journalistic frame. She turns the captains, the remarks about the reporters losing their objectivity

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because of the relationship with the crew, to an excuse about the dearth of hard news. Not only is she discounting the idea that she's getting too attached, but she's also insisting that she's reporting only the truth about what is or is not happening on board.

Any source, rumor, off-hand remark is fair game in a blog. I found this quote by the NewYorkTimes.com Editor really, really interesting. He said – he said this to CyberJournalist.net by the way –

“We knew that there is plenty of other very good reporting out there and we knew that to have credibility with the reader. We couldn't just say, ‘well, here's what the Times was reporting’ and ignore everybody else.”

And he's talking about their new blog for the presidential campaign “Times On The Trail.” And I thought, this really struck me, cause I read the Times everyday and I never see them in the print version acknowledging what their competitors are up to. So, I thought this was sort of indicating there's some sort of shift.

Also, traditionally, newspapers have been ?. And I've sat in plenty of meetings in newsrooms where we argue about whether we should be linking off-site because we can't verify anything else off-site. And, so, the fact that blogs, somehow, this is what we should be doing, is interesting to me.

Readers are key sources in the blog world. And as a result audience agency is changing. Bloggers routinely use readers both as sources and as co-authors. Some new sites dedicate entire blogs to reader's input. And I found that Citizens does have the opportunity to react not only to what was written in the blog, but to repair what the print publication's doing. They're allowed a much longer entry rather than the edited traditional print letters that we've been doing.

I'm just going to skip this slide. A new form of news does seem to be occurring. And I came across a number of these kinds of sites, where they have updated every few minutes or so according to, usually they're on the spot sort of blogs. This is from the 16-day mission of the spaceship Columbia and this blog was updated throughout that mission – very specialized audience targeting talking about the weather and, you know, what the ship was doing in minutia. Once the shuttle blew up though, this blog became news in the traditional sense of action. But it was written in a post-modern way. There's no inverted lead, there's nut graph, there's no traditional story format here.

The last entry is actually several weeks after the crash and continues as the previous speaker said in reverse chronological form. Again, playing with our notions of time. Most of the entries are a sentence or two at most. In such a format the reader no longer controls the build up of the story, cannot fashion a lead, doesn't choose from among the recognized story formats and so I decided a Communicative Model of news has suddenly become post-modern.

The blog is often merely a porthole to the rest of the story. It signifies a beginning rather than an end. I picked this next entry because of a locale. This is The American Statesman. And this is, you know, this is also printed in the print publication but it's very clearly indicated that it's originally from the Internet, which is sort of a reverse way that it's been happening.

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Here, Garcia's talking about his trip to the Hall of Fame, which we actually don't get to until the fourth paragraph down into the entry. And, rather, his comments are about his antics that angered the Hall of Fame staff rather than any discussion of the museum itself.

There are multiple tangents that defy categorization. Words such as "whatever" contain no literal meaning and the use imparts an acknowledgement that the reader, just like the writer, will interpret the event in contrary ways.

There is no point, or at least the point is chameleon - changing with every line. This way mainstream newspapers are embracing post-modern writing, which leads me to my conclusion, which are that J-Blogs are really the corporate answer to the Internet's independent blogging. They're a way for journalists to reclaim journalism online, even through a post-modern entity that was originally created to defy those traditional norms.

Mainstream journalists counter the threat of independent news blogs by taking them to task within their own blogs, thereby framing according to the dominant journalistic tradition. When their own writing becomes suspect for deviating from those norms, they justify by manipulating the truth in such a way that they're presenting many truths, under the guise of citizen forum and the fact that well, this is a blog so we're all right - we can do that here.

Blogs are now achieving what **Gonz** called for in an indirect sharing of responsibilities back in 1979. But, I would argue that even as we stretch the notions of journalism online that we need to remember Gonz's caution and, I paraphrase: As sources, perspectives and therefore, values multiply and diversify journalism norms need to become even more necessarily than they are today.

But I'm also conflicted because I think about Cook, who's another online expert. In 1996 he said, "If journalists tell their stories on behalf of a normative order, they may be doing so to an ever smaller and less attentive audience."

I'm arguing that maybe it's time we reexamine Kovach and Rosensteel's "Nine Elements" of the online environment - maybe expand them a little bit. Add a new element, such as transparency - make it really clear what we're doing and how we're doing it.

