

Day 1, Panel 1: The transformation of newspaper to multimedia news organization – The merging of online-print newsrooms and the challenges of a continuous news flow

Moderator:

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Panelists:

Jim Brady, Vice President and Executive Editor, WashingtonPost.com

Neil Chase, Continuous News Desk Editor, NYTimes.com

Bill Grueskin, Managing Editor, WallStreetJournal.com

Kinsey Wilson, Vice President and Executive Editor, USA Today

Jim Brady: Sorry about that. Okay, I want to talk a little bit about the structure we have and talk about how we think that structure works, how it's kind of a little bit of the evolution of it, how we're structured today, how we work with the newsroom and obvious strengths and weaknesses. I think, I'm not sure if everybody here know this but we kind of going against the tide right now in newsroom structure in that we actually still maintain separate online and print newsrooms. So the CEO of the Interactive Division, my boss, and Bo Jones is the publisher of the Post, both report to Don Graham. So we're completely separate organizations and have stayed that way despite a lot of changes from a lot of our, a lot of other folks in the industry. In fact, physically our newsroom is not even in the Post newsroom. We're in Arlington, Virginia, about 5 miles or 10-15 minutes from the Post building, which comes with its challenges.

A quick history of cross platform communication at the Post. Until '95 there was none, '96 slightly more than none, 1997 people started asking what the hell is digital ink, 1999 they asked, "You lost how much money last year?"

[audience laughter]

In 2000, after the bust, see the web was just a fad after all. And then things started to build back up for again and for us I think a couple of things that made a big difference was 9/11 was a big moment for everybody but in the little mini-world, our mini-world, everyone at the newspaper saw quickly how we could cover that story in a way at real time. You know, obviously some of that started 8:45 in the morning and not a great time of day for newspapers if you're trying to cover something live. And that day started to get people to realize, especially 'cause of the impact that event had on D.C. as well, that we need to have some ability to produce news on a more, on a 24/7 basis. And that started the conversation that ended up in early 2003 with us forming the continuous news desk and this is a newspaper, this was a

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newspaper department of about five or six people, some editors and some reporters, and their job was to generate web content all day long. That was if a, you know, something happened in the Middle East, it was trying to get the Middle East correspondent on the phone to produce something for the website. If we couldn't get that particular reporter to produce something for the website, we had rewrite folks back in Washington to crank something out and get it up on the website.

So we started that in 2003. That staff built up to about 10 or 11 by the time early this year. And it was a huge success for us in that we were getting 20, 25 files a day from reporters in metro, foreign, national, every, anywhere we needed files from. But over time we started to realize that while it was great we had this great central group that got us content all day long, there were still other, most of the departments at the paper were still focused very much on that department kind of making everything happen and other departments were not as web savvy or as focused on the web as we wanted them to be and as the newspaper wanted them to be. So it was just about a month ago we partially disbanded the continuous news desk, which we left just a couple of people on the continuous news desk to cover weekend and overnights. You have to have some central location for covering off hours and holidays and things of that sort but during basic news day, from about 7:00 AM to about 8:00 PM in our world, right now introducing web editors in each department so we have a web editor in metro, a web editor in national, a web editor in business and their job is, they now work for those sections, not for a centralized department at the Post but they work for business, for foreign, for national and their job again, get content all day long.

We've already seen this new model working and now we're getting a lot more from metro than we were getting before because previously the CND was trying to juggle stuff from five or six different departments and just didn't have the, it wasn't being as proactive to ask for things as opposed to just dealing with things that were coming in. So this model has been introduced a month ago. We're very happy with it thus far. And so that's kind of the history.

So, you know, one of the questions that comes up all the time when you talk about structure and one of the questions somebody will inevitably ask after we've all talked is what's the right structure? And my opinion is there is no answer to the right structure. Every organization has to make its own call on how they ought to be structured. There's a lot of factors that go into a decision about a structure. And in our case, the advantages we've seen in being separate is that the website has clearly developed its own DNA and it's freer to try new things. If there's something I want to try that I know is going to make people, maybe creep some folks out in the newsroom, I'm not going to just go throw it up there and wait for the response but I have the freedom to launch that if I need to and I can work to evangelize something and eventually get people on board because at the end of the day, it is our decision if we want to try some of these new web, kind of webbier things and it's also allowed us just to grow up with this very different culture. And I'll talk more about that later.

And I think the other advantages are when we're separate the way we are, there are people who have expertise in each medium trying to solve the huge challenges in their specific medium. In our case it's how do we continue to build web traffic, web audience? How do we get people to come more often, hit more pages, stay longer? How do we build this into a real business that can sustain newsgathering? Well those responsibilities lie with people who have long careers working in web journalism. Meanwhile, the newspaper, which is dealing with huge challenges in

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addressing circulation and revenue issues, those challenges are being dealt with in a management structure that's been in print journalism for a long time and is better suited to handle those challenges than the website would be obviously.

So that's, well a lot of the reason Don has kept the newsroom, Don Graham has kept the newsroom separate is because he feels like we each are facing huge challenges in our own respective media and they'd rather have people with long experience in each of those type, media types addressing their specific problems.

Well what are the disadvantages? Obviously communication between newsrooms is complicated when you're not in the same building. You pick, if I need to pick up the phone and call Lynne Downey, I have to hope he's in his office. If he's not then I have to wait for him to get back or I have to try to find somebody over there who can find Lynne and it turns into like a little bit of where's Waldo type game. So obviously being able to walk up a floor or across a newsroom to find someone, your counterpart at the newspaper would be a lot easier. Some of us who drive like native New Yorkers have figured out to get back and forth in about 8 minutes but it's not a short drive and it's not an easy, not easy to get back and forth.

And obviously this independence which I just lauded a couple of minutes ago sometimes lead to a lot of tension. Comments on articles being one that cropped up last week. A lot of folks in the print newsroom are not too happy with the fact that we do comments on articles that we allow readers to come in and just post whatever they want to post on articles with some obvious limitations in terms of filtering but they don't like that. They wish that we wouldn't do that and wouldn't give the readers a voice and so sometimes this tension pops up where they're asking us to stop doing something and we're telling them we're not going to stop doing something. Obviously being under 1 management structure, somebody would be able to say we're either doing it or we're not. So that sometimes is a problem.

And I think print newsroom staffers because we're separate sometimes feel like they don't have a dog in the hunt, you know that this is not part of their future that this web thing is going on kind of in a vacuum over there and we're over here trying to figure out the print thing and you guys are off doing your own thing and even though we feel like we're all passengers on this same vessel, they don't always feel that way. So those are some of the disadvantages.

But we've had a lot of successes in this model and the successes fall into a whole bunch of different categories. I mean there's content. We've worked with the Post for a year on some of their major projects, including being a black man in Citizen K, which I have screen shots of later but we're also coordination. We're now coordinating launches on the website with launches in the newspaper. Now this can happen obviously just as easily in a merged newsroom so this is not necessarily, these successes are not specific to our structure.

But training is one where we've had a lot of success. We have about 85 print reporters now trained to shoot video. And I think to adjust the question raised before, it's not that they have to shoot video at everything. They shoot video when they think it's something useful to add to a particular story and so we now have, we get about 8 to 10 reporter videos a week which we then do the editing on our side, put up and we're doing a lot more of that training. We've done some training in Flash for the graphics staff at the newspaper.

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Awards, we just had Preston [inaudible] who is a photographer at the newspaper just won 2 awards for his video work. So he's the first person who ever, the first person working at the Post ever who had won awards now for work in photography and for video. So we're now starting to see a lot more of that, a lot more of that cross pollination.

Culture, I mean the creative tension that does exist from this sometimes leads to innovation. Sometimes it leads to us pushing the newspaper because we really believe in something and the paper pushing back because they're not sure and then you kind of battle out it for a while and you end up, it ends up leading to something that is pretty innovative and impressive. So I don't, creative tension is often referred to as a negative thing and I don't think it is always a negative thing.

So, you know, this is an example of a project where despite the fact we're separate newsrooms, we worked with the newspaper for a year on this being a black man project and from the first project meeting we're in the, at the table figuring out ways to help tell this story that Post did a year long look at being a black man, largely focused on black men in Washington D.C. And they had an idea for all sorts of print stories but we had all sorts of ideas for video, how to bring the readers into this, how to, you know, do databases off of variety of different data, databases we had.

