Day 2, Panel 2 - Participatory journalism: Now the old passive audience of mass media is becoming the new active communities of online media

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Dan Gillmor: Good morning, everybody. We're racing straight into the next part of this. Rosental asked me to give a short talk roughly in the same time that the others were doing. We're going to go each 10 to 15 minutes. Our purpose is to leave a lot of time for conversation with you. And so I'm absolutely awed by the people who are sitting to my left—Ethan Zuckerman, Jan Shaffer, and David Cohn—who are going to give you all kinds of great stuff that will make it wonderful that I went first, because then you'll be able to forget what I said. I'm going to just quickly…[recording starts/stops]…and some things…[recording stops/starts]…just a general sense of why I think we need to start thinking more about not just the supply side, but also the demand side of media. You will get many other perspectives from these folks. And I'll introduce them individually as we get to them.

By the way, this is my current favorite Twitter stream. [laughter] What's amazing is the 15,000 followers. [laughter] So just a reminder that we've gone from the cave drawings to a media world that is fairly different and that subsumes and extends everything that came before a democratized media, not about voting as much as participation. We all know the tools of creation are everyone's hands, but something not as well appreciated, and I'll just spend a second on it, is that access is the other democratization. In the past, we created stuff, distributed what we created, sent it out in trucks or put it out over broadcasts over network satellites, whatever. That's not what we do now. We create stuff and we make it available and people come and get it. That's different from what we used to do. And if we don't keep that context in mind, we miss something quite important about where we are.

It's a Read/Write web. You know this. Consumers are creators. Most exciting for the future, to me, is the creators becoming collaborators and what that means. So I'm not going to spend any time on each of these individually, but these are the creators creating and collaborating. So you've now seen the Internet, and I can go home.

This world is so extensive and so broad, and we have to think about the fact that we have this massive, massive supply, and we're going to have to figure out what to do with it. And people keep asking, "Who's the journalist in this world?" And I keep saying, "That's not the right question. The question is, what is journalism?" Agreed, I think that's journalism, and I think we can agree that that's not. That doesn't solve the problem in an ecosystem that's getting unbelievably blurry and complicated and, in my opinion, wonderful, but how do we figure our way through it? One way in journalism is to follow Doc Searl's great advice to think *and* not *or*. It's one *and* the other and we sort our way through it. And examples of the *and*, just one example is that think tanks, I believe, are doing journalism. Advocacy groups are doing part of the journalism of the future, and we should recognize that, celebrate that. You'll see some things later that include that. And in Arizona recently the SPJ gave awards to a Goldwater Institute journalist. This is not a problem in my opinion; this is part of our opportunity—that the data available out there is changing things. API's making [it] possible to combine things in lots of ways. One of the great innovations of *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* and NPR and several others has been to do API's *to* their information so that others can use it in unexpected ways.

So again, why I'm crazily optimistic… And Ethan will cure you of some of that, I think, in his talk. We like to disagree on parts of this, but I'm nuttily optimistic because as Clay Shirky has pointed out, "It doesn't cost anything to try anymore." So lots of stuff, most stuff will fail, but so what? That means that even the small percentage that are successes, if it's a really big number of tries, you still have a really big number of successes. OK. The next question here is, you know, supply seems fairly well assured. We have a demand issue we have to consider. Obviously [there is] too much and a lot of it is garbage. We don't know what we can trust in the new media, call it, or any media. And that goes for some old media too. We've had some problems along the way that are not so easy to just brush away.

So this is the heart of what I want to address right now, which is I think we need to think back to some principles, but not just the journalistic ones that we all understand; though, they are important, and I will come back to those in a second. I'm convinced we have to persuade people who've been consumers of news to become users, and really in the best sense of the word *use,* and that obviously the people doing journalism, we have to help them to better journalism. In the end, that may provide the most leverage to get the supply we need. But if we don't address the demand side, we're not going to get it right. So on the "consumer" side, and I put them in quotes, because I hate that word. I just hate the word *consumer,* and I don't have a better

one. But we have to be skeptical of absolutely everything, and I mean everything from *The New York Times* on down or sideways or whatever direction. But judgment is not being equally skeptical of absolutely everything.

So what does that mean? Well, in my own mind, I have a kind of credibility scale now that I think, let's say, starts at minus 30 and positive 30. And I'll start at *The Wall Street Journal*. Most articles, not the editorial page, but most articles in *The Journal* [are] off high positive. And the random comments on a random blog, anonymous comment, understand, it doesn't have zero credibility. The random comment on an anonymous blog would have to work really hard just to get up to zero. This is part of the way I've been training myself to think. It's not you actually can suck credibility away in certain ways. It's not a matter of zero and above. It's minus to plus. And it raises the ongoing anonymity question which keeps coming back.

By the way, the debate over comments on news websites is so ludicrous right now. It just makes me laugh, because they let this thing fallow into a swamp, and now they are complaining that it's a problem. Well, it was not unexpected. The problem is that people are not taking some responsibility, as people writing and as people moderating—that's an important word—but that the people reading have a responsibility. I'd like to see newspaper websites say, "Sure, post your anonymous comments," and then say to readers, "but please ignore these. They don't mean anything. It's stupid. We just leave it there if people want to rant, but it's not worth reading." Now, that's not a way to drive page views. But this is part of the reader education. And on anonymity, please, please don't ever let people tell you we have to get rid of it. Not that we could technically succeed, but it could make it a lot harder to be anonymous. It's critically important to preserve it. But I'd like people who are the consumers of media, all of us who read it, to just understand and train ourselves, as I've tried to do myself, if I see anonymous or unsourced comments—and that goes for unsourced in *The New York Times*—that are an attack on someone else or something else, I believe the opposite. Until proved that it is true, I'm going to believe the opposite. Start there.

Research is another principle. And again, this goes to a lot of media literacy stuff that's gone on over the years, but I think in a slightly different direction. Asking our own questions. And, you know, about anything you're going to make your own decision on based on media, you have to ask more questions. Students in universities debate Wikipedia still, which amazes me, the question of Wikipedia. Well, it's often the best place to start. No question about this. And it's almost always the worst place to stop. So Jimmy Wales, by the way, completely agrees with that. I put that to him and he said, "Yes, exactly." So this is the thing we should recognize. Use things in their appropriate ways to go deeper.

Another principle that Ethan really made me think hard about was to go outside your comfort zone. And this involves many different things. For me, one way is to read global voices. Read things about people and from people I don't know and will likely never know. To go outside my cultural, political, and other kinds of comfort zones. To read politics about things that will make my blood boil. To read about cultural places and people that I don't know. And on and on. This is so important; otherwise, I'm just uninformed. Not just badly informed, but uninformed. The other is to challenge my own assumptions. And this is a list of things I used to keep in my desk when I was a reporter or a columnist, saying, there were things I believed. And I would relentlessly attack those every few months to make sure they were still true. And they would stop to be… Some of them would move down. Some of them would disappear. Some would come up.

And then finally, the techniques of media to be conversant and good at. Not just creating media, but understanding how it's used to persuade and, in fact, to manipulate. So places like Source Watch to help understand who's spinning. And News Trust, about maybe we can start sorting out a trust system. Joining the conversations ourselves with the journalists and others creating media. Some students of mine have done a media critic site in Phoenix. And on and on we can do this.