Right now the blogs are too varied and too changing to have definitive implications for the news media as a whole, and as a result what it will mean for community and democracy. But I did find that this textual analysis indicated the world of post-modern journalism has arrived in the mainstream press, embodied in a blog but still very much framed in tradition. And that's it. Thank you.

MARK TREMAYNE: Thank you, Sue. On a related note, next up, Rick Stevens, a student of ours here at UT. His paper, "Weblogs and the Search for User-Driven Ethical Models."

RICHARD STEVENS: Good morning. I've been listening to the presentations that have gone so far and we've been talking a lot about what journalists do with weblogs, but what I kind of wanted to do was to back up a little bit and talk about weblogs in general, which is something, I think, in our discourse we overlook quite a bit. Because they're having a lot of the same questions in those communities that we're having and so I kind of wanted to look at what they're looking at.

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First of all, blogs have been around for a long time. I know we've been getting some dates, centering them the late nineties or even early part of this decade, but the only thing that differentiates a blog from a lot of the other interactions we've been doing is simply software – the ease of use. A lot of people have said the web itself, when it was first brought out, was intended to be this blogging environment that we're just now getting around to. And certainly the original designers had intended a lot more interactivity than we've gotten to.

But when we talk about blogs we're talking about these experiences. And there are hundreds and thousands of these, what we're calling today blogs. These blogs that currently exist, they're put together by journalists, but that's only one group of people. Journalists, students, teachers, professionals in all fields, clergy and even people who don't seem to have any discernable purpose in life at all.

There's an interesting blog that came across that is titled, "The Dullest Blog in the World." Do a search for that in Google and you'll find it, and it is a long blog where a person merely walks around his apartment and thinks about, "What am I going to eat today? I could have ham on rye, but maybe not." You know, and that's his whole blog. And it has attracted so much attention that he has audience for just what he's doing.

And that takes us back to some of the earlier ideas when people talk about maybe blogs were invented when we had Jenny-Cam and some of those other beginnings of reality television even.

But when we're talking today about what's happening, recently the war blogs, which are blogs about the war effort, has caused an increase in the popularity of the conversation for us and for those that were involved in those. And one of the most interesting examples that's been mentioned in a few of the papers, that has not especially, is **Chris Albritten's** foray into Iraq. He was a former journalist who had started a blog and he wanted to become the web's first independent war correspondent. So what he does on his website is he tells everybody that he would like donations to be able to cover the war on his own and he winds up collecting about just under \$15,000 from 342 donors and uses that money to rent equipment, fly to Turkey and slip into Iraq and cover the war on his own. And that was truly an interesting moment because if this is a trend that continues, you know, that's completely outside of our traditional way of looking at it.

However, not all of the blogs during this period have been quite so useful for society. Bloggers recently have had their own Jayson Blair. His name was Sean-Paul Kelley. This came up during the war blogging period that is still going on.

Sean-Paul Kelley is a Texas blogger who composes this blog that is still around today called The Agonist. He started the publication because he felt the media wasn't doing a good enough job of covering the nuances of international relations, ok. So where does he get his information? First of all, Kelley had had journalism experience – it appears about three weeks of it at a local paper before he started this blog. And so he's going to bring us all of this activity. So where he gets it is he plagiarized the U.S.IraqWar.com newsletter from **Strapboard**, which is a Texas-based Intelligence firm. Basically, he subscribed to that newsletter and he's sort of dumping their newsletter directly into his blogs without attribution of any kind.

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Well, the bloggers were actually the ones that called him on this. They were concerned, there was a lot of mixed reaction – two or three of them had very strong, “You cannot do this. This is violating journalism ethics.” To which he kind of responded, “Well, I’m not really a journalist,” but yet he claims sometimes that he is. And it’s this fluidity between whether someone is or isn’t and they tend to pick whichever argument is going to serve their case.

But what was more interesting was that the majority of the responses did not criticize him for this, but rather asserted that this is just a part of blogging. This is what happens – we’re always copying other people’s content, we’re always forwarding it, we’re always linking to it, we’re always repurposing content. But it started this big debate that’s been going on within their community.

You know, this is outside of our own debate that raises this question: Are bloggers journalists? Do they need a code of ethics? And they have a lot of opinions about that. Some of them feel that bloggers as a community should adopt something like our codes of ethics and some think that actually destroys the whole point of blogging. So I was going to talk a little bit about that, quickly.