And so but the difference is we were in the first meeting and, you know, four or five years ago we used to joke that the definition of collaboration in our newsroom was that we were given more than 24 hours head's up that a huge project was coming.

[audience laughter]

Now we're actually in the room for the first meeting and we're share, we're really sharing our expertise. The paper is sharing its expertise but in this project the difference was, and everybody noticed it in the first meeting, the print staff had all these ideas of what could we do with video or databases. Our staff had all these ideas for stories that the paper ought to write as part of the series. Everybody started sort of ignored the fact that there was this organizational wall between and we all start talking about what is the best journalism that we can create for this package, regardless of what medium it lives in. so that was a breakthrough for us and now we're seeing that in a lot of other areas.

This is something we're doing right now which is called Citizen K Street, which is maybe a long series of history of sort of Jerry Cassidy who invented lobbying and not invented it but is sort of one of the leading driers in lobbying as we know it today. And this is a case in which we, the first part of the story was a huge piece that ran in the newspaper, long piece kind of a Godfather wedding like set up piece that introduced all the characters that were in this guys' life. The next 20 parts or 24 parts, I guess, are on the web only. And the newspaper is running a huge key every day to it. The last part is also going to be in the newspaper. So it's kind of a way to move people to the web to get most of the story. If you read only the first and last parts it held together just fine but if you wanted a lot of the background that set up that last piece, you can get it on the web and it's devoted, it has a very, not a huge but pretty solid devoted audience coming to it every day. But these are now the papers. This was the paper's idea. "Hey, we'd love to do this big series where part of it is on the site, part of it is it on the paper, part of it is on the web."

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So we're starting to see a lot more of these ideas so you know, again, a lot of these things I'm talking about here are not structure specific but in talking a little bit about our successes wanted to mentioned them. And that's all I have to try to keep to my 10 minute limit.

[audience applause]

Lorraine Branham: Thank you. And Neil is going to come up now and chat a bit about the New York Times and how [inaudible]. I think this is an important question in journalism. This whole idea of [inaudible] of how we change [inaudible] and can you really change [inaudible] online as an acceptable [inaudible] exist side by side. New York Times [inaudible] they need to be together if it's really going to work. So [inaudible].

Neil Chase: Well, thanks.

Lorraine Branham: ... about the advantages of doing it the New York Times way.

Neil Chase: I thought I was supposed to talk about the disadvantage. I'll show you both. The funny thing is you look at this panel and it's the paper that is merged and converged, the paper that is not, the paper that is completely converged and the guy who left because he couldn't handle it.

[audience laughing]

Who is in another completely separate operation. The fact is we're all far more alike than different. Everything Jim described, you have the exact same situation at the New York Times. Yes, there's an organization chart that says the website reports to the executive editor. Physically they are still mostly separate. Some of the web people are in the newsroom. And you, there's no real, there's no black and white, even though we're in a black and white business. It's all about little subtle differences and the differences between us are very small and the similarities are huge.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about how we're doing things at the Times, just to give you a quick sense of it. You're going to find, I think, that it's not all that different. I was a journalism professor at Northwestern for five years and professors have the wonderful sadistic tendency to throw out pop quizzes so here we go.

[audience laughter]

Everybody at the New York Times is creating web content. Every story that goes in the paper is on the web site but also all the desks, everybody in the newsroom is doing stuff for the web. Given that, half of them don't necessarily even know they're doing stuff for the web but half of them do. And it's not about web producers versus reporters. It's not an age thing. The number of people who you might look at a person and go, "Wow, you're pretty old. You probably don't do anything for the web." Who actually are the first ones who want to do some audio and video and get graphics, all that kind of stuff are amazing.

We are doing stuff with readers. Jim talked about training his graphics department to use Flash and do interactive graphics. The graphics department at the Times decided last year, "You know what? What the heck, we can do this. We don't need a

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graphics department at the website," so they sort of stomped in and took it over. And started doing interactive versions of all the graphics that they wanted to put up on the website, started doing all the graphics in color at a mostly black and white newspaper because you could put the color version on the web and it's a lot easier to start with color and convert to black and white.

So the answer is all the above, except E.

[audience laughter]

No idea why it's coming out one word at a time. Who cares? The editors at the New York Times, obviously this is a heavily edited newspaper most of the time are now doing a lot of stuff for the website. And again some of them are actively doing it every day. Some of them are helping out once in a while. On some desks we tweaked the publishing system, CCI the newsroom publishing system, to allow you to write headlines that go on the website separate from headlines going into the newspaper because those wonderful creative, one column, they call them an A head, the lead headline in the New York Times that's got about 4 characters on a line and it's 3 decks. The art of writing those is amazing. The value of taking one of those and stretching that across the top of a web page is kind of stupid. And we now give the copy editors the chance to do this. Some do, some don't. They're picking it up.

We're trying to build tools so the slide shows and things can be edited by the copy editors in the newsrooms who are writing the captions on those pictures anyway. Instead of by somebody else at the website hours and hours later. They're doing their own audio. They are doing a lot of the reader comment moderation. We are still moderating all the comments on our website, which is why we have so many fewer comments than a lot of other websites. There's no way we're going to be able to keep that model as we try to grow it.

And for now they're at least not selling ads and they probably won't be.

The convergence time line, you can pretty much take Jim's and clone a lot of it to match the same thing. A lot happened in 2001, obviously, to promote the value of the website and the news gathering operation. One of the first times a lot of the journalists at the website were out gathering news as opposed to catching everything that the newsroom reporters were bringing in.

May, 2005, Bill Keller sent a note first to the publisher saying he'd like to take over the newsroom and then to the newsroom saying it had been done, that he was now going to run the web newsroom as well as the print newsroom and everything reports to the executive editor. That was convergence. That was the day everything merged. The #4 editor in the newsroom was charged with overseeing everything web. The newsroom is still separate. The people still, some of them work in the newsroom, some of them don't. The day you announce the change in the org chart is important but it's not the day everything changes. There was Katrina. First of last month I moved over to the business section for an experiment for a couple of months where we said let's take the continuous news operation, bust it up much like Jim is doing, move it into the business section, let them do their own continuous news, it's worked extremely well.

Web producers are all over the place. There are web producers in the Times newsroom sitting right next to the editors. When the phone rings on the metro desk

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and somebody says, "There's a fire at X. There's X people dead," you know, let's get a photographer, let's get this reporter out there, let's do this. You get on the phone to this place, you go to this hospital. The web producer is sitting right there, part of that conversation, hearing it, being involved in the whole discussion. That's tremendously valuable, whether you're integrated on the org chart or not. Having those people physically there makes all the difference in the world, not only so they can hear what's going on but so that the web, so the print reporters, the original newsroom knows these are human beings who are journalists who are just excited about the story as they are. And that's one of the ways you get in that conversation earlier.

There are still web producers 7 blocks away in the old digital building. Most of the web producers still work there. There is a new building coming in a couple of months. There are some people in other parts of the newsroom. There are web producers in Paris and Hong Kong. We have the good fortune to have amicably borrowed the International Herald Tribune from the Washington Post. We use the producers in Paris and Hong Kong who are awake in the daylight in the International Herald Tribune newsroom to run the New York Times website some nights overnight and we do the same thing for the Herald Tribune website. And there are a few people editing from home in their pajamas but usually just when something goes wrong.

This whole convergence concept, this ongoing steamroller that has started several years ago and will probably keep running forever has done a lot of things for us. We do respond faster to breaking news stories in more places. We do a better job at enterprise journalism because like Jim said we're in the room when it starts. More and more often the reporters, the editors who run the sections; the business editor, the foreign editor, the national editor, they are now responsible for what's on the web site. Some of them take responsibility, some don't but it is their responsibility to oversee all that stuff.

How did it happen? It's not really how, it's who. This is, Jim had a number. We have X number of reporters in the newsroom now trained to do video and if you're sort of following the metrics that means we have X number not trained and the more we can train the better off we are. It's a one person at a time thing. The big memo from the executive editor, from the publisher, whoever it is, wonderful, it's a great point in history. Two hundred years from now somebody writes a textbook, they'll say on May something, 2005, the New York Times merged its newsrooms. Well that's not when the newsrooms merged. That's when the memo came out saying we're merging.