The journalist principles are not ones to leave aside; though, I'm most focused now on the former consumers part. But we all have to work hard, those of us doing journalism at any level, to be thorough, to do things like using the web well. So go out [and] ask the readers to help, and they're helping all the time. The document done from the Senate committee yesterday, or this morning, of the Goldman Sachs and other banking documents is now being thoroughly analyzed by a million people, not just a thousand journalists.

The accuracy part. Of course we know, but we can't all afford the Atlantic Magazine's fact checker, who is an amazing woman and has been — I couldn't believe the stuff she knew. But we can start to use this participatory media to get at some of this. A project that I've been helping with, Scott Rosenburg's Media Bugs, to find out where the bugs are, like software bugs, and to report them and see if journalists will actually take responsibility for them.

Fairness. We all understand that. We don't do it much. So when *The Times* did a story about Congressman Randall, [they] gave him space, not in the paper, sadly, but online to reply, and then replied to the reply, it stopped there. It shouldn't have stopped there. It should have continued until there was a resolution, but this is a good start. I don't understand why we don't give people a right of reply in online journalism—period. I just don't understand it. It seems like a natural and honorable thing to do.

And then independence, not just of your own thinking but of your corporate sponsor's. I do not expect… I don't care how honest and great journalists they are, ProPublica, I don't expect them to ever do the final and perfect or best version of the savings and loan and housing stuff when their chief funders are people who are part of that, and who weren't the worst of the bunch by far, but who were involved in some of the stuff that went on. I'm just not expecting it. But transparency will help a lot of this. And ProPublica is extremely transparent about its backing and about everything that it does, and I applaud that, but not everyone is. We have the scandal that continues, by the way, of TV channels, news channels that are promoting people who have direct connections, if not financial ones, political ones, or other kinds, to the things they are commenting on without any disclosure. It's disgusting. It's just disgusting. And we let them do it. We journalists allow this to go on.

Transparency also involves being more open in what we do and how we do it. I thought it was a mistake when *The Post* said to its editorial staff, "You may not Tweet about anything interesting." I believe that was a mistake. NPR has much more rational rules about this. And I would take a look at both and you'll see what I'm saying. One of the ways we can be more transparent as journalists and help them understand why this process is so important is to explain how we do it. If you recall this fabulous story in *The New Yorker* about healthcare a year or so ago, the journalist took us through his reporting process as part of the article. Like, he said, "This made no sense to me, so I then did this to see what I could find." This was actually describing the journalism, and it was wonderfully done. Just as the NPR, the brilliant stuff they are doing on the housing bubble and the financial bubble, where the journalists are saying, "We don't get it, so we tried to figure it out, and here's how we did it." That's brilliant journalism. You can't do it on everything, but you can do it on a lot, and *we* can do it on a lot and at all, all levels. It's a principle we should follow in transparency.

Finally, we can help people… And again, this is like three of about a thousand tools and methods I could show you, but *tracking* is now possible with technology that we've never tried to do before. But for every Wikipedia article, there is an 'every change ever made' page. You can go back and see every change ever made. And more importantly perhaps on Wikipedia, there's a meta discussion about the big articles, where people argue about the content of the article. So the more you care, the more you can find out about the people who did it and the sources they used and on and on.

Transparency, to me, is the single most important new principle for journalism in this century, and I don't see enough of it yet, but I think we're going to see more. So I'll stop there just with a point or two. The website and book that I'm working on or finishing up about all of this stuff is called Media Active, but I think the opportunity has never been greater, but I'm very, very worried that if we don't get both the supply side and the demand side in better shape, and that's going to take all of us, we're all the ones who have to help this happen, that we're not going to get to where we need to be, but

we're, I think, making good progress. That's how you find me. And actually, you can find me here in person.

But I'm going to stop and bring up Jan to get to talk about the great stuff that she is working on. Oops. Well, that was stupid. I just closed the app. I did exactly what Jan was hoping I wouldn't do. [laughter] Sorry about that.

Jan Shaffer directs J-Lab at American University in Washington. Jan is one of the real heroes of journalism, and going back to her work as a journalist, but to her public journalism roles. It was public, wasn't it?

Jan Shaffer: No, civic journalism.

Dan Gillmor: Civic. Civic journalism. Yeah, we have it different. And what she's been doing for the last year she'll talk more about, but it's a wonderful operation. And I will now turn it over to Jan.

Jan Shaffer: Hi. Well, thank you. Thank you, Rosental, for having me, and thank you, everybody. What I wanted to do is take a quick cruise through some key trends I see happening around the country in the realm of participatory journalism, with a cautionary tale that we don't lump it all under the rubric of citizen journalism, because I think when we do that, we fail to understand the many different patterns that are coming out.

And I will start with a little, quick story about how fast and how nimble citizens are becoming nowadays. We had a situation in McLean, Virginia, where the local public library was closing. And Bobbie Bowman, a former journalist—she worked with the American Society of Newspaper Editors—happened to walk past the sign on the library that said it's closing, and said, "Oh, my gosh! This is a big deal. This is the third place in the community. How do we tell everybody?" Because *The Washington Post* wasn't going to cover this story, right? Well, Bobbie was planning to launch a site called The McLean Air, but it was going through a design process [and] wasn't quite ready yet. So, she ended up in an hour putting up a WordPress blog. [She] called somebody in our office, got a little help with it, [and] reported the story. Four days later, McLean, which had no plans for an interim library while the building was being remodeled, came up with a new site for the library, and it's still open. So you have in four days time the launch of a site, the reporting of a story, and impact on the community that got, you know, something [to happen]. And she's maintained the blog while her other website is still being designed. So we see now how easy it is for citizen journalists to just turn around a story very quickly.

We have a "Site in a Box" tutorial on how to use WordPress on our site. There are many other places where you can find this too. But for nothing, you can put up something and start being a reporter. I think when we look at the news ecosystem now and we talk about participatory journalism, we've really got to look at a lot of different players. And I would sort of characterize

some of them as fact entrepreneurs, certainly creative technologists that are teaching us non-narrative storytelling, [and] citizen media makers. And I do not like the term citizen journalist, because not to diss them, [but] they don't like the term journalist. Sometimes they find the term daunting. Sometimes they don't much respect the way journalism has been done in their community and what journalists are doing. I think that philanthropic foundations are playing an increasing role, as are universities, advocacy groups, as Dan just mentioned, and government.

And I think we need to look at the venues for participation as being different than just the act of journalism. As Chris Anderson said in his wonderful dissertation, which I'm quoting all over the place, I think we have to look at a broader scope of work that needs to be done in our community, and it really falls under the rubric of "news work." Where journalism may be just collecting, validating, and publishing the news, I think that news work is a much bigger scope of work. News work requires sharing information, facilitating the conversations in our community, sometimes crowdsourcing stories, sometimes it's smart curation and aggregation, sometimes it's data mining [and] visualizations. It could be a news game or an exercise. It could be just lists and resources or social shout outs, in some way marketing the information that you do. But it's a much bigger enterprise, frankly, than journalism, but it also provides many more entry points for citizens to participate in this.

We at J-Lab have funded community news startups for the last five years. Actually, we've funded 46 projects. A very micro-level of funding. They get $25,000 over two years. But in that five years, we've received more than 1,500 applications, which I think suggests to you the level of demand and the level of vision that is in communities to kind of mind the gap, to kind of fill the gap with things that people do not see being covered, and they are very willing to try to cover it themselves. Well, I think we've had a lot of success through the years. We've seen some really, really terrific projects that are still going on after five years.