First of all in my paper, I go through a long history of why it was that we came about with, to develop ethics in the first place. A lot of times we like to think that these showed up as soon as we had this activity. And I gave you this quote of how we sometimes have this pie in the sky view of ethical content, but in reality we did it, we created ethics in a period when elite newspapers were trying to differentiate themselves from more common newspapers, which were doing some activities they didn’t be involved with. It was more of a class war and this is a way of controlling it.

But the first 100 years we had very little, if any, calls to ethics. The first codes that we have, and I’m just going to list these up here, they’re in the paper, you can see them. **Charles Dana** – 1888, he gets the credit for having the first code when he was speaking to the Wisconsin Editorial Association. His code looks similar to some of ours. There’s some interesting things – he talks about how we need to support our parties, but also not to be blinded by that support. Clearly, there were some ideas that we’ve kept today but they’ve, ethics have changed a lot since then.

In the 1920’s we saw the rise of a lot of these professional codes. Walter Williams, the journalist, created this one that a lot of people look to. It’s one of the very early ones. The interesting thing that I want to point out is that the opening line of his creed is, “I believe in the profession of journalism.” Ok, immediately we’re saying codes of ethics are about the profession of journalism. And, of course, there’s still debate today whether journalism actually is a profession or not, or whether we’re, you know, the skill sets that we have some kind of professional society around them.

In 1923 we have the Canon of Ethics. In 1926 the Society of Professional Journalists, and we’re still having this debate. It’s always framed as a way to separate, at that time, the professional journalism versus yellow journalism or the common journalism, but yet we don’t have any licensing or control in our industry and so that kind of begs the question of what it means to be a profession.

Rebecca Youngblood was mentioned. I’m going to pull up her. This is her view. She’s gone through journalism sites and looked at our codes of ethics and pulled up some ideas about what a potential code would look like for bloggers. And you can see that

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some of them are very familiar. Publish as fact only that you to believe to be true. She says that we oughta link to material when we reference it.

Publically correct any misinformation. And she's very opinionated about that. She thinks even we make spelling mistakes and correct them that we should show people that we've corrected those mistakes, which kinda comes to her number four. Do not write or delete any entry. She talks about keeping those, and that's something that came up in an earlier panel about what do you do when you change the information, where does the information go? Disclose any conflict of interest. I mean, even in the industry we could probably do a better job of that, but they're talking about that now. And to know questionable and biased sources, rather than just say, "well they said it," to an attribution.

I wanted to talk about the Clinton/Lewinski scandal. The reason why this was really significant was not only did it break and conclude on the Internet. Remember that it starts with the Drudge Report and ends with the Star Report being distributed through the web. But that it also affected traditional journalism behavior in the way that we view ethics.

And in that we're going to be talking a little bit about the book by Kovach and Rosensteil that talked about as the web sources, like the Drudge Report, kept bringing out these elements of the story that the news media reacted by trying to keep up. And the analysis is in the early going of the story, and this is, I believe, the first six days, this is what they're reporting here, that the number of sources used and the naming of those sources, those standards declined in a hurry. And, of course in their book they decry journalism standards are falling and failing.

But anyway, even our own professional ethics are being affected by the speed of the Internet. And a lot of times we try to press upon them this is the way that you should be doing this type of communication. We have our Jayson Blair and his name is Jayson Blair, you know. We have Jack Kelley. We've had infractions in the last couple of years from almost every major outlet.

So some of the bloggers are rightly saying well, why should we follow your ethics, you're not even following your ethics, which is an interesting question in that relationship. Well, when we're talking about amateur journalism, I want to refer to kind of a localized event that I had seen occur that I thought was kind of interesting.

In 1999 the Texas A&M bonfire collapsed. That was a story that got a lot of national recognition. Austin360.com, which at that time was separated from the local paper, that had separate editorial staffs although they shared content, had a Post-it Forum, which is like our blogging now where people would come in and they would comment.

But they started having problems and people from College Station would write in and start revealing information that the paper would never have allowed and nor would the website. You know, for example, "this person is alive, oh I don't think this person made it. I overheard somebody saying in the ambulance that they died." And all of the sudden all of the content managers had to go in and shut all that down because they couldn't control that level of information.