The merger is happening one person at a time and it's people who you may or may not expect. It is gray haired, grizzled journalists. This is the print design director for the New York Times, the person in charge of among other things how the front page looks every day who heard about a project we were doing with Microsoft to create a thing called Times Reader and said, "Hey, now I can take the website and have complete control over the fonts and the layout and the design of the page and the size of the pictures and whole presentation. This is what I know how to do. I'm the newspaper design director." He jumped into the Microsoft project, he went out to Seattle and met with these people, took the lead on this thing and we created this new thing called Times Reader that looks a lot like the New York Times. It got to the point where in the news meetings, in the design meetings about this thing you'd hear him saying old newspaper things like, "You can't break the grid of the layout."

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And our news, our website now is based on a grid, that's the front page and that's the inside pages, that everybody in the newsroom, including all the print people who do design understands because it's the same old model.

This is a Google map for driving from the New York Times to the website, not that anybody drives in New York but if you were driving, that's how you'd go. There was 1 producer not the day the memo was announced but years earlier who went and started spending a lot of time in the newsroom and she got to know everybody on the national desk, where she was the person responsible for working with them. She inserted herself in the process, she became a part of the newsroom, she had a desk there before the memo went out saying, "Let's try to find desks for web producers." She is the one who started this process and it's all about her making that walk many times a day.

This is the new building. It's a gigantic thing. We're going to own half of it. This little thing sticking out back here is the flat part, wide part of the building where the newsroom is going to be. It's still going to be in a big, flat, wide area, which is nice. The web newsroom, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, web newsroom is on the ninth floor. A lot of the web producers will have seats in the newsroom but even with the convergence in the new building, there's still some separation.

Put a team together like this, a national copy editor, a magazine editor, a foreign affairs columnist, a video producer and a tech writer, what do you get? What else, a soccer blog. I'm sorry, a football blog. It was the World Cup. The New York Times, let's just say the home team we'd be covering was not expected to go very far in the World Cup. How do you cover the World Cup if you're the New York Times? Well you put this team together of people from all over the newsroom who aren't even, the sports editor loved it because it was nobody off his budget. Every other desk had to lend people to this thing. We did a blog. One of the bloggers went to bars around New York in ethnic neighborhoods when that team was playing, when Portugal was in the World Cup they were in the Portuguese neighborhood in Newark in a bar with cell phone cameras recording the audience watching this thing. This was how the World Cup worked in New York. This thing was a huge success. And it all happened because people around the newsroom who don't have soccer on their job description popped up and said, "We'd like to do this."

Jeff has a whole slide devoted to one line. It said, "Do what you do best." But, you know, somebody was asking about local newspapers. Every local newspaper has something they do best that nobody else does and everybody around the world is going to go there for that information. One of the things the Times does better than any other newspaper, I'm told, is coverage of the Supreme Court because we have one reporter who has been there forever. Her nickname is Justice Greenhouse. She knows the court inside out. She's one of these people the continuous news desk relies on heavily when something breaks to figure out what the hell it means and whether it's a lead story or a two graph brief.

When Justice Rehnquist died we did an advanced obituary. The paper does obituaries pretty well and she sat down in front of a camera for what became 20 minutes of video and who the hell makes a 20 minute video, right? 2 ½ minutes is supposed to be the most anybody will listen to. They did a 20 minute package with a ton of stuff from the archives. Three photo producers worked on this for a couple of weeks, off and on. And she created this thing which is, it's a college level class.

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This is the history of the U.S. from 1950 to 2000, from civil rights through the 2000 election.

[videotape audible in background]

You can hear it a little bit. And nobody wants to sit here and listen to her talk for 20 minutes just sitting there. It goes through pictures, it goes through graphics, we pulled out New York Times headlines. This was one story where we had reporter expertise, we had quality stuff from the archives, we had a story to tell and this thing can live forever and be very useful. It would not make a lot of sense in something where we don't have the beat reporter, don't do the coverage, don't have the background. When you've got it, you've got to use it. Like I said, it's 20 minutes so.

[audience comment inaudible]

Neil Chase: I don't. That's a good question. Although Jim and I were talking yesterday. There's this sense that people don't want to read things on the web. You've got to keep everything to one paragraph. At Market Watch, where I worked until I came to the Times, we did this shift where you have pages broken, long stories broken into 2, 3, 4 pages. We'd always heard in the news business it was, what? Fifteen percent of the people would make the jump from the front page into the inside page. We're getting thirty, forty percent conversion rates. People will jump and read longer stuff on the web than they will in the paper sometimes.

A reporter was sitting at a table with an editor, talking about a story they were about to do and said, and the editor called me over and said, "Hey, should we do audio with this?" I was like, "Oh, what's the story?" Well there's a widow, there's an insurance company, there's a devastated daughter, there's a rip off, there's a hell of a story. We put this little thing in his hands, it's a \$100 Olympus recorder, three buttons, any reporter can operate it. It doesn't even have cables. It plugs right into your computer. And the result was a slide show where as he's telling the story, you hear this woman telling her story. He recorded the part that matters, the part where the person is telling the story that is compelling. And if we skip ahead here through the slide show, which only two minutes and 30 seconds.

[videotape audible in background]

Talking about how her mother couldn't get the long-term care she needed, even though she paid for the insurance.

[videotape audible in background]

There are editors who would cut out the two seconds of dead air there but she was crying. It's hard to write that. There are some good writers who can do that but that's the part of the story you need to tell. Here's a reporter who had never done anything before with audio, we showed him how to use the recorder, we gave him an audio training program, which is stick it in the sources face, not yours, and try to use a microphone.

[audience laughter]

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Get this great audio where you hear the question and there's no answer on it. And he comes back, he's on several flights to get back from a remote part of Montana and says, "You know, I found this audio editing software so I tried it. And so instead of giving you two hours of audio, here's like a minute and a half I think is pretty good." Reporter doing his own editing, without any training or anything and it came out just fine.

Real quickly, the trade offs. Guy who was writing a restaurant review and a second story every week for the paper, his editors agreed he'll drop the second story, work on a blog instead. The reporters who see their competitors scooping them constantly or Albany reporter getting beat by bloggers constantly decided to do his own blog. Reporter covering the Newark, New Jersey mayoral election, very entertaining but was never was going to make the front page of the paper more than once or twice. Figured out if he did it in a blog he could get it out there day after day after day on the home page and it worked real well. Reporter covering Wall Street who wanted to establish his beat and faced with some competition from some local paper downtown, decided to build a business plan for a blog and he said, "If he can be 2 people, we can get this much advertising," which is far out of the realm of what most reporters want to think about. It worked.

Lots of people do really little things. you know, this is the low hanging fruit. Right down the URLs you hit while you're reporting and give them to the web producers and we built the tools so you can put them in the story yourself 'cause the readers are going to want to see those URLs. Take the documents you collect in the field and get them back to us. There's a 30,000 circulation paper in Florida where every reporter can take a document, drop it on the Xerox machine. It will scan it, make it .pdf and move it up the website. No fancy anything to do. Data, photo, graphics, just get it and bring it back.

We show people these graphics. Here's the overlap between print and web at the New York Times. Only a small overlap. It's okay to do something on the web that's different or earlier or later.

And then there's the leadership role of all the top editors and department heads who really frame the entire sort of completion to the move to convergence. And that's where my story ends for now. As they do that, we'll be able to tell you the rest of the story.

[audience applause]

[audience comments inaudible]

Lorraine Branham: [inaudible] because that's an interesting part of the next story because in at least two cases we created these online newsroom operations where the print editor remained in charge. USA Today decided to take a different tack. And Bill going to go or Kinsey?

Bill Grueskin: I just put my thing up but I don't care.

Lorraine Branham: And I was about to introduce Kinsey. I'm sorry because...

Bill Grueskin: How about if I do Kinsey's and then he can do mine? And we'll see if anybody tells the difference.

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Lorraine Branham: Okay, well we're going to do Wall Street Journal instead and we won't yet talk about putting the online person in charge of the news operation.

Kinsey Wilson: Bill will be happy to talk about that.