Of the 46 projects, 76% launched and found great success in the sense that they had some kind of impact in the community. But I will also tell you that after five years, only 54% of the projects that we funded are still going strong. We would call them our greatest hits. That's 25 of the ones we funded. Another ten were good while they lasted, but they lasted about two years with the grant and then kind of petered out. 20%, well, they delivered on the grant, but they weren't things that we would particularly want to showcase, and they weren't very robust or didn't update their information frequently enough. And two of them were just plain duds.

So why did the ones not go beyond the two-year grant period? I think we find not a lot of commonality, but if I had to lump it under one cause, it would be leadership of the project. We had projects in which they were university projects, and then the second year the professor took a sabbatical.

Well, guess what? The project collapsed. And we now don't fund those. We had projects at community radio stations in which we had so much staff turnover that by the third person working on the project, they never read the grant proposal and had no clue what the deliverable was supposed to be. We've certainly had other projects that just relied too much on training citizen journalists to produce their content. And I will tell you right now that what we have learned is that if you're counting on training citizen journalists as being your only source of content, it almost never works. You can train 100 citizen journalists. You might get ten that stay with you after three months. And after a year, you're lucky if you have one or two of those left.

We find the most successful projects tend to be those that are derived from kind of a passion and knowledge about the community. People who really care about they community. They know the community well. They often have free time on their hands. Frequently, they are people who have kids who are out of high school, into college. They used to be PTA presidents or whatever. They know what's going on in their community. They are very much a connector in the community. And they've got time to do it almost as their next phase in civic volunteerism, their next phase of civic participation. So I think I regard it as much more of an exercise in civic volunteerism, rather than citizen journalism. You need to think about it, I think, in that way.

I think one of the newest trends we see starting are professional journalists trying to get into the community news space as they are laid off or somehow severed from their news organizations. And they are wanting… They have the vision. They still want to do journalism. So they want to do either hyperlocal startups, sometimes they want to do state-based investigative news sites, [and] sometimes they have a niche site they want to do. And increasingly, we are seeing activity in this realm. I will tell you that in our experience, professional journalists are clueless about how to start. Sometimes they are more clueless than the citizen journalists about how to start. They're not very technologically savvy. And because they don't want to be called citizen journalists, they won't go to any of the websites that have the tutorials on that might help them do this. In fact, we are probably going to change the name of our Knight Citizen News Network to the Knight Community News Network precisely to sort of try to get rid of that particular barrier.

But we do see professional journalists launching sites and making a living at it. The West Seattle Blog, Tracy Record's site. You know, they're pulling in about $120,000 a year. It's a two-person operation. Very robust. We see DavidsonNews.net. David Boraks, a former *Charlotte Observer* reporter, pulling in probably about $80-$90,000 a year, covering this small college town outside of Charlotte. We see Metropolis by Tom Ferrick, a well-known columnist from *Philadelphia Enquirer*, who just launched. It provides very deep analytical reportage on what's happening in Philadelphia. We also see a lot of investigative projects launch, like California Watch, which just received about $4-million in grants to do investigations in California and share them with media around the state. Wisconsin Watch, which is doing the same thing

on a smaller scale, founded by Andy Hall, is sharing stories with other media in Wisconsin, and Investigate West out in the Peugeot Sound region also launching.

I think the next biggest trend we see are a lot of what I call independent metro news sites. These are different from the smaller citizen journalism projects in that they have paid staff. So they are paying reporters or freelancers to launch their projects. And they are often launching in parallel with a regular daily newspaper in their community. There are at least ten of these now happening around the country. And certainly among the newest are The Texas Tribune and The Chicago News Coop. Connecticut Mirror also just launched. Voice of San Diego is an old-timer. And they are doing genuine journalism, often hyper-focusing on six to eight issues that they want to own. They don't try to cover the waterfront. They don't try to cover sports. They don't try to do music reviews or food reviews or anything like that. They are really going deep on a particular number of projects. And increasingly, *The New York Times* has shown interest in doing license content deals with these operations filling pages of *The New York Times* with local content.

We see some high-level journalists launching very influential niche sites. Politico.com in Washington D.C. is certainly an example of that, as is Global Post, which does international coverage, again, for syndication or sharing to other news organizations.

I think we are also seeing another trend, if you will, occurring, which is what I would call a fact entrepreneur. Fact entrepreneurs are not quite journalists. Sometimes they are advocacy groups. But they are uncovering or watch-dogging news and information, reporting it on their blogs. Credibility means a lot to them in terms of what their blogs stand for, so that you tend to find this information that's very accurate. Things like The Daily Kos or Andy Sullivan's Daily Dish would be some examples of that.

And then I think what can't be ignored and what I think mainstream journalists have to work out is how they are going to deal with advocacy journalism. I think there are some, what I call, soft advocacy projects that are doing some very good work that has journalistic DNA. The Sunlight Foundation certainly advocates for transparency in government. They are building a lot of applications and tools to help people data-mine, do searches, look at the patterns. It's always the patterns that sort of give you the story. But likewise, the Council on Foreign Relations are doing some very good evergreen stories on crisis hotspots around the country. In smaller communities, we are increasingly seeing sites that cover education in public schools. Sites like The Notebook in Philadelphia or The Catalyst in Chicago are doing very deep education reporting. They are in favor of good schools. They do have a point of view, but the news and information they are producing has a lot of — they apply a lot of journalistic standards.

Creative technologists. Certainly, *The New York Times* last year won our Knight-Batten Award for Innovation in Journalism for a tremendous body of work that helps give new entry points into news, information, data. Things like document reader and other things. See Click Fix is another example of that. A popular application that's being used on a lot of community websites to report problems in communities and try to elicit responses from public officials.

Increasingly, and certainly we are being asked to fund a lot of community news projects in which students use a community as both a learning laboratory and a reporting laboratory to cover areas: South Los Angeles Report, Grand Avenue News in Miami, Madison Commons, Greater Fulton Hill News. There are sites around the country. One of our issues with university projects, however, and we will not fund them unless they promise to produce news 12 months a year. We do not believe any site that goes dark in December, March, and the summer has enough momentum to make a difference in the community. So we do require that all university sites figure out a year-round operation.

And I'll close by talking about some of the newest projects that we've been working on. We have recently funded five pilot projects around the country under a rubric that we call network journalism, in which we invited five news organizations to partner with five hyperlocal sites in their community. We focused on Charlotte, Miami, Seattle, Tucson, and Nashville. We paid $20,000 towards a community coordinator to be kind of the wrangler of the project and also to report results back to us. And we paid $5,000 in thank-you money to each of the first sites who agreed to be in the network. And the project has really been fascinating to us. Everybody has done it slightly differently.

Seattle has found great success in this. They've grown. We only funded this last summer. In the last eight months, they've grown from 5 sites to 22 sites, collaborating very widely, with more wanting to be in. they are beginning their first crowdsource story on graffiti very soon. And they want to take it now to the next level to develop a ____ network.

Miami has done it totally differently. They've created channels on their content management system where sites in the community could put up their content. Miami decided they didn't have enough independent websites in the community, so they had to create two of their own to put it on their channel, but they are now going to expand to sites covering kind of the Brazilian/ Haitian communities as well.