But, to a lot of people who were watching that, I think that signaled a new relationship between audience and media. So again, in this Kovach and Rosensteil book, this is the

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warp speed book, they talk about this mixed media culture and they give five characteristics that are causing problems and I'm going to list three of them and talk about them really quickly because I think that they relate to this blogging environment.

One is that sources are gaining power over journalists. They're saying, as we're struggling to keep up with this frantic pace that sources holding on to information forces journalists to compromise in ways that we would rather not. Bloggers kind of push this issue. They are not always as concerned. Not all of them are journalists, not all of them want to be journalists and not all of blogging looks anything like journalism. And they tend to leek information in ways that drive us to try to keep up.

The second is they noted that there's a decline in the gate keeping function. And I have this quote from Walter Lippman in 1920 and it says, "The news of the day as it reaches the newspaper office is an incredible medley of fact, propaganda, rumor, suspicion, clues, hopes, and fears and the task of selecting and ordering that news is one of the truly sacred and priestly offices in a democracy."

And I bring that up because there are times in our culture, and the cultures that have come before us, in which technology kind of forces this issue. And the reference to this sacred and priestly office kind of brings me back to this idea of well, maybe weblogging, now that it's so useful, is this like the printing press? And the Protestant Reformation is this kind of pulling away and giving control to the people and what is this going to look like?

So I'm going to move ahead – oh, and reporting culture is also being overrun by argument culture. We're seeing a lot more of that and this book also showed that. That as we get a lot of the debates and blogging, is a perfect medium for this, and they've kind of taken advantage of it.

So when we're talking about the conclusions, I wanted to list four brief ones right quick. First of all, weblogging is not synonymous with online journalism, at least not the way we define online journalism. They don't seem to have or desire that need for objectivity or balance that we push. They're perfectly comfortable admitting up front this is not, these are my political leanings and I'm going to use them. If anything, if they are like journalism they're like journalism in our pre-professional state and maybe that's a good way to think about them in terms of the way that we ask them to develop standards.

But, like in the 19th century, they need a reason to adopt the standards. We didn't invent those standards from the air. We didn't have some revelation. We developed them for very real reasons and they're going to have to also. Blogging does fill an important niche between the consumers and the professional media. It allows a lot of interaction. Media, even though we're becoming more interactive, are still not accessible by the user and blogging is helping to fill some of that. And that there will be bloggers who desire, and right now are pushing for, a heightened level of credibility. That's what they want that we have, that they cannot seem to get, is this credibility. And the way that they're pursuing it is to try to adopt our models, but only some of them. Maybe credibility will be the element that pushes them to do it.

So, very quickly, how about we just jump out here. What I had said was that whatever their system of ethics is going to look like, should they provide one, it's going to be a very user driven system, like all aspects of this medium.

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If you've been reading the papers you know that we're running into all kinds of cultural issues, you know, with Amazon.com book reviewers, they're not professional and yet are being treated by the publishing houses as professionals. Just to the basic websites that are being put up. Who controls these relationships? And the answer is the technology is releasing them from control. How do we as journalists interface with them? What can we learn from them? And what can they learn from us?

And so the end question, are J-Blogs leading or following this trend? And I know that some of these other papers are better suited for dealing with that, my personal impression has been that we're following those trends. And so there's a lot that we could learn from them. So, I'm going to stop it here.

MARK TREMAYNE: Ok, thank you Rick. Finally, we have Kathleen Olson and her paper, "Citizens or Journalists? Legal and Ethical Rules Governing Journalists' Personal Weblogs."

KATHLEEN OLSON: I'm going low-tech. I don't have a lot of data, per se, and the concepts I'm going to talk about are pretty simple. I guess if anyone's keeping track, I'm an alum of UT, so it's nice to be back. Also was on the first staff of Austin360, the Statesman's website here, so it's nice to be back in Austin.

The issue of journalist's personal blogs, blogs done on their own time not connected to their professional work as a journalist has created some controversy lately. Steve Outing has written about it. Cyberjournalist.net had a good debate on sort of the pros and cons of restrictions, newsroom restrictions, on personal blogs by newsroom employees. But those debates sort of went to what newsroom policy should be and what I wanted to do was sort of take a step back and look at the law and see whether there were legal rule that apply to journalist's personal blogs.