Bill Grueskin: I'll say. I'll be happy to talk about anything. Alright, well thanks. It's great to be here. I was here in 2004, was it? Rosental? And I have the much coveted I think 3:45 PM slot where everybody was really dragging hard and I started off my spiel by saying, "I have some bad news for everybody." I actually got their attention. I said, "I don't have a PowerPoint for you." And it's the first time I ever got a standing ovation before my speech started. Unfortunately I was going to do that this time but Lorraine is tough and she really wanted a PowerPoint and I've learned not to cross her. So I do have one, as you can see. It's 1 slide. No, it actually has a few more slides.

[audience laughter]

I just wanted to talk to you for just a few minutes so you, I mean if you want to, you can stare at this all you want but I just want to talk to you a little bit about our evolution because it's a very different one and it fits in certain stances that are unique to the Journal.

I came to WSJ.com about six years ago, in around June of 2001. And at that time the online print staff were all in the same building. We sat right next to each other but they were truly what I call separate and unequal. The online staff reported up to the electronic publishing head. There was almost no communication between the two. Print reporters almost never filed directly on line. They were basically used to adhering to deadlines that had been set sometime in the early years of the Calvin Coolidge administration. And, you know, there was just basically no communication. So when I came in, they changed the structure a little bit, had me do a dual report both to the general manager of online but also to Paul Steiger, the managing editor of the Wall Street Journal print edition.

And, you know, I'm kind of getting used to my job and I'm sitting there 1 morning in September, 2001, when pretty Tuesday morning and right across the street two planes crash into the World Trade Center. My staff and I fled the building, as did my wife and daughter but that's a whole other story. We navigated through the dust and the smoke and we had to evacuate to Dow Jones back office, which is way down in South Brunswick, New Jersey. Sorry, another New Jersey slam, Jeff, but it's about an hour and a half on a good day. It's really more like two hours. And we had no way of knowing this at the time. I mean who knew what was going to happen after September 11th but we would actually spend the next year down in South Brunswick, New Jersey, even though most of my staff lived in Manhattan or Brooklyn or Queens.

And as you can imagine, many respects this was a really terrible year for us because my staff had been through so much that day. Many of them had real family problems after the attacks. The commute was excruciating for the day staff. Literally there were these vans, these kind of bumpy vans would pick people up all over Brooklyn and drive them over the Goethals Bridge and down the Jersey turnpike and dump them off. And the night staff had to stay in some cheesy one star hotel across the street from Dow Jones back office. There was a lot of bad stuff going on. People drank a lot. They were sleeping with people I didn't want to know about.

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[audience laughter]

But, you know, journalists do that. But, you know, in a way, it was actually a very good thing for us because what happened was when we got relocated down to South Brunswick for this year, the print newsroom found office space somewhere in mid-Manhattan, actually in Soho, because they felt and with good reason that the print journalists had to be in New York City to do their jobs. They just couldn't be commuting 2 hours per day. And so for the first time we were literally, physically located in a very different place. But we were also emotionally located in a very different place, as well. And in the previous years the online print staffs had worked in the same building but we communicated sporadically and at times with great tension. In our post-9/11 year we were out of sight and out of mind from each other, which was a liberating thing for some online staffers, especially the younger ones who had first gone through the popping of the internet bubble and then through the 9/11.

A lot of the online staffers no longer felt as intimidated as they used to be by their print colleagues. They were able to focus much more on experimentation online. And they didn't worry so much about pleasing people on the print journal, many of whom never even read the website. They began to experiment more, they felt freer to take risks. They were less concerned with somewhere down the hall a veteran journalist was frowning in disgust at something that had shown up on WJS.com's homepage. And obviously 9/11 experience had another effect; our staff realized that even the 20 year olds realized that life is short, you should intrinsically enjoy your work, not just do it for a job, that there are a lot worse things that can happen in your life living in New York City than writing some bad html code.

So we were down there for about year and then we moved back to Manhattan but because of some real estate issues, we didn't move to where the print journal had relocated to our old office across from Ground Zero. We moved to this kind of vacant office space in Soho, real cool, trendy neighborhood. People would run into Ben Affleck and Claire Danes during their lunch break and this in a way was a really great thing, too, because at this point we were 2 subway stops from the print newsroom. Gingerly at first but over time much more commonly printing online staffers started going back and forth to each other's newsrooms yet we kind of each had our own little culture. And people started actually planning out joint projects, interviewing reporters and editors who wanted to change jobs from one staff to the next and even attend those dreaded time wasters, the daily news meetings.

And it was a different group of online staffers in 2002 than it was in 2001. They were more self-confident. They had a better sense of what they wanted to be. And then you fast-forward to 2004 when our lease in Soho was expiring. We had to make a decision, are we going to move back to the building where the print journal was on West Street downtown or would we find some other office space? And a lot of people on my staff wanted to stay separate and some of it was just because of the trauma. They didn't want to be across the street from Ground Zero and if any of you have been downtown in the last couple of years you know it doesn't look a lot better now than it did 4 years ago. There were some health issues with the building we were moving into and that kind of thing. But I pushed hard to move us back to World Financial Center and we did. And we had been separated for 3 years and for all of our differences and our medium and the way we defined our daily routines, even in our pay scales, we do share a brand and we do share a mission with each

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other. I felt that we had squeezed most of the benefits we were going to squeeze out of having separate newsrooms. And it was time for us all to be under the same roof.

Now that didn't change some fundamental issues. We still have our own budget. We have our own personnel. We hire whom we want to, sometimes people from the print journal, sometimes the other way around. And we are very focused on making sure that we're on top of the changing dynamics of the business. And I suspect this is going to, this is how it's going to continue in the next few years, that we won't be quite where the New York Times is, where the newsroom kind of get atomized and put in different places, and we don't be quite where the Washington Post is. We're in a different area code and a different state. But we'll be 1 that works closely with the print staff yet still has its own identity.

And it's hard to overestimate the level of change we've seen in print/online cooperation since we moved under the same roof. Reporters and editors from both staffs are in constant communication. It's not artificial add-ons. It's more of an ongoing evolution of figuring out how print journalism can flow online and how online journalism can flow back into print. And I'm actually, that's where my PowerPoint starts in just a minute because that's something I actually want to talk about.

But before I do, let me just say I think there's tremendous value in having a cohesive group of editors, artists, and writers who wake up every morning thinking, "I work online. I'm defined by that. And I have to be successful in the online medium, with the online readers and with the online business model," which is a really big issue for all of us. And each of those things are fundamentally different from what people in print world face.

So there you go, WJS.com made an evolution over the past 6 years, a journey from passive coexistence with print before 9/11 to complete physical separation to gradual reintegration to close and vibrant cooperation all the while retaining separate staffs and budget. I don't recommend this path for everyone. I especially don't recommend that you wait for terrorist attack to make you rethink how your newsrooms work but it seems to have worked pretty well for us.

Now part of the reason I think it's working goes back to something that I mentioned a minute ago, how to make more of a feedback loop between the online and the print newsrooms. To paraphrase John Kennedy, maybe it's time for us to ask not what print can do online but what online can do for print. And I want to explain that a little bit more. Each of us on our panel owes a great deal to the brands that identify our sites and to the print journalists who made our news organizations what they are today. No matter how good our sites are, no matter how fast we're growing, we wouldn't be where we are today if it wasn't for the historic success of the reporters and the editors in the print publications who preceded us and the ones who are working with us now.

Second, even while our success may be amazing in terms of growth terms, after all who can argue with 20, 30% growth compounded annually? As we all know, it's growing from a fairly small base. Very few newspaper websites attain 5% of the revenue of their print cousins, some of them get up to 10%. And if you compound it out, it's still looking at 10 or 12 years before online revenue approaches what print revenue is now. And now, again, according to Jeff's model, the problem is that print is too, print has too many built in costs so we could argue that point. But

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nevertheless, as we've seen from Knight Ridder, as we see from the drama going on in the Tribune Company, public media companies, and we all work for one, don't have 10 years to figure this out.

So I'm not here to prescribe a fix up solution for newspapers or websites and even with about 820,000 paying subscribers, WSJ.com doesn't have the magic wand here. I do think for both economic and journalistic reasons, online staffs had to start thinking about how to make their print counterparts more successful and how to enable them to do their job in a way better attuned to the readers of tomorrow. And part of it gets back to the feedback loop that I was talking about.

