

12th Annual International Symposium on Online Journalism

Day 1, April 1, 2011:

Keynote Address: *Beyond Breaking News*

Keynote Speaker:

- **Meredith Artley:** Vice-President & Managing Editor, CNN.com
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Rosental Calmon Alves: I'm going to invite Neil Chase to come here and introduce our keynote speaker now. Neil has been an editor at *The New York Times* and Market Watch and *Wall Street Journal*, whatever. And he is now with Federated Media, and he knows this speaker.

Neil Chase: Thank you, Rosental. It's always an amazing pleasure to come down here and see the amazing group of friends that Rosental has; all of whom come here, all of whom know him and love coming here to be part of this thing. It's also a real pleasure to introduce my friend Meredith. At least she was my friend until I started doing the introduction. [laughter] Meredith is a really interesting person. She went to journalism school at Missouri. She's from Missouri. She was destined to have a journalism career. There's some weird rumors about affairs with Hunter Thomson and stuff like that. None of it's been proven. [laughter] But what she has proven is an amazing ability not just to manage news, but to realize that as a manager in the news business, you're not actually managing news. We always get accused of managing news. We're not managing news, we're managing people.

When I got to *The New York Times* as the Deputy Editor for news there at the website in 2005, Meredith had just left, I don't know, a year or two earlier to be the Web Editor at the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Times* paper in Paris. And I inherited a staff of people who were all relatively young, just out of school, and had been in their first job for five-years-plus at *The New York Times*. They were happy to be there and were still there. They all had some nickname that Meredith had conveyed upon them while she was running the place, and they all had gotten used to under her tutelage really important things like going out for drinks every night after work. She built an amazing team there of people who worked really hard in a really challenging situation, where there was a newsroom up the street of people who didn't quite know what you did and had an average age 20 years older than you. And they really made a huge impact, not just on the *Times* but on journalism. And she takes a lot of the credit and the blame for that.

Meredith went on to *The L.A. Times*. She ran the web operations there after she was at *The Herald Tribune* in Paris. She is now at CNN in Atlanta running CNN.com and doing a bunch of amazing things there at a place where, as you know, it's nonstop 24/7. You don't get a day off to plan anything. But she's planned a lot of things and made a lot of changes. I think she's going to show you a little bit of what she's done and what's next. Meredith Artley.

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[Applause.]

Meredith Artley: Thank you. Thanks, Neil. Hi, everyone. Nice to meet you all. Okay, so, we're going to talk about a few things. I'm going to talk about them naturally from the CNN lens, but there are a lot of things that we've been inspired by that are kind of floating around out there that we want to show you about. So, we're going to talk about some of the things that we're working on and where we think it's all — where we think it's all headed. I'm going to get used to working with Keynote, which is this.

So, we're going to talk about the journalism. Glenn said it earlier in his remarks this morning. Let's be sure that we keep that front of mine. We talk a lot about technology and all these great things and these toys we can work with, but it's always about the journalism. So, I want to talk about that a little bit, and then we're going to talk about some of the things we're doing around participation, video, and mobile.

First, I want to talk about Japan. It was March 11th that the earthquake and the tsunami that followed devastated much of this country. And it's a story that we're living with today. We've got it all over...for those of you who are in the industry, we've got it all over our homepages still. It's a shocking, devastating story in many cases. And we are hearing some stories of hope, but I want to...my point in talking about Japan is a couple of things. One is Lindsay Lohan is great, you know. There are great stories around Lindsay, and that gets a lot of interest sometimes. And we're all glad that the cobra was found who escaped from the Bronx Zoo. And you hear a lot about those stories getting all the traffic and getting all the buzz. And this story, this Japan story has broken all previous records, except for one day, and that was the election of President Obama.