When you think about it, the issue of restricting them really brings up a clash of Constitutional rights that journalists, just like everyone else, have individual free speech rights and that in some cases they clash then with the First Amendment right of their employer, the newspaper, to control the editorial content and the operations of the paper. So that's the issue that I wanted to look at and it has come to a head in some recent cases in which journalist have been disciplined or even fired for their personal blogs.

You may be familiar with some of them. **Steve Olafson** was a reporter at the Houston Chronicle and he created a personal blog under the pseudonym "Banjo Jones" in which he wrote about life in Brazos Port, Texas. And among the topics of his commentary were critiques of local politics and politicians, which were subjects he was responsible for covering in his beat for the Houston Chronicle. The blog also occasionally criticized the local Brazos Port newspaper as well as The Chronicle.

After his identity was made known the blog was shut down and he was suspended from The Chronicle and subsequently fired. The Chronicle refused to comment on whether the site violated The Chronicle's code of ethics, but the editor did say we have standards and expect our journalists to comply with them.

Other examples include a part-time radio reporter in L.A., **Ron Fineman**, who was fired from his job over negative comments he posted on his website about a producer at a sister station. And more recently, **Dennis Horgan**, who was the travel writer for the Hartford Courant, became a columnist and began, or I'm sorry, was moved to the travel

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desk after being a columnist and began his own personal blog and The Courant stepped in and he was told to take down his blog.

The editor of that paper said that Horigan's entire professional profile is a result of his attachment to the Hartford Courant, yet he has unilaterally created for himself a parallel journalistic universe where he'll do commentary on the institutions that the paper has to cover without any editing oversight by The Courant. That makes the paper vulnerable.

Horigan, on the other hand, said there are restraints that we shake hands on here but I don't think I surrender the right to sit in my family room and type up my observations on the Red Sox.

So, what are the ethical rules regarding what a journalist writes about in a blog on his or her own time? Well, the public comments of the news organizations in some of these cases have been guarded. They haven't really pointed specifically to newsroom rules that may have been broken, but the objections that are raised generally center on two related ethical principles – conflict of interest and objectivity.

And, as you know, the code of ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists required journalists to act independently. And as part of this journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know and should avoid conflicts of interest real or perceived and remain free of association and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.

So, for instance, the code of ethics at the Washington Post calls for employees to avoid active involvement in any partisan causes – politics, community affairs, social action, demonstrations. That's a quote that could compromise, or seem to compromise, our ability to report and edit fairly.

Controversies have erupted over journalists taking part in public demonstrations or marches. Linda Greenhouse, the Supreme Court reporter for the New York Times, got in trouble when she joined an abortion's right march in 1989. Reporters have been fired for political activities. A movie reviewer for the Philadelphia Enquirer was reprimanded for signing a petition that protested the deterioration of a local movie theatre. The Enquirer saw that as giving the wrong impression to members of the public by blatantly espousing or expressing viewpoints on public issues.

So, those are just some examples then of journalists getting into trouble for their outside activities. And it's easy then to see how newsroom policies that cover such things might carry over to affect a journalist's personal blog. Especially if the journalist uses the blog to comment about the issues or events about which she reports for the paper. If a journalist's political activities can be restricted in order to comply with newsroom ethics rules then, are his free speech rights similarly forfeited upon employment at a newspaper?

Well, if you look at general employment law, the answer is yes. At common law, most employment is considered at-will employment. That an employer doesn't need to give a reason to demote or fire an employee. Absent showing of unlawful discrimination based on sex or race or other statutorily protected classes, an at-will employee has no legal recourse for her firing. And this may be true even if an employee's actions outside of the working hours may be the basis for the dismissal.

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Courts have also affirmed that for purposes of challenging the principle of employment at-will, journalists have no rights above those of other types of employees, even when their dismissal may be due to their expressive activities – their First Amendment activities.

So that's common law – the basic law. Under contract, of course, they may be greater protections and journalists who are covered by a collective bargaining agreement, for example, may be protected to a greater extent than journalists who are just operating under general principles of employment at will. And the Newspaper Guild, the labor union that represents newspaper employees, has opposed overly broad conflict of interest policies and has had some success in requiring papers to negotiate the terms of some of those codes, at least as regards penalty provisions, if not the substance of the codes.