Historically, of course all print content goes online. And then also online you get online content that goes online. But you very rarely see online content and even more importantly the online culture going back into print. And this is where my PowerPoint begins. So you can all either wake up or go to sleep and kind of see how it goes. But basically as many of you know, the Wall Street Journal did a big redesign of the print edition the first week of 2007 and part of what we tried to do is to rethink how the print and online newsrooms work together but more importantly how print and online readers approach our product. And we came out to adopt the philosophy that we're completely agnostic about whether people read our content print or online, although we want you to do at least one. We actually want people to be reading both.

So we started with a few things and, again, most of our readers are going to show things we're doing online. I'm actually going to show things we're doing in print. It pays to be different. So we started with a few things. These really easy, really almost don't even want to mention them but just to kind of show kind of where we started. And we'll talk about a couple of months ago. So every day we have what's most popular and most emailed stories are on the website. As most of you know, there's a huge difference between most popular and most emailed. I don't want to get into that. Every day readers from our online forums appear on the letters to the editor page of Wall Street Journal.

Some time ago we started an online economic forecasting survey. Now I don't know how much this appeals to a lot of you but economics is kind of the lifeblood of our readership. It's also truth is it's kind of the lifeblood of our growth among young people because economics I think is the most popular major in colleges or one of the most. So we do a monthly economic survey where we go out online and we survey about 100 economists, collate all their feelings about a whole bunch of questions, everything from Greenspan vs. Bernanke to crude oil and then that turns into a story in the Wall Street Journal, a very prominent story, often the best read story. And then that actually creates feedback loop back to online.

We've gotten the religion on blogs. We've had some very good ones lately. This was actually our first blog, Law Blog, run by a guy named Peter Lapman and frankly Paul Steiger, among others, said, "Something in blogs is lot better than what runs on the inside pages of the Wall Street Journal some days. Why don't we phase the best of the blogs inside." So, in fact, what you see is every week the Law Blog has space in the marketplace inside the Wall Street Journal where we take some of the items and put them into print. And obviously part of it's a marketing gimmick but part of it is we know we can tell from our traffic that as popular as Law Blog is, it doesn't have the same or even close to the same circulation as the print journal. So this is a way of kind of feeding Wall Street Journal online back into the Wall Street print edition.

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We have a working family blog and it's, most people know you have the most popular blog in the world that gets a million paid views. You have a work and family blog, it gets 100 paid views. Every person comments on the working family blog. So it's called the Juggle and in this case we actually run items from the Juggle in the print journal and we also run comments from the readers in the print journal, including even comments like, "Man, I don't want to be a downer but every time I read your blog it makes me glad that my wife wanted to stay home." So, you know, that's alright. But that was what he said.

And then we tried something else and, you know, this is something that Jeff did with his speech where some of our columnists, Jed Sandburg who writes Cubicle Culture, kind of a look at what life is like in the offices, will go online and say, "I'm going to write about this next week. What do you guys think about it? Give me some anecdotes." So he had a great column. We changed the introduction after the column ran but he had a great idea basically when spouses make you do something stupid at the office, you know, like when you're coming home every day and telling your spouse, "My boss is such a jerk." And your spouse says, "Go tell your boss what a jerk he is," and you go do it.

[audience laughter]

So, so we went online about a week before the column ran, we said, "Readers, do you guys have some great anecdotes? Do you have some thoughts about this?" And in fact he started getting a whole bunch of comments from people. He wrote the column in the paper based partly on what he got online and partly what he got from his own reporting and then the forum was recreated online that people could no read not only the comments that went into the story but people talking about the column after the column had run.

And, you know, this is what I talked about a feedback loop. Basically the online DNA source infusing the print journal, not just the print and in actual visible ways that people can see.

So what are the benefits of this? I think there's four. One, you provide genuinely good content for the paper from online, for the bean counters who are always wondering, "What has online done for the print journal lately?" it's kind of a nice bone to throw them. Two, it's much better promotion for WSJ.com than all those little teasers that are sprinkled in the paper because people actually see, wow, there's some real content here, not just something that might be good. Three, as you see with Jed Sandburg's column, it provides a feedback loop with readers. You started the online, you run it in print and then it gets a whole new life online. And fourth and this is kind of the key thing. I think it starts to change the dynamic of our print colleagues. Breaking stories get built online, blog posts become stories, it raises the metabolism of the print newsroom. And we've seen this several times in the last two weeks. When the market crashed back in late February, our deals bloggers did a couple of quick blog posts about what the effect of the market collapse was going to have on the junk bond market. As he wrote the blog posts, the story started coalescing in his mind. The story ran in the paper, that went back onto the blog and suddenly it kind of had a whole new life.

So this is where we are at WSJ.com. As I always say, what works for us may or may not work for anyone else. But it seems to be working for us. That's it.

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[audience applause]

Lorraine Branham: [inaudible] in the print newsroom and put it all together.

Kinsey Wilson: Partially in charge. Not totally in charge.

Lorraine Branham: That's right, partially in charge. And that may make the difference. And maybe we'll hear about that.

Kinsey Wilson: Just a little bit of background in terms of how things work organizationally and how we got the point where we are now. USA Today operates with a fair degree of independence and autonomy from the rest of Gannett. So when you heard Jeff referring to Gannett's information center initiative, it's something we're certainly aware of, it's something we talk to them actively about, we're looking at, we share information but we don't operate under that mandate. We're really charting our own course.

We also sort of our own 9/11 story, we were in a tower in Roslyn in 2001 with a two and a half mile, three mile clear line of site so the Pentagon, saw the plane go into the Pentagon. Month later moved out to Tyson's Corner. And it was an important moment, I think partly because it changed the whole physical arrangement of the newsroom. We were still on separate floors. The layout of the building was very different and the collaboration that was spurred by some of the things that Jim and others were talking about after that period really intensified. And between 2001 and when we merged at the end of 2005, I would describe the relationship between print and online as highly collaborative but still somewhat arms' length.

It was very important that we remain independent through that period because we were losing amounts of money that I won't describe here. There was to some extent an attitude on the print side that "well that fad is over and we can move on and not think about this". And it required, I think had we been merged prematurely a lot of what we were able to do in that period simply wouldn't have happened.

So why did we merge? Ultimately it goes to some of the issues that Jeff was describing, which is at the end of the day what's becoming abundantly clear with what Knight Ridder has gone through and what the Tribune has gone through, is that business model is changing at a really fundamental way. This is not just the incremental addition of another medium but needs a little bit of time to grow and will ultimately operate in the same way that those that preceded it. There is probably going to be less money available for journalism at the end of the day than there has been historically and so the question becomes, there's really an increasingly urgent need to sort of look at the organization from the ground up and say, "How would I rebuild this today if I were starting over?" Not, "How do I tinker with the different pieces on both sides?" And at a certain point in time it really only becomes possible to do that as a combined organization. So that's what we've been trying to go through in the last 15 months or so.

It also allows us to be a much more direct and active participant in driving decisions about what we cover, what beats we decide to staff and those we don't, how we move resources around the newsroom. During that period, earlier period of collaboration we were often in on the ground floor on individual stories and were able to participate in kind of a story formulation but the decision to put that, to get that

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story going, set it in motion and the decisions about who staffed various parts of the newsroom were entirely in the hands of the newspaper and that's beginning to change.

Finally, the last thing is that after reading sort of all the last couple of years of news stories about the misery in the news business, the folks in the print newsroom are eager to get involved and no longer have sort of the arms' length attitude and so what we found when we started to physically combine the staff in early 2006 that it was, the hardest challenge I guess was it was actually setting expectations as to how quickly we could move and get them involved in some of the things that we were doing.

Steps that we've tried to lay out to actually make it happen. Probably the most important way it picks up off the tail end of what Neil said was clear leadership from the top. This was the quote in the press release that came out on December 12th, 2005, when we merged from Ken Paulson, who is the editor of the paper and to whom I report. "The goal in combining the two newsrooms is to create a single, 24-hour news organization that will inform and engage readers on multiple platforms. That means going beyond arms' length for collaboration. Starting today our goal is to begin conceiving and planning our coverage as one unit, thinking more strategically about the deployment of our news gathering resources in a world in which news has become an on demand commodity." It's a message that he's continued to reinforce day in and day out, whether it's through the daily notes that we send on individual stories or the monthly meetings that he holds or public speaking that he does in various forums. So there's been a very clear from the top down mandate as to what we need to do.