Tucson, very interestingly, networked sports bloggers in the community. It's been a tremendous success in that the sports bloggers now are now beating the local daily newspaper in a lot of sports coverage, and it's attracted the attention of the Phoenix papers who now want their content. So it's suggesting a new model of sports coverage.

Finally, we released a report earlier this week. There were some copies at the front table. I don't know if they are still there or not. You can also get them at J-Lab.org. [It is] of a big research initiative we undertook in Philadelphia last summer, at the request of the William Penn Foundation, to try to figure out how to amplify public affairs reporting in the city and how to come up with some recommendations for an investment strategy for the foundation to make. And I think we went in and found an incredibly robust community. We tracked 260 blogs there, about 60 of which had some journalistic DNA. And we found a great willingness to collaborate, so we have recommended an independent new news site much like The Voice of San Diego or Chicago News Coop, one that would hyperfocus on issues, one that would broadly collaborate with existing responsible media, and one that would incentivize community news applications with the creative technology community and build applications that could be tested out on the site. And the foundation announced this week that it would begin funding the first three tiers of this.

We also suggested an enterprise reporting fund, where individual news sites could apply for a $5,000 award to jumpstart reporting and quickly turn stories. And I think that's going to happen as well. So it would like kind of a hub-and-spoke system when all is done.

As you know, we do track non-profit grants to community news sites. We have a database on our site that chronicles about $146-million that has been awarded to news initiatives in the United States since 2005. And you can see it there. And we have many other programs, but I'll wind it up there. Thanks.

[Applause.]

Dan Gillmor: I hope that gives you one sense of why I'm so insanely optimistic [about] the amount of stuff going on. David Cohn is up next. Is there a way to make that full screen? [Adjustments are made.] David Cohn is, among many other accomplishments, the founder of Spot.us, which he will show you. And I do want to say how remarkable his project looks to me, and how far it has come along in the short time that it's been up and running. Before I even go on, I did want to also say I'm amazed and delighted, Rosental and your team, what a wonderful job you've done putting this event together. This is really astounding.

[Applause.]

Alberto Vargon said some things about David Cohn a while back that completely embarrassed him, but they are true. He is one of the really bright young folks in the world of journalism today, and thank God he's around.

David Cohn: Thank you, Dan. So yes, my name is David Cohn. And I'm going to talk to you guys about participatory journalism. And actually, I'm going to talk a little bit about the opposite of what Dan just said. When

Rosental told me who was going to be on this panel, I got really nervous. This is how I view some of these people. [laughter] And I'm a little rusty on Photoshop, but this is sort of how I view myself at my very best. [laughter] We are giving ten presentation points to the first person who names this character. It's an Ewok, yes.

But I have good news, which is that the era of a passive reader isn't over. And the reason it's not over is because it never really existed. We all know about the "rapidly evolving media landscape," which I'm calling a REML here, right? I sort of want to just put that out there and go beyond it. I'm sure we don't have to talk about, you know, the way that people now have an active voice and can articulate themselves. So let's just sort of posit it and move on.

What I really want to talk about is one part of the rapidly evolving media landscape, which is participation. And if you look up on Wikipedia, which is just a place to start, participation, you know, the Cliff Notes version of it is that it basically just means people doing things together. And this is why I say that the passive audience never really existed, because people have always done things together. It's just much easier now. A good example of this is actually last night a bunch of people went to a local bar. I don't know how other people ended up there. I found out about it via Twitter, and I actually imagine most people found out about it via Twitter. It just sort of happened afterwards everybody knew to go there.

Participation has many forms. Jan talked about, I think, a good array of them. I, too, sort of have a weird relationship with the word citizen journalism. Same with user-generated content. Sometimes it's called distributed reported. Sometimes it's called Pro/Am. Semantics aside, there is a general sort of idea there of people contributing and distributing the workload of journalism, right? Distributing the workload. Before, it was a few people at a newspaper who would do all this work, and now, that workload has been distributed in some sense, way, shape, or form. And I think that lends itself to certain types of reporting. This is the sort of classic, again, citizen journalism type stuff—when the plane landed in the Hudson, there's somebody there to take a photo of it. The photographer at the newspaper doesn't necessarily have to come and do that. Some of the work has been distributed.

But I think that there are certain types of reporting—citizen journalism, user-generated content, whatever you want to call it—I prefer participatory journalism actually for the broad spectrum—that it doesn't lend itself to. And I worked a lot in citizen journalism and I believe in it greatly, but I often got this response when asking people to really do a long-from story. They'd come back and say, "David, this is really hard work." And I'd say, "Yeah, I know." And it was kind of like asking people to do their college mid-term paper again. They just didn't enjoy it. They didn't have fun. I think there are certain types of stories where you want one person there who can stick to

the story for a long time. And this led me to think about community funded reporting, which is the act of distributing the financial load, right? Because if you're not distributing the work load, the work load is on a few people, then you have the financial burden. And this is actually a form of participation, I believe, right? People contributing not their time, but small amounts of money, and that's what led to Spot Us, which is at the URL Spot.us.

And this is just an example of it, but essentially you can look at this from the reader's perspective or the public's perspective. And there's this new sense of transparency and control about where their money goes, right? And I've said this before, and I never mean to pick on NPR, because NPR is amazing, but I use NPR as a juxtaposition. When you contribute to NPR, you are contributing to a great organization, but you're not sure where the money ends up, right? You're sort of throwing money over a fence. And I believe that there is a way, and Spot.us is sort of trying to map this out, where you can give the people a sense of transparency and control about where the money goes.

Another way to look at this is it's a menu, right? And traditionally, you know, if you were to walk into a restaurant and the waiter told you what you were going to eat for dinner, you'd walk right out. That's a ridiculous idea. But that's the way it's always worked in journalism. And again, it's not because journalists were evil or conniving. That's just the only way it could be done, right? Another way that I like to put this is that traditionally .0001% of the population would set the editorial agenda. And the reason why they would do that, again, is not a sense of control or nefariousness, it's just that they were the only ones with a freelance budget, right? They were the only ones with money that could then direct it to hire reporters. And so I want to increase the percentage of people that can set the editorial agenda by letting the public have a freelance budget if they can get organized.

And again, you know, this slide shows it. This story at the top here looking into mid-market blight issues and the story at the bottom, which was in Los Angeles, those both got funded. This middle one didn't. And that happens on Spot.us. I think if every story did get funded, that would actually be cause for concern for me. If a story doesn't get funded, we give credits back to the original users. They can reinvest in another story. And, you know, the reporter and I shake hands and we go our separate ways.

So I just want to talk briefly about two quick actual stories that happened, just to short of show what Spot.us is, because we're actually a platform. We're not a news organization; at least not traditionally understood. So we often work with other organizations. This was a story about civilian oversight of police in Oakland. And I originally launched the site with San Francisco in mind. I was living in San Francisco, but increasingly, the stories just gravitated to Oakland naturally. In covering the police, we've done at least five or six different projects around Oakland police. This one was with… It had an audio component with Making Contact, which his an NRP, National

Radio Project, program and it was also published in *The East Bay Express*. They were the print version, which is an alternative weekly. And the reason I wanted to highlight this is because one of the quotes that I got back from one of the people that contributed money really struck me, and it was that they said that it made them feel empowered. And at the time, again, I was living in San Francisco, but anybody in the Bay Area knows that the situation in Oakland with crime and police relationships there are strange. And I can imagine feeling like a victim living in certain parts of Oakland, and this was a way where they felt empowered. I think this also goes to something about — says something about media as a form of community organizing and community activism. Whereas, maybe in the sixties—and I admit, I missed the sixties—if you wanted to change something, get something done, a bunch of your friends would get together and you'd picket, or I don't know what you guys did in the sixties or what, but now you make a YouTube video, right? You can make a YouTube video. You can make media and that can impact change. It's a way of feeling empowered over your community.