So, absent union representation or collective bargaining, what recourse does a journalist have for demotion or dismissal based on one's outside activities? Well, one recourse may be a corollary principle to the At-Will Employment Doctrine, which requires that some exceptions be made for public policy reasons. That traditionally the common law doctrine of at-will employment has been limited in cases in which matters of public policy weigh against giving the employer discretion in his employment practices.

So, despite employment at-will, an employee might successfully charge wrongful dismissal if that employee can show that his dismissal was based on conduct that is protected by public policy. What constitutes public policy is sort of vague and may differ from state to state, but certainly scholars have argued that the First Amendment rights of employees should counteract the At-Will Doctrine under the public policy exception.

In some states the legislatures have actually codified what constitutes public policy, a public policy exception, and have protected employees for punishment for their political activities. And such a statute was at stake in the case of *Nelson vs. McClatchy Newspapers*, a Washington state case that pitted a journalist against her newspaper employer based on her outside activities.

Sandra Nelson was the education reporter at the Tacoma News Tribune in Tacoma, Washington and she was transferred to the copy desk when she refused to give up her outside activities, which included picketing, helping to launch a ballot initiative and organizing rallies, mainly in the areas of abortion and gay rights.

She filed suit to be returned to her reporting position and alleged that the newspaper had violated Washington's Fair Campaign Practices Act, which was a statute that prevented employers from discriminating against employees based on their political activities. In particular for in any way supporting or opposing a candidate, ballot proposition, political party or political committee.

The newspaper argued that Nelson had violated, one, it's newsroom ethical rules, in particular the rule against conflicts of interest, which defined such conflicts as all situations in which readers might be led to believe that the news reporting is biased, including situations in which reporters participate in high profile political activity.

The paper also argued that the application of the Fair Campaign Practices Act, in this case, would violate the newspapers First Amendment rights by unconstitutionally interfering with its editorial discretion to control the content of its publication by enforcing its ethical code of conduct.

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On appeal the supreme court of Washington agreed with the newspaper and upheld Nelson's demotion. The court said under the First Amendment and the Washington Constitution defendants have a right to protect the newspapers unbiased content, both its facts and as perceived by its readers, its sources and its advertisers. In order to protect the newspaper's credibility defendants may enforce the political neutrality of reporters.

What was interesting about this case is that the court relied very heavily on another First Amendment case that centered on a newspaper's right to editorial discretion – Miami Herald Publishing Company vs. **Torneo**. And you may be familiar with that case in which the Florida in which the Supreme Court overturned a Florida law that required newspaper publishers to grant a right of reply to people who have been criticized in the paper. It was sort of like a fairness doctrine applied to newspapers and the Supreme Court said that you can't do that for the print publication – that the newspaper has a First Amendment right to control its editorial content and the state can't come in and violate that right.

So Nelson's right to avoid discrimination in the workplace in this case then, based on her political activities, had to yield according to the court to right of the newspaper employer to exercise its editorial discretion.

The Nelson reports reliance on the **Torneo** case turned what might have just been a simple employment case, applying a general statute to a newspaper employer, into a First Amendment based precedent for the press to further deny journalists their individual free speech rights. But, now it's a Constitutional matter that the newspaper employers have the right to control their editorial content by demoting or dismissing who go outside by having personal blogs.

So, how then would the laws surrounding employees outside activities and employment at-will affect an individual journalist's avocational blog? Well, absent collective bargaining or other contractual limitations on the employer, journalists are subject to employment at-will and can therefore be reprimanded, transferred or fired for their outside activities, which would include blogs.

Despite the importance of freedom of political expression and state statutes that have been put into place to protect those freedoms, the Washington Supreme Court, at least, said they may be disregarded when they conflict with the newspapers free press rights to exercise editorial discretion.

Although the Nelson case obviously only applies in Washington state, the court's reasoning may be applied in other states to limit the effects of statutes like the Fair Campaign Practices Act in journalism context. And it's easy to see a court relying on the Nelson case and the Torneo case in a situation such as Steve Olafson's to require his right to use his blog to mock the same local politicians he was obligated to cover as a reporter to say that must yield to the newspaper employer's right to govern its content.

So, although blogging implicates important First Amendment rights of the individual journalist, those rights may not be enough to invoke the public policy exception to the Employment At-Will Doctrine, especially when ethical rules have traditionally circumscribed those free speech rights.

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If the courts have accented to newspapers, barring employees political activities in the context of marches and other types of political or community activities it is likely, I think, that courts will uphold the right of newspaper employers to bar such activity in the form of blogging. Thank you.