We have put web journalists in positions of authority. I share the title of executive editor with John Hilker. We both have purview over the entire operation. I'm not the web guy, he's not the print guy. We probably still lean a little bit that way because of our respective backgrounds but we have started to divvy up responsibility for the sections and work as collaboratively as we can.

Training, can't underestimate the importance of this, though I would say that the physical relocation of the web staff into about nine different places within the newsroom probably has accomplished more than any amount of training that we could undertake. But we've done everything from have Jeff come in and sort of give people the big picture and begin to get them acclimated to what's going on within the media space to very hands on, very focused training around video and audio and other things like that. But the familiarity that people have been able to build with their print and online counterparts, by sitting in the same physical space, has been crucial. And to that extent I take issue with the idea of exploding the newsroom. Yes, get the reporters out. Perhaps it's appropriate to have them working out of their cars in some cases but when it comes to producers and editors, that personal face-to-face interchange is still very important, particularly in this period I think.

Another thing that we've discovered is how important it is to start giving people who are in charge of various subject domains real authority over the web. And this is a sensitive issue because on the one hand they're never going to get invested in producing journalism for the website in a fully committed way until they have some authority over that. And at the same time you don't want to give them authority for something they don't have a full understanding of as yet. So we're in this awkward period where you've got a newspaper organization that is much like the military,

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very hierarchical and people are accustomed to a clear chain of command and you've got a web organization coming in that actually has been very lateral and the 2 coming together and we're asking people to do something pretty difficult, which is to finesse some of the traditional hierarchical authority that they've had and know what they don't know and reach out to people who have that knowledge and help them gradually gain command of this medium.

We have had to address all kinds of cultural issues head on and we've tried to do that in an open way and do it outside of the urgency of particular news decisions that get made. To try and create sort of safe forums where people can get together and say, "Well, your standards around this really suck." Or, "Why is this not getting edited before it goes live on the web?" Or, "Shouldn't this go through 6 levels of review before that happens?" And lot of interesting conversations that come out of that.

To Bill's point, we have been looking for opportunities to really transform the newspaper, not simply improve what we do on the web. Among the changes we've made, we have consciously stepped back somewhat from our commitment to the international edition, which had 1:00 deadlines which tended to make it difficult but we would get a lot of copy all at once at 1:00 because people were filing to international and but not before that and not after that. We have said essentially we will do with wire on the inside of international at this point in most cases and bylines on the front. We've also moved the deadlines in international back an hour and a half, which enabled us to close down a printing plant and saved us money that we could put into other areas. And we now have real time news desks, not just 1 continuous news desk but 1 in news, similar arrangement beginning to come together in life and in sports, that allows us to report in real time and then essentially those folks are responsible for taking a snapshot of the news around that international deadline and pushing it to print. So it's completely flipped the model as to people's mental outlook and how they're approaching this.

We've tried and we're continuing to experiment with a variety of organization models. The traditional print newsroom is organized around assigning editors who are sort of fulfill in many ways the most crucial function in any of our newsrooms and have anywhere from 4 or 5, 6 reporters that they run at any given time. What we've, what we're starting to experiment with is putting a couple of editors together with a blogger and creating kind of a team that is looking out, is looking both internally and externally. The blogger is constantly surveying what's going on, being reported by other news organizations, linking out to that but also talking to reporters and taking things that would never find their way into a full length story, even on the web, and getting those things into the blog. That activity then informs the thinking and the conversation that goes on between the bloggers and the editors, 1 of whom is looking a little longer term towards enterprise, another more concerned with real time news and feeding the web. Ideally, these jobs ultimately become interchangeable and they can back each other up in various ways.

One of the issues that we've faced as we've gone along, I think there was an expectation that when we merged staffs that the folks that were going to be smarting the most were the print folks. They outnumbered the web folks by about five to one and the web folks went from being in a single, consolidated space, high degree of camaraderie, very lateral organization, having taken a chance on the web when it was wasn't a sure bet and now they're in nine different locations spread out throughout the newsroom and there is some feeling of loss and some feeling that

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they haven't, they're not able to do the same kind of work or at times it's not as fun as it was originally. And we're working hard to try and overcome that.

This I guess was, we anticipated this a little bit but are finding that where we had a high degree of interaction with all the various business units, sales, marketing, finance, IT, they're now spread out throughout the building. They're starting to be integrated into their respective legacy, business units and communication across those groups has become much more difficult and that's something we're going to have to struggle to overcome. There's a little bit of a lag while the rest of the organization tries to get accustomed to breaking down the barriers that traditionally separated those groups. Because we did online, as we go through the reorganization, some of those barriers have gone back up.

Innovation can suffer, though I think having just relaunched the site in the last couple of weeks, a five-month project that involved about 50 people and entailed a redesign as well as the introduction of all kinds of social networking tools and so forth. We've managed to continue to innovate, even while we're trying to go through the hard work merging the newsrooms.

And there is a continuing struggle to try to align values. The, we had a case where actually before we merged, 1 of our web producers over manipulated a photograph that was simply inset into a story and a conservative blogger, Michelle Maulkin, got a hold of it and accused us basically of having distorted it intentionally to make Condi Rice look evil. And created a flap. In fact we mishandled the photograph and quickly said it was a mistake, responded both on her blog and others and so forth. But the response from the newspaper initially was, "How could that have possibly have happened? We wouldn't have published a photo without it going through at least 5 or 6 layers of review." And we're like, "Huh, that's all very nice but we don't have that kind of staff."

And they, I want to leave enough time for questions here so I won't put the Comedy Central thing up but we had a USA Today snapshot that ran the other day that was, that Colbert has a lot of fun with in terms of sexual, the apparent sexual gesture that was being made in the snapshot and that was a snapshot that went through 5 or 6 layers of review.

[audience laughter]

So it happens on the print and the online side. We stumble in these ways. But it does cause us to step back and say, "What's the right structure for this?" It is possible to publish in real time to the web without having to edit everything that goes before it goes online and we've been doing that with our on deadline blog and have not had a single correction in the course of the 15 months or so that's been up. But you have to think very carefully about where and how those resources are applied. And get people out of the sort of reflexive sense that there's a certain way to do it and it's always been done that way and that's how they're going to continue to do it.

So the benefits, it's been an enormous force multiplier. I mean the thing that strikes me over and over again as I go through the newsroom is the extent to which reporters and editors at all levels, print and online, have simply begun to internalize the logic of publishing to the web. Probably the biggest day-to-day issue is having to triage what you do. Do I report this story out in full for the web right away? Do I

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file a nut graph to somebody on a rewrite desk who is otherwise going to incorporate it into a wire story? Do I just go with wire story and forget about trying to match them so that I can do enterprise? And those are minute to minute decisions, story by story, section by section and that's been the biggest benefit that we've seen is people are starting to get this and make these decisions on their own without having to come to the web staff for guidance on that.

This was a quote from one of the editors on the real time news desk sent in an email. After he listed out about five things that had just occurred naturally without any prodding in response to coverage of various events one day.

There's been an enormous amount of buy in. When we launched the social networking tools in the last about four weeks ago, put comments on all the article pages, allowed people to recommend stories. No backbiting in the newsroom. We were able to sort of set the tone well in advance, get them involved in understanding exactly how we were going to do this. And rather than second-guessing it, they've actually been embracing it and asking how they can use it in their reporting. And we've started to flow those comments back into the paper in ways that are similar to what Bill described.

And we're getting fresh ideas from folks that, you know, there's the inevitable having to fight back ideas where we say, "Yeah, you know, we thought about that 5 years ago. We even tried it and it really doesn't work." But for every one of those, there are also lots of other good ideas flowing out.

And we're doing better journalism as a result. One experiment in particular that I'll show you, try and illustrate for you, is we have put one of our online, one of our most talented online graphic artists who came up through print along time ago, has done television, now works online and so is able to work across a variety of media and embedded him in the life section. Rather than embedding him in the photo and graphics department, where most of the other designers are. And he works side by side with photo editors and page layout editors and do forth and reporters and editors who are conceiving of stories from the start and has an influence on both what appears in print and what appears on the web. So in this case the topper that ran across the web story here, which is on the bottom, was reproduced in the paper essentially as a [reefer].