Here's another one I wanted to highlight, which was published in *The Oakland Tribune*. And when we work with other organizations, like *Oakland Tribune*, we work with freelancers. So we won't fundraise for an *Oakland Tribune* staffer, but we will fundraise for a freelancer. And we also used SeeClickFix on this one, and we used another type of participation. We organized the I "Hella" Hate Potholes Bike Hunt. Hella is kind of like Wicked in Boston. It's a lot. We really hate potholes. And we got 15 people on bikes. We all went in different directions and found different potholes and we mapped it on SeeClickFix.

And I just wanted to highlight — just wanted to show that the medium of reporting isn't that important on Spot.us. We have funded audio. We have funded text. We have funded photo journalism. We have funded video. We've even funded two projects which took data from San Francisco, which released some data, and matched it up to create a database where you can search types of trees. So if you want to look up eucalyptus trees, you can see all the eucalyptus trees in San Francisco. You can write a report and say, "My tree's branch fell down." And you can also see which neighborhoods do or do not have trees.

And I also wanted to talk about this from the journalism side, because in truth, one of the things that inspired Spot.us for me was I was a freelancer, and freelancing, I think, is a horribly antiquated system. Think about freelancing 30-40 years ago, right? 30-40 years ago, if I were a freelancer, I imagine that I would write out my pitches, you know, and I would snail mail them off to editors, and I'd wait for their humble response, and then they would send it back. But it was very opaque, right? It's one-to-one communication, and it happens behind closed doors. And actually, despite the Internet, that's kind of the way freelancing still works. The only difference is that instead of snail-mailing, I email my pitches, right? So it's a little bit faster, but other than that, it's still one-to-one communication and

it's not public. The public doesn't really understand that process. And so on Spot.us, freelancers are pitching the world. They are pitching editors, as well as the public.

And this is another pitch I wanted to highlight on Spot.us, because we work with news organizations, and this is a pitch covering the Johannes Mehserle trial, which is happening in Los Angeles. There was a young man shot in Oakland by a BART police officer. And the trial got moved to Los Angeles because it was argued and probably true [that] he couldn't have gotten a fair trial in the Bay Area. And there's about seven different small organizations that were all going to spend about 250 to 500 bucks max to get a reporter in Los Angeles to all cover the trial. And they were all going to do that, right? And it would have been a horrible waste of resources, in my opinion, right? They all would have been chasing each other's tails. So instead, we sort of created a little de facto coop of sorts. We're working with KALW, an NPR station, Oakland Local, New American Media, Placeblogger, Spot.us, ____, California Beat, and I think that's everybody. I hope I didn't leave anybody out. But the idea here is that they could come together, and because it was all happening above ground and transparent, Spot.us just became a platform where they could organize a way to become a little bit of a wire service or a coop for covering the trial. There's also a sense of transparency in that reporting happens in public.

I just want to read this. The reason we're launching Seattle last week, and we funded our first Seattle story, and it's with *The Seattle Post Globe*, which is—I forgot how Jan described it, but it's one of the types of, you know, new startups. It's basically ex-Seattle PI people. And the reporter wrote this. He said, "The process of writing this crowd-funded story and of blogging about it is going to be a new experience for me. The old method of writing a story was to get approval from your editor, and then the story was something of a secret except for those who needed to know. When you were done, you published your story and you wowed the city with it, and made your competitors at other Seattle daily newspapers curse that hadn't thought of it first. (Or, at least that was the fantasy we journalists had.) So, what's the process now? It's developing, that's for sure. I would be very interested in hearing your suggestions for aspects of the story to cover or things you'd be interested in reading in this blog."

The idea here is to open up some of the process. This story was actually already funded when he wrote this, but it sort of touched me, because he put it in ways that I hadn't as a reporter. You know, he just sort of naturally grasps that he's now sort of reporting in public, because he's reporting for the public. And an immediate kickback I get from journalists, and this is understandable, is about scoops. You know, "What about scoops? You're going to give away the story." I love this question, and I have sort of a web-radical response, which is to say, scoops have the half life of a link, which is very short. And I have sort of a web-conservative response, which is, in your pitch, sort of frame it the way you want. Don't play all your cards. In San

Francisco, when we were covering the city budget, there were specific stories in mind, but we just said, "We're covering the city budget," and that doesn't really give anything away.

But I also want to go back to something that Dan talked about in terms of transparency, and also from that Wikipedia entry on participation, the one line that struck me actually from that Wikipedia page was about transparency, and it said, "For well-informed participation to occur, it is argued that some version of transparency, radical transparency, is necessarily, but not sufficient." And it really struck me, because rarely do we think about what conditions do we need for participation to really happen, right? What are the ground conditions? And I would argue, as does Wikipedia, that transparency is one of those conditions. You need to have a sense of transparency; otherwise, people are not going to be able to participate. You cannot ask for funding for a reporting project if you don't reveal a little bit about what that project is.

Now, on a broader level, I want to talk about why to experiment, and actually, Dan sort of already hit this, and the way I say it is, the rule of the Internet is that it is cheaper and easier to try something than to debate about whether or not to try something. And I have actually witnessed and been a part of some very ridiculous debates about whether or not we should try something. Spending weeks debating about something that in truth could be done in three days. I think, you know, as Jan mentioned, it takes an hour to create a WordPress blog. Try it, learn, fail early, fail often, and try it again. In terms of failing, we'll pass that on to Hans Solo later, which is Ethan Zuckerman.

And being true to that, I want to sort of show something that we're going to be trying and hopefully succeeding, but maybe failing, on Spot.us. This is actually an image from our test site, so this one more blog test is actually me. This is not the live site. But we're going to be trying a new experiment. I'm hoping to launch it in maybe like two or three weeks. We have our first sponsor for it, which I'm really excited. And it's going to be a way where people can support reporting financially, but not by whipping out their wallet, but by earning credits. So we're going to have a button "earn credits," and from there, there will be a page from a sponsor. Very blatant, very transparent that it is an advertising. It'll be a survey or a quiz, whatever people want to engage with their brand. And by taking the quiz… I use Levi's as an example, right? So Levi's wants to know, what's your favorite jeans, where you buy your jeans, how often you buy jeans, whatever Levi's wants to know. Or, maybe it's not even info about your buying habits. They just want you to engage with their brand. It's a fun quiz: What year was Levi's invented? 1852? Multiple choice. But after you engage with it, you get five dollars credits and then you get to decide where that money goes. So the idea here is that Spot.us will be trying something new. We'll be doing a form of advertising, but we're going to be very transparent about our advertising. Normally, advertising budget would go to the editor or the publisher, but me,

high in my judgment, would know where to put it. But I'm actually going to give it to the public. The public will get the advertising that they engage with.