MARK TREMAYNE: Start off with a broad, simple question that perhaps each of you could address that is you know is what you find on blogs journalism? And if your answer is "it depends," what does it depend on?

PANEL RESPONSE: Well, I'll start. I think, you know, the problem with personal blogs is that the more its like journalism, the more they're in trouble because just the conflicts of interest aspect and it would be more like freelancing or something that would be a direct business conflict of interest for the newspaper employer the more it's like journalism. The more it's like the personal diary, I think, the less trouble a journalism employee would be in.

PANEL RESPONSE: I think I'd say "sometimes" because again blogging again is a huge, the blogosphere is huge; it's so much bigger than just what we define as journalism. If journalism in our base classes we teach journalism is just communicating through technology, well, on some level yes, but in the sense that we talk about journalism the profession, most of the blogging that we see is not professional journalism but it is journalism in the true sense.

PANEL RESPONSE: The thing you have to wonder if the professional journalists who are blogging, is that journalism? And my original thought was, it depends. But then I was thinking you know that's really not good enough. And I think that we have to distinguish between, or start distinguishing between, what is traditional journalism and what is online journalism. And even though we want to establish ourselves as professional journalists according to traditional standards online, and I think – I fully agree with that. I do think that there are certain forms that we need to be cognizant of, might have other kinds of standards and just be, make it transparent, make people understand that this is a blog and this is who's writing it and this is whether it's edited or not. That was one of the things in my textual analysis most of these I could not figure out A. who the person was doing the blogging, whether they were also a reporter, whether they were and editor, whether they were a columnist and B. were they edited and a lot them didn't say.

PANEL RESPONSE: I think one example to mind is a professional journalist, or at least a freelancer who has a blog and that's the Talking Points Memo where it's a rare example of someone who's actually going out and doing first hand reporting. Going out and obtaining documents, getting their sources in D.C. and filing reports. I mean, it might be more opinionated but I don't see how you could not consider that journalism. I mean, unless you were to say that columnists were not journalists or editorial writers are not journalists. I mean, just the fact that he's opinionated, now he's pretty moderately opinionated, I don't think that would disqualify him, but.

PANEL RESPONSE: Just a final thought. I guess it depends if you consider opinion writing and editorial writing to be a form of journalism. I think we've come to accept editorial pages as a standard part of every newspaper we pick up. The online newspaper allows a different type of editorial medium in the form of a blog, but any kind of comments that are coming back to the editorial writer from the readers probably need to go through some kind of gate keeping function to avoid a potential liable for example.

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MARK TREMAYNE: Ok, questions from the audience.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: This question is really for anybody that has an idea. I'm just curious how, if anyone knows, how big is the blogosphere. I mean, how big is the audience for blogging?

PANEL RESPONSE: It's hard to, cause I've come across that question before, it's hard to determine what an audience is, first of all, for a blog because are you talking about just the people who were reading or are you talking also about the people who were communicating? What is the audience? You know, I'd said in my presentation that there were hundreds of thousands of them, but I mean there are I mean it also depends on what you call a blog and there are so many it's hard to keep track of. It's like saying how many web pages are there out there. Do you consider all the pages within a site to be you know individual pages or do you just call the sites? Those kind of metrics are really hard. I think the definitions are still being formed, but suffice to say there are millions of people engaging in this activity.

MARK TREMAYNE: Yes?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Yeah, I'm curious to hear y'all talk a little bit about the blogging as, by looking at one of the characteristics that I haven't heard mentioned yet, but looking at it as a form of media that's produced by citizens instead of as a form of media that's produced by corporations, because I think it's probably the latest in the continuum of transformations that have happened in other media. I mean, if you look back at newspapers and so called alternative newspapers that emerged as alternatives to the dailies what you saw then was that the alternative to survive became bought by corporations and alternatives emerged for them. The same thing happened with radio. Public radio emerged as an alternative to commercial but then other groups of public radio stations and other philosophies emerged as an alternative to National Public Radio, that community's radios, etc. With television you had commercial television and then later public television and then as an alternative you had public access television. And in each of those three examples newspapers, radios, and TV to produce an alternative to that – for citizens to produce an alternative to that – required quite a bit of capital, quite a bit of investment, whereas the bloggers that you're studying in just a few years have been able to make a very significant...