In this case, any of you who have tried to take content out of a print publishing system and get it online, you know that this particular story up here is a nightmare because it's nothing more than a bunch of thumbnails and it doesn't flow through a system the way a normal story does and so it sort of lands on some web producers at 11:00 at night and they're, they got a bunch of garble and they're trying to figure out how to get it on a page and sort it out. So instead, he's able to conceive of how he wants it presented online first. It's a very simple interactive. It's not a difficult one to do. Produced in real time both for print and the paper. Looks very different but it contains the same information and actually is designed in a way that works for both platforms.

Similarly with this one. This is a combination of text and graphics produced in CCI that would have been a nightmare for a web producer to deal with if they didn't know it was coming. These aren't big stories. These aren't projects where there's, we've done a pretty good job for a long time of collaborating in advance and so forth. These are the kind of quick hits, on the fly stuff that you do day in and day

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out that in the past were simply not getting well represented on the web. We often didn't even know that they were coming. So the map is used in both places. The information is the same across the 2 but their presentation style is entirely different so we see this as 1 indication of what we're able to do as we go forward.

So I will leave it there and hopefully [audience applause drowning out final words].

Lorraine Branham: Perfect. Kinsey, I was glad that you talked a little bit at the end about obstacles because that was going to be my question. Is this working? To get the discussion going. And I just wonder whether or not any of the rest of you would like to address the obstacles as you see them going forward. There doesn't seem to be much disagreement about the need to combine the online and print operations and to have more collaboration and cooperation. We've talked a little bit about some of the obstacles. Are there others out there that we need to be concerned about and that you're trying to address? Jim, would you like to talk a little bit about that from your perspective?

Jim Brady: Sure. I think what everybody agrees on here is that the newsrooms obviously need to work closely together and have the same mission. I think there's probably differences still in the opinion on structure but I think if you look at the 4 presentations that you just saw, how much, to Neil's point, how much of it was actually the same and that the obstacles we face, the obstacles that Kinsey, Neil, Bill face, a lot of them are, don't even seem to be relevant to how the newsrooms are structured. They're just cultural things that sort of go beyond how you're structured.

So I think going forward, obstacles are pretty obvious. It's just, obstacles probably isn't even a good word; challenges may be a little less negative but I think it's still trying to figure out how to keep this, you know, for all the talk about the death of newspapers, I don't think anybody, well I certainly don't think the newspaper is going away for some good chunk of time. So the newspaper obviously has a significant number of challenges to try and face and we have our challenges we're trying to face on the web side and how do you figure out how to, your resource balances? Do you start moving resources online because that's the growth engine in terms of traffic? Do you keep more resources at the newspaper because despite the financial challenges and circulation challenge it's still the main driver revenue?

I think that, those are the questions a lot of us deal with kind of on a daily basis. I'm sure we all could figure out what do with 20 people more people in our newsrooms. But how much do you move between medium, between different media types? I think that's going to be the big struggle I think going forward because, we, after all these years of the print newsroom, not all these years but really up until about 2000 the print newsroom not being all that engaged in the website. Now everybody is engaged in the website. Everybody wants a blog. Everybody wants to do a live discussion on the website. Everybody wants a video camera. And that's great but what happens when now you've got all these people sending video back and all these people who want to start blogs. So now we're dealing with the challenge of not having enough people on our end to handle all the attention we're getting, which is much better problem than the one we were facing six, seven years ago but a problem nonetheless.

Lorraine Branham: Anyone else want to address that question?

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Neil Chase: I was going to address almost the same thing. The obstacle now is taking the people in the newsroom who are saying to Jim every day, "I want a blog. I've got this audio. I've got this video. What do you mean you can't do it 'cause you don't have enough people?" It's keeping that enthusiasm, which is now, you know, a thundering snowball coming down the hill and making something out of that without having to say no all the time because the 3rd time you say no to a reporter about a great idea, they're going to go back to doing what they were doing. And it's, we're at a point right now where, yeah, if you give me 20 more people I can get a lot more multimedia up on the site tomorrow because there's plenty of people who want to do stuff but we have to figure out how to transform the existing people, how to get a few more people snuck into the budget here and there at time when we're not hiring a lot more people. That's the challenge. Keep that momentum going.

Lorraine Branham: You've got all those people on the New York Times newsroom.

Neil Chase: I know.

Lorraine Branham: Do you really need more people or do you need people...

Neil Chase: We don't need more people. If the publisher is listening, yes, we need a lot more people.

[audience laughter]

If everybody is trying to make this work in current budgets, we don't need more people. We need more training, we need more, we need to spend more time, you know, somebody spends three weeks not doing anything for the website or the newspaper but building a tool and that tool then lets every photographer build slide shows on their own and drop them into the newspaper for the next 10 years, that's a huge kind of a thing. We need to invest much more in the infrastructure that doesn't require more people but requires more sort of a global look at how we're going to do the whole newsroom as opposed to what we've been doing for a long time, which is the one offs.

Lorraine Branham: Questions from our audience? Would you come up and use that microphone?

Audience Member: Is it on?

Lorraine Branham: It is on, yes.

Audience Member: Alright. In that same vein, for the others, are any of you cross training? I think that the idea that you said is good, that we need to make the photographers able to put their own slide shows in. So is any newsroom cross training of the ones up here?

Panelist: We're doing cross training all the time. An example of that, we took our principle online life editor and one of the senior assigning editors from the life section and basically paired them, kind of along the lines of the model that I showed there with the triangle. They did all of our awards coverage throughout the 3 or 4 months and we're, they took different parts of the day but they were each responsible for planning both print and online. The online person took the earlier part of the day because that leaned a little more online. The person who had come up through the

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print side took the later part of the day. But they were accountable for both and are learning a lot about each other's disciplines as they go and we're doing that. When we put together our real time news operation in the news section, we took people who were blogging real time news, the people who were doing rewrite for the web and the people who were producing briefs columns for the newspaper, combined them and they now have collective responsibility for that and move across those depending on where the need is at any given time. Yes.

Panelist: I'll just add one thing is that one of the things that we're doing some of and I really want to ramp up isn't limited simply to training people how to use the video camera or how to put together information for an informational graphic but how people use our site and what works and what doesn't, what gets traffic and what doesn't. You know, we get surprised a lot but I spend way too much time looking at, you know, the daily numbers and the hourly numbers of the site. And over time we're starting to develop a pretty good idea of what kinds of things are really worth a print reporters time to do. And what's not. And the results surprised us a lot.

We had a page one story the other day about a Princeton professor, the well known guy named Blinder, who had fundamentally changed his view of whether free trade is good for the workers of America. And because it's kind of a classic economics professor point of view, it's free trade is good. Some people lose their jobs but over time it's better for the economy. And he was basically saying, "You know what? I'm not sure this is true anymore." It was a very well read story on the site but we also had like a three-minute video interview of him. The video ended up getting as much or more traffic than the story did.

And this is an important thing for our colleagues to understand, not just kind of how to use a device but sort of how people use the site and how people are changing their reading habits, what they're getting referred to, what blogs and other third party sites send us traffic. And I think the more the journalists understand that, the better they'll be able to adapt to this world.

Panelist: So you're all about metrics now?

Panelist: We're a lot about metrics, yeah.

Panelist: I'd also say that training goes both ways, too. In addition to we're training print newsroom staffers on using cameras and Flash in some cases and a variety of other ways also as Bill said, have people use the site. But we also bring a lot of people from the print side over to the web side to talk to our producers who tend to be younger and about headline writing, about investigative reporting, about things that we need to learn more about from a skills set standpoint. So it definitely works both ways.

Panelist: Doing the same thing, you have to. You have to.

Lorraine Branham: Any other questions? Yes?

Audience Member: Okay, well my question is for Mr. Brady and actually for all of you who want to, care to add. With the Abramoff, with the Debra Howell thing, you know I'm going to ask that, how are you dealing with accountability on the web? I mean how are you going to make that, how can you possibly make that more

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prevalent because then if it's, if there's more accountability, not to the journalists. I mean there should be for that. I mean that's, we all know that, but for the bloggers. I mean because a lot of these comments that you got were anonymous and people who are anonymous tend to be able to speak their mind and say irrational, rash things that they wouldn't do if they actually had their name on it. Is there any like way that you're trying to make more accountable?