And what does this represent? And this is actually what I used to say when I first started Spot.us, because I recognized that community-funded reporting, you know, sort of pushing boundaries in transparency, can feel a little bit uncomfortable. What I used to say is: That's what this represents. It's a new sense of transparency and collaboration in journalism. And I'm sort of here to see how far the rabbit hole goes and to report back to the larger journalism community. That's what I used to say. And this is what I'm saying now: So far, the water is absolutely fine. In fact, it's quite warm. The training wheels are coming off. In fact, I need to update this slide, because we did just launch in Seattle last week, and I'm already talking to people in Minneapolis and Austin and other regions across the country, because it's time to sort of open this up and make it available to more people.

And you can steal this idea. No joke. There are several ways to steal this idea. You can ask me how. In fact, these first two people did ask me how. And one of them launched today. They are both Italian, the first two. You Capital It, which I think is a nice play on Spot.us, and also SpotUs.it. Neither of these organizations are associated with Spot.us, and I have made it — you know, I'm promoting them, but they are not part of me. I can't even read their websites. If I'm honest with you, my Italian is very bad, but I hope that they are great. But you should check them out. They are taking the concept of community-funded reporting and they are doing it in Italy. And it's interesting, because they are launching within about a month-and-a-half of each other, so there's almost competition now to see who can do community-funded reporting better, which I think is great. There's also You Comm News, which is in Australia, which hasn't launched yet. But if you go to, you'll see a site that looks exactly like Spot.us. Thy are in the process of making their own logos and stuff like that. Again, this won't be associated with Spot.us, but they are using our code. And I encourage other people to either use our code, which is completely open-source, or you actually don't need to use our code. I think there are ways to try really lightweight versions of community-funded reporting. Again, if you really wanted to, the bare bones, you could probably have it up in an hour, if I'm completely honest.

And finally, it's my birthday. I just wanted to put that out. [Audience reacts with cheers and applause.]

Dan Gillmor: Boy, there's an applause line if I ever… [Laughter.]

Woman: How old are you?

David Cohn: I'm still under 30 and invincible.

Man: Right.

Dan Gillmor: So I should say in the interest of transparency that I'm allegedly an advisor to both David and Ethan's projects, but as you can tell, the learning goes much in the other direction, not from me. That's great stuff. Let's see. Ethan is up next. Ethan is the… What's your title at Berkman now?

Ethan Zuckerman: I think I'm a senior researcher there; although, it seems to change day to day.

Dan Gillmor: Is this the…?

Ethan Zuckerman: No, but I can deal with it.

Dan Gillmor: So Ethan Zuckerman is another hero in my world and I trust, those of you who know about him, in yours. And the rest of you, you'll understand why. You will join the group that does that when we see Ethan.

Ethan Zuckerman: [Laughs.] Well, if that's not a set-up for failure, I don't know what is. But I have to say my day has already gotten sharply better for the very simple reason that on Dave Cohn's slide I'm not portrayed as Chewbacca, [laughter], which I thought would have been the absolute obvious way to go about this. So I applaud him for being graceful; although, I have to say I think you missed an obvious one there.

So, my colleagues here have done a gorgeous job of sort of giving a broad view of the waterfront of what's going on in participatory media. I'm going to be infinitely more selfish. I'm going to talk mostly about my project. And even worse, I'm going to whine. And so I just want to warn you of that, because the frame that I'm putting around this is a frame that I'm hoping is going to come out more and more at conferences, and it's the frame of failure.

So I want to talk about the giant critical way in which my project, Global Voices, which is now five-and-a-half years old and as we'll see in a couple of ways has been very successful on a bunch of fronts, has failed in a fundamental way. And I think it's failed in a fundamental way that gets us to some of the issues that underlie participatory media and that really underlie a lot of these questions of the future of media. I want to start by acknowledging that the person that I think has done the best job of putting fail sort of into the forefront of the conference world is my friend, Katrin Verclas. Katrin runs an amazing website called Mobile Active, which basically looks at the use of mobile phones in the developing world for development purposes. And international development may be the only field that I can think about in which we fail more often than we do in journalism. In international development, we don't know what we're doing. We try a lot of things. Most of them fail. They take a long time to fail. And they tend to be very expensive. And sometimes when they fail badly, they hurt people. So

it's a bad field in which to fail, and yet, we fail often, and we actually need to get better about talking about it.

So what Katrin decided to do was start something called FAILfaire. And the idea behind FAILfaire is that you could only speak at FAILfaire if you came on stage with a catastrophic failure of some fashion or another. Your talk was about your catastrophic failure. It could only be *your* failure. You're not allowed to say, "Here's how Rosental failed. Here's how Dan failed." You have to talk about how *you* failed. And in fact, there's a contest, and someone was awarded at the end of this first gathering "the biggest failure," which they wore with pride, because in fact it's talking about how you got the lessons learned out of all of this. And so the first FAILfaire was in New York a couple of weeks ago. There's another one already planned for D.C. If you're going to have a FAILfaire, D.C. is a really good place for it, particularly in the international development space.

We started talking about this last night. I was talking with Joshua Benton from Neiman. And we think that there's space for a FAILfaire within the journalism space and maybe particularly in the participatory journalism space. Talking about it over dinner last night, we actually think this could be a bi-coastal virtual event over Skype with people failing from all corners of the globe. So keep your eyes peeled for this.

But I want to get into how I failed, because you'll remember, again, this is a whiny personal talk. And clicking doesn't work. That's another lovely failure. Can we help me out here? Clicking and going forward seems to, well, fail.

[Someone helps him get it set up and working.]

So this is my project. This is Global Voices. And I've actually been chewed out by my community for using the phrase, "This is my project." This is emphatically not my project. This is a project that I helped found five-and-a-half years ago, but it's a project that involves hundreds of volunteers all over the world. And it's a project that was built with a very specific agenda. And that agenda was to say, "Could we get better international coverage and particularly coverage of the developing world by trying to bridge the gap between participatory media and professional media?" There is an ongoing crisis—I don't have to tell anyone in this room this—having to do with the funding of journalism. And one of the places in which journalistic funding is being cut is in international newsrooms. We've seen American newspapers go from having dozens of oversea bureaus to having very, very few at this point. We're really down to three or four major U.S. newspapers that have a substantial overseas presence. At the same time, we're living in this connected world where it's more and more important to know what's going on in the rest of the world. And this seems like a really dysfunctional state to be in an increasingly connected world and have less connected journalism. So the question was, could you somehow lean on citizen media to try to bridge this gap?

And so what we started doing at a conference at Harvard in late 2004 was bringing bloggers into a room and saying, "Could we somehow turn all the individual work that we're doing into some sort of a newsroom?" And since early 2005, we've been producing a site which is basically a newswire of citizen media with a very strong emphasis on the developing world. We've covered over 150 countries, but the countries that we cover well tend to be countries that don't get a lot of attention in mainstream U.S. media. They tend to be in the global south. They tend to be poor. And the way that we do this is by looking for stories that you might not get elsewhere.

Our correspondents from Egypt lately have been rounding up a number of Egyptian blogs that have been talking about a wide range of shortages. And so what we're seeing is a number of people talking about a decision to become vegetarian for economic reasons, because the price of meat has gotten very, very high. This was perhaps not the funniest story in the series. The funniest story in the series by the same author rounding up from a similar set of Egyptian blogs was about the rising price of hashish in Egypt and why this was making a whole other group of people very, very upset. But this ends up being a very interesting window on what's going on in economics.

Now the way that we do this is not by having reporters on the ground who are going out and tracking down these stories; it's by reading blogs. That's all we do. We read thousands and thousands and thousands of weblogs. We also read Twitter feeds. We look at photos. We look at YouTube videos. But the input into our system is existing participatory media. And then we try to find these articles. We translate them, because we know that our audience doesn't read Arabic. We add some context around them. It doesn't make much sense to talk about economic vegetarianism unless you know that there's a financial crisis going on. We look for the ones that we think can be understood and, you know, embraced and amplified in one fashion and another by an international audience. Not every story necessarily makes sense outside of an Egyptian context. So we do a lot of journalistic work in trying to figure out how to amplify this stuff and bring it out.

And we've been doing this for a long time. We tend to do this around issues that come up in different blogospheres. Sometimes these end up being issues that are sort of one-off. Sometimes these end up being much longer conversations, like the thousands and thousands of blog posts that have arisen about Google in China or the sorts of things that come out about the Haitian earthquake. Some about news stories that don't really make the U.S. press, like ongoing political crisis in Fiji or Madagascar. To do this, we have to translate, and this has become the obsession within my community.

When we started doing this work in about 2005, a whole lot of people wrote in English. And the reason for this is that if you were an Egyptian blogger in 2005, you probably wanted to reach an international audience, because there

might not have been much of a local audience. And so if you had the capability of writing in English, you probably were writing in English at that point. That's completely changed. What we've seen is as more and more and more people come online, people are more likely to write in local languages. And on the one hand, this is great. It means that they are writing for local audiences. It's a much more participatory process. They are able to get much more back and forth with their readers on issues that they care about, but it makes it much harder for us to do this work of opening stories to the wider world. So we've added a whole new tier of volunteers within our system. We have a small number of paid editors. We have a large number of volunteer contributors. And we now have a vast number of volunteer translators. And they take the edition that we put out every day in English and they translate it into 20 different languages, including ones you've probably never heard of like Malagasy, which is the one that we're looking at here. But the reason that we put out a Malagasy language edition is that there are people in Madagascar who are very, very passionate about finding out about the rest of the world and ensuring that that conversation is involving their own language. So this has turned into a whole system for how you do participatory translation that's been adopted by people like the Ted Conference, who are now using the same model to do subtitling for their videos. All that translation and subtitling is being done by volunteers using this same sort of model of embracing.

We've also discovered that there are parts of the world where there's not a lot of citizen media coming out. And that's often because the resources aren't there for people to have found citizen media on their own. And so we started doing a project called Rising Voices, which basically said how disconnected, how disadvantaged, how poor a community could you find and still have people embrace citizen media? We did this through a grants process. It was inspired in part by Jan's work. We tried to do it in a very open fashion. People could come to us and say, "I need up to $5,000 to try to do citizen media in my community." We had a big evaluation of former projects as well as people on our team, and we funded dozens of these projects to do citizen media everywhere from Medellin, Colombia to rural Mongolia, where there's an amazing team that's working on environmental issues. And what this ends up doing is creating groups like Foko Madagascar, which started as an English language learning club, turned into a computer learning club, turned into a bunch of journalists, and these journalists now find themselves—and this makes us very uncomfortable—on the frontlines of demonstrations against the government. So we've been training sort of 16-year-old journalists to figure out, what are the basic journalistic techniques? We used some of Dan's material to do this. And then at a certain point, they decided that they didn't just want to tell the neighborhood stories that we figured they would tell; they wanted to tell some of the very complicated political stories going on in this country whose politics are so complicated [that] I can't tell you about it in the ten minutes that I have on stage.

So participatory media ends up being very complicated when you invite people to go out and do work which can actually be dangerous in the long run. We have complicated feelings about it, but we also have a great deal of pride about it. And we love the fact that what we're doing is empowering a group of folks who are now showing up. These are kids in rural Madagascar showing up for a video conference on climate change in Copenhagen. Organized by Foko Club by this journalism group that's now getting people to participate in international [journalism] of one fashion or another.

I mentioned dangerous. One of the things that's been happening with our community from very early on is that people who get involved with citizen media get arrested. And so we've been discovering that we have to provide a lot of tools to protect them [and] to advocate for their freedom. We've ended up in the course of this becoming a free speech organization. And more than anything else, we've built this sort of amazing international team of people who are involved with this. So this is all the success part, because I have to give you the success before I talk about the failure.

Here's the failure. Here's the reason we started this project. I have been making maps of what parts of the world media pays attention to since 2003. They are very, very ugly, because I am a lousy graphic designer, but they are fairly informative. And this is a recent map. It comes from Google News. And the chunks of it that are in red are parts of the world that get a whole lot of media attention on Google News. So across all of Google News, these are how often countries were mentioned in the last week. And I've been doing these maps now for about seven or eight years, and they are always the same. [laughs] There is always very, very little proportional attention on Sub-Saharan Africa. There is almost never attention on Central Asia. There is almost always heavy attention in certain parts of the Middle East, but only certain parts of the Middle East. It's almost always Iraq, Iran, Palestine.

There are systematic biases in how we cover the world and who we choose to pay attention to. Probably the simplest way to get your head around this is Nigeria versus Japan. These countries have the same population. In any given year, you're going to end up with eight to twelve times as many stories about Japan as you do about Nigeria. And these are both enormously important countries. You cannot possibly understand global politics without understanding these countries.

Now I said I've been making these maps since 2003. I started making them in 2003 and said, "I would like to start a project to change this map." We have thoroughly, catastrophically failed to change this map. And I want to talk about how we failed on this. We produce media specifically... [Recording stops/starts.] ...actually helps anybody. I would really like to figure out how I peel off two of those photographers, get one to pay attention to Fiji and one to pay attention to Madagascar. I've been working on it for five-and-a-half years now. I have failed utterly and catastrophically. And I'm here to admit it publically, because I'm hoping someone will help me fix it. And if you want to

help me fix it, this is how you find me. And thank you very much for listening to me.

[Applause.]

Dan Gillmor: Awesome as always. Actually, let me just raise a quick question to you, Ethan, just to start and then you guys [can] get to your questions. Your equating failure almost completely with the lack of attention by traditional media that are crumbing anyway; in many cases, not doing the journalism that you… In other words, you said all the bureaus are being shut and now you're not getting coverage. Well, maybe you wouldn't have anyway. I'm not sure you're… I question that piece of it. Otherwise, I agree.

Ethan Zuckerman: [Not speaking at the microphone.] We can show graph disclosure. We can do traffic routes. And I could show you…

Man: [Inaudible.]

Ethan Zuckerman: [Now at the microphone.] What you would see as well then is when something happens that's getting a great deal of international media attention, say, Google's decision to pull out of China, traffic to our site spikes. And you can closely, closely correlate our traffic to international news stories that got a great deal of U.S. and European play. And so while I'm sympathetic to the notion that traditional journalism is decaying dinosaurs, I don't think we're nearly that far yet. I think what shows up in *The New York Times* and what shows up on ABC News continues to be immensely important. And what I've been finding is that it's quite hard to inject into that ecosystem, which I think still is where the majority of Americans are getting their news [and] new stories; although, it's fairly easy to inject new voices — would be the conclusion that we've come to so far.

Dan Gillmor: We'll pick this up later. Your question.