Jim Brady: Well, I mean you have to take the good with the bad. I mean I think we've taken a fair amount of bad in our time but that example being one where we got a fact, our ombudsman got a fact wrong in the column and was jumped on by hundreds of bloggers from the far left and they call cam onto our site about the same time and started calling the ombudsman all sorts of horrible names so we shut down the comments on that blog and you would have thought they'd taken dissidents out in the yard and shot them considering the reaction we got to it. And "stifling free speech", "you're an enemy of the state" and it was basically because we didn't have the tools in place to handle the amount of comments and we didn't have a profanity filter, which we desperately needed at that point. So but I think over time we've kind of, you know, worked on the side of "let's get things out there" and "let's get this new functionality out there and figure out how to deal with all the monitoring stuff as best we can and learn as we go."

So we're now at a position where we do have a pretty decent profanity filter. You have to be a registered user of the site to publish anything, which while you can't make somebody put in their, an active email address or proper name, you can at least get some user name you can block if they create trouble. So there's a whole bunch of functionality that we have put in place to stop that but I think some of the controversy we've had in the last couple of weeks is focusing on news, print newsroom saying that we should take comments off of the site because Washington Post should not allow people to post racist, vile stuff on our website.

But that ignores the fact that in the Walter Reid story, for example, comments we got on articles and the conversation that happened after that story hit the website generated other, more journalism. Diana Priest and Ann Hole wrote stories after that about story tips they got through the comments about all these contacts they made to get further details about Walter Reid. So as with any kind of interactive capability on the web, if you decide you're going to shut, I think it's a huge mistake to not have it. I think it's in fact suicidal not to have some dialogue between readers and journalists but you have to accept that there's going to be some crap that comes in with the good. But there's lots of good there if you tunnel down.

Panelist: One thing I'd just add to that, it's important to recognize a couple of things. I mean one is we're in the infancy of figuring out how to deal with reader interaction and I mean this is really a one thought out exercise and we're feeling our way and we're going to stumble sometimes and make some mistakes. The other thing, though, is that it's a reflection of the fact that as established media we no longer have absolute 100% control over what happens on our pages. We're linking out to other sites that may have other standards around the use of the anonymous sources and so forth and we've got to try and balance the sort of openness of the architecture against the desire to create an environment that is consistent with the brand and the positioning that we've established for ourselves in the marketplace. And that's not an easy exercise. It's much easier when you can exercise 100% absolute control but that game is over. So we've got to learn how to allow for a little

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more flexibility and a little more transparency and things happening underneath the umbrella of the brand in ways that we wouldn't have contemplated 10 years ago.

Lorraine Branham: Jeff, we said there's be no whining. I think before we go I promised our panelists that I'd give them a chance to talk about the whole idea of metrics versus journalism and some of the concerns in the newsroom about how journalism gets impacted by all the changes taking place. So and who would like to, Bill, I know you raised that issue.

Bill Grueskin: Want me to start? Yeah, I won't go into my whole sermon since we'd be getting out about 4:00 in the afternoon but, you know, why do people get into journalism? It's not for the pay. It's not for the prestige, although this is a pretty cool panel. But it's to have impact, you want to have impact on the world. And that's not a bad thing. You know, that's not a bad motivation for choosing a career and it's not a bad motivation for putting up with the crappy hours and the lousy pay and the bad coffee. It's actually a pretty good thing. But, you know, there is something very powerful on the web about having a better sense of what kind of impact that you're having. And, you know, I worked in print for a long time. I remember at the Miami Herald there was this 1 reporter who got a story on the local front and he started high-fiving everybody because his phone is ringing off the hook and all that and turns out the calls were from a mortgage broker, his wife, or the kid needs to be picked up. You don't know.

Now you can kind of get a sense of the impact and the impact can be in page views. But the impact can be in comments. The impact can be in what kind of feedback you get from readers, the quality of feedback. You know, there's lot of different ways to skin this cat and I think if we get too narrow about it, if we look at it strictly as a page view metric, then do get into trouble because page views depend so much on placement on the home page, what kind of linking you get from blogs or third party sites and a lot of things that are outside the reporters control. But it's a valuable thing to know and I think, you know, people don't stop reading a newspaper because it's too important in their lives. They stop reading it because it's losing relevance in their lives. And if over time we can, we can use the data to make much more intelligent judgments about what people care about and shape our coverage that way then that's not a bad thing.

It can definitely go the other way, especially in terms of websites that create content that's simply there to kind of drive page views. You know, big slide shows and that kind of thing that don't really have any merit for being a slide show for [inaudible], that kind of thing. But I think, you know, this is overall a very positive thing for journalism and I think, if anything, journalists have lost touch with their readers over the years. And maybe this will help us.

Neil Chase: It's, there's a school of thought that goes, you know, if you start giving reporters metrics, you start showing them the numbers, well they're all going to write about Britney Spears and sex and space and all the weird crap the New York Times writes about that always makes the most emailed list. It's going to change the view of the newsroom. We're all going to be writing for the readers. We're going to lose all of our news judgment.

If you really believe that then you shouldn't expect newspapers to be around very long because there's no difference between my front page and Yahoo's front page and Google's front page and some guy down the street who is doing the

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neighborhood blog. The reason newspapers are going to be around, all four of the papers up here and lots of other ones, is because of the news judgment, because of what they do, because of the editing that, the eyes they bring to this process. And if you really think you can't show the New York Times newsroom the most emailed list without everybody wanting to write about pop celebrities tomorrow, you don't have a lot of faith in the quality of those journalists.

The most emailed list, as Bill said before, is completely different from the most read list. Everybody reads our Baghdad coverage; nobody sends it to their friends. Everybody reads the weird lifestyle and personality and trend stories and everybody sends those around. It's a new front page, right? It used to always be, "Here's the front page of the newspaper. We decided what goes on it." The top of the New York Times website is still that. Editors in the newsroom, including web producers, deciding here's what's going to be on the home page. And then you know what? Down here is the most emailed box. Here's what readers have on their minds. Here's the most interesting thing they're sending around. Here's what people are blogging about. It's like everyone of those is new front page, different way into the paper. And the conversation in the newsroom about the most emailed list is fascinating.

At the same time there's a large newspaper in the southeast United States that puts up, at its news meetings every day puts up the front page with the tracking overlay that shows exactly how many hits were, they've had on each story throughout the day and lets that guide the design of the newspaper page for tomorrow and that seems kind of silly because the web and print are totally different.

So used smartly, it's a great way to build up the feeling about it in the newsroom.

Kinsey Wilson: Yeah, the wonderful thing about the internet is we have access, unparalleled access to his incredible profusion of information. Of course, the curse of the internet is that we have unparalleled access to all this information so that the task for us as journalists is to help people figure out what they want look at, what's relevant to them, what its credibility is and find the things that are of greatest importance to them. And some of that is through the traditional application journalistic judgment but metrics come into play in that it allows us to give readers another view of what's going on. If we can reflect on our front pages, a variety of different perspectives or lenses on what's important about different stories, the traditional order of headlines that we apply to it as journalists, the number of stories that have been recommended, the number of ones that have attracted comments, a simple chronological listing of things, then we're very quickly giving people a variety of different ways to understand sort of what's going on in this larger news sphere.

Jim Brady: And, you know, I send an email out to the newsroom, Post newsroom, once a month that kind of have a bunch of metrics in it about also things we've launched but also lists the most popular stories in the site in the past month and inevitably the person who wrote the lead story will send an email going, "Wow, why was my story the #1 story? Was it because it was a great reporting, 'cause it was the video slide show I did with it? Because it was on A1?" And it's like, "Drudge linked to it." And now it's always...

[audience laughter]

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Well it is. It's Drudge linked to it. You look at the pathing report and 80% of the traffic for the most popular story on the site every month is from Drudge. So if you start looking at pure numbers without looking at what those numbers mean, you can get yourself in serious trouble. We try to look at numbers to infer trends like, "Wow, you know, Robin Givens' fashion stuff does really well. Maybe we ought talk to her about doing a blog, do something that gets her more presence on the site." This is not to turn the home page into a popularity contest. So I think you have to be very, just want Kinsey's point, it's great that we have all this data but if you don't really look at it with a discerning eye and really look at what those numbers mean, you can get yourself into serious trouble. Kind of like being a journalist.

Lorraine Branham: I think we're going to have to end it now so we can move onto our next panel. And we do have a break. There's coffee outside for those of you. Thank you to our panelists. Would you give them a round of applause?

[audience applause]