Angela Grant: Hi. My name is Angela Grant. I just want to say this has been a great panel, so thanks, everyone. My question is, in your experience in what you've seen in participatory journalism, I'm curious about whether most people choose to participate with the written word, with text, or other forms of media, (i.e.) photo, video. What do you see most frequently?

Dan Gillmor: So is it text, audio, video, what? The answer is certainly yes.

Angela Grant: Yeah. Are you seeing people choose to participate mainly with text, or how frequently are people using other forms of media?

Jan Shaffer: You know, I think for ordinary community news sites, photos are the most comfortable thing for people to do. Writing is more daunting for them, but they can be cajoled along to write, if they feel like there's an editor who won't let them make a fool of themselves.

Dan Gillmor: Certainly seeing a lot of, I think, it's everything, but, yes, sir.

Ken Martin: I'm Ken Martin. I just started TheAustinBullDog.org on April Fool's Day here in Austin. I've got to tell you that Jan Shaffer and J-Lab are the most amazing resource that you could ever hope to find. I got a New Voices Grant last year, and while the $17,000 that I got out of it so far, you know, made it possible for me to get this launched, but what has really been amazing is the network of resources that I've been wired into. And if they went by too fast, you need to go to J-Lab.org and take advantage of the learning resources in there for your organization. They are just fantastic. Also, I want to thank David Cohn, because I stole a piece of his Spot.us system for the Austin Bull Dog. I've got three projects up there now that I'm asking for crowd-funding on. I just put out an email about four or five days ago to ask 120 friends to contribute to the Bulldog, and out of the trickle of contributions I've gotten so far, two of those were minor amounts for—I'm sorry—two of the crowd-funded projects, so I just want to thank all of y'all for all your help.

Dan Gillmor: I don't want to interrupt, but we're short on time and got a long line of questions.

Ken Martin: Oh, OK.

Nick Waters: Yes. My name is Nick Waters. I have two questions directed specifically to Ms. Shaffer. My first question, in the sites that you referred to that have been successful, and I understand you may not know the logistics and specifics of each site, but in a generalization, what are the demographics of the regions or cities of these blogs that have been self-sustaining? You mentioned approximately half of them have. Are we talking towns of 100,000-plus or regions of a million?

Dan Gillmor: Stick with that one question, because there's other people with questions.

Nick Waters: OK.

Jan Shaffer: You know, it really runs the gamut. Deerfield, New Hampshire is a town of 16,000 people and very rural, you know, retailers do ads, to Chappaqua, New York, which is Hillary Clinton country and a bedroom suburb of New York City. It's really all over the map, so that there is not one demographic.

Man: I wonder if we can bake the ability to talk about failure into our funding world. I imagine it's very, very hard when you're on a funding cycle to talk about failure. How can we do that?

Dan Gillmor: The good funders I've seen want to know what's working and what's not, and they hate surprises, and they expect a lot of this to fail. At least, if you're looking at the Knight Foundation, which was funding a lot of this stuff, they are completely comfortable with the idea that lots of it is going to flop. But we need funders who really get that, and not all of them do.

Ethan Zuckerman: I think it's really important that we don't backpedal or sort of soft-sell failure. I come out of the international development community. Every grant that you do with USAID, you're required to issue your lessons learned, which are basically your failures, but it softens it. And I actually think calling it what it is, "This is what failed," and having that be mandatory as part of grant reporting. And honestly, I think encouraging people to tell the stories and celebrating it in this sort of way that Katrina is doing would be a huge step in the right direction.

Dan Gillmor: Let me add one other thing. In Silicon Valley, where I've spent a lot of my life, the culture there says that failure is not something to be ashamed of, as it is in many cultures around the world and much of the U.S., but rather something you, if you didn't do it stupidly, then you've actually gained, you've just banked some capital for the next thing.

Man: Probably to Ethan. The U.S. State Department is flying the Twitter's founder, Jack Dorsey, around the world to promote freedom. I would like to know, what are you thoughts on that? I mean, the amount of money being spent to fly one person around.

Ethan Zuckerman: I think right now there is this embrace of this notion that we can somehow export freedom by exporting tools, and I think that's mistaken. I think that we would do a much better job of sort of embracing people who are already using digital media, trying to figure out how to point people towards them, but I also think there's a real danger in sort of selecting just the most dissident voices and particularly selecting dissidents who we happen to agree with. I think what's really, really powerful is the fact that people that we don't agree with, people coming from profoundly different points of view, can use these sort of tools. And figuring out how we get better at listening to everybody who is using these tools would be a much better interaction than flying anyone, myself included, around the world to somehow explore freedom through exploring tools.

Dan Gillmor: Next.

George Lewis: Hi. I'm George Lewis. I'd like to ask David about an L.A. project called Stories from McArthur Park, which kind of strikes me as the journalistic equivalent of The Simple Life starring Paris Hilton and Nicole Ritchie. You've got two young white girls writing about their adventures in McArthur Park, a poor Latino neighborhood. And the entries are things like,

"Oh, my God, there are cockroaches in the apartment!" I'm just wondering, what's the point?

David Cohn: Sure. And, you know, I think it's a good conversation to have. It's an interesting project, and especially with the conversations they had. They haven't actually done any of the reporting. I think what caused a lot of the excitement was their personal blog, which isn't what we're fundraising for. And, you know, I can understand where some people took it and sort of thought that this was — the point of the project was their personal narratives. And, you know, in some respects, it's, you know, some people sort of said that because they were white women, they shouldn't be allowed to report in this community, which I don't agree with, but I can also understand where some people got offended by their personal narratives. And we're working with them. It's been a learning experience for us. I don't know if it's a failure yet, because it's actually an ongoing project, something that we're learning from right now.

Woman: A commentary about that. The people in the Latino community were not opposed to the fact that they were white and they were covering the Latino community. They didn't like what they were writing. They felt it was inane. It was too self-referential and was not referring to the people in the community.

David Cohn: Agreed.

Woman: That's what it was. So it was a misunderstanding there. But I have another question for Ethan. In some of the Latin American countries, there are these insult laws, where if a public figure feels that a journalist has insulted him, it's criminal defamation. They can throw you in jail. There is a reporter here from Chile who says that. So how do you protect these people, who may not be experienced on this, against this danger?

Ethan Zuckerman: Yeah. So, we're very, very cognizant of this. And we've been working with traditional press freedom organizations to try to ensure that they are not just protecting licensed, registered, professional journalists, but they are protecting anyone who is engaged in an act of journalism. At the same time, we also are working with groups that are trying to educate people engaged with participatory media about what the risks can be. And so, for instance, my colleague over at the Berkman Center, David Ardia, runs something called the Citizen Media Law Project that within the U.S. is trying to provide information on legal liability and risk for citizen media. It turns out there are in the U.S. some simple things that people can do. You can add to your renters or homeowners insurance policy liable insurance, which in this country costs almost nothing, and you just sort of have to ask for it. And for three bucks a year, you have some legal protection. We need to build out systems like that for countries where journalists of all sort, whether they are participatory journalists or professional journalists, are threatened. We're not doing a ton of that work ourselves. I feel like groups like Community to

Protect Journalists, our work is persuading them, and they've been very receptive to it, that people who are doing citizen media and are doing serious work within this new medium should be considered and protected as journalists.

Dan Gillmor: Yeah, that's good.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Thank you very much.

[Applause.]