So, the interest is there. People care. We are seeing a growing interest in people caring about a connected world. People caring about international events. The ark of this story, at least for CNN, [and] I think for many others was, you start with the story of a country and its culture, and then you started to hear stories of survival and stories of victims and of devastation. And it gets...it almost moves across from Japan and around the globe in different directions till it starts to really hit home. People started talking about Chernobyl and Hiroshima. Then people started talking about radiation in our daily lives and, "Is it okay to eat sushi?" And, "Is it okay to walk through a scanner at the airport? What's that doing for me—or to me?" And that's happening right now. And so, it's fascinating that this tragedy has so many different angles and so many different elements and lives with us. And it's fascinating the way that it's resonated.

Here are some numbers for you. So, CNN is a monster site. I still feel relatively new there. I've been building on a lot of the strong foundation that Mitch Gelman and others have built there. I've been there for about a year-

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and-a-half, so I'm always still shocked at the size of the site. But these are the—these numbers are the average of the ten days since March 11, right? So since the Japan quake, these are the 10-day average numbers. So, 75-million page views a day for CNN.com for the PC-based site, as in not the mobile site. 15-million average video starts a day. A million app downloads in a 10-day span. And 9-million average page views a day on the mobile site. I think the highest was 14-million on the day of the quake. That's stunning, right? It's stunning in that it shows that amount of interest and engagement in a story that's so massive and so connected to the rest of the world, in a culture that is not familiar with a lot of our audience.

So, that's...I have this somewhat cheesy metaphor for editorial approach at CNN.com. I say that it's like Pilates, which I guess Pilates is like Yoga. I don't really know. I don't really practice Pilates. And now I've disclosed to you my fitness habits, which is very odd in a conference like this. But the point is this: pilates, I hear, is about strengthening your core and stretching into new areas and that's exactly what we're trying to do. So, you strengthen the core of what CNN has been doing and what CNN is known for, which is breaking news. No surprise. And then you want to stretch it into areas that it's not traditionally gone before, and that's what we're doing. We're doing it with stories like Japan, but then we're also doing it with beats and topics and using technology in interesting ways. And so that's what I'm going to show you.

And first, to illustrate that and wake you up after lunch, we have a little video that shows some of the original video pieces we've been doing, and it shows some of the ways we've been stretching the brand into new places.

[Video plays.]

[Music plays while showing various videos and still images as various people speaking.]

Man: Dr. Drew would be nothing with me. I mean, look at him now. What's he doing? What's he got?

Steve Martin: Steve Martin! Steve Martin! Steve Martin!

Woman: We asked our reporters to help us tell the story of Hurricane Katrina five years later. So we gave them access to dozens of CNN photographs, allowed them to download them, and then go visit those locations and take the photos.

Woman: [making noises]...falling asleep with you.

[Music...]

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Man: I heard that Larry King was gonna do this. Is that not really...? Is it...? Is it not Larry? Because if Larry's not gonna do this....

[Music plays with various still images.]

[Video ends.]

So, that's that. And let's talk about it. There's a couple of things in there you saw, but there's a lot of entertainment, there's a lot of technology, there's food. I mean, that's a little non-traditional for CNN to cover food. And so we launched this Food Beat Blog about a year ago called Eatocracy, and it's amazing. We weren't sure how that was going to resonate with the audience. That's not really something people were expected from us. And so, our wonderful food editor, Kat Kinsman, did a post on—as an ode to the PB&J of all things. She was having some fun. And we had more than 400 comments on it. Non-critical, non-snarky comments on how people like to eat their peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Those little things tell us that that kind of strategy of stretching and going into these things that are of our times of the days that we live in, that's really working.

And then there's one or two things I wanted to point out that just didn't make it into the video. And this is another way that we're looking to stretch what CNN does for the world. This is one of the most important things we will do ever. This is advocacy journalism. This is public service work. It's called The Freedom Project, and it's a year-long initiative. It's not just a series. It's at least a year long. Who knows, maybe we'll go more. We're working very closely with CNN International on it. And it's telling the story of modern-day slavery, of human trafficking around the world in all its forms—of child labor, of prostitution, of domestic servitude. You can imagine the stories that you can tell here. And then from there, you can go further. You can imagine the impact you can have and the change that you could affect. So, we are stretching into this as well, and this is a topic that we're very proud of. It is a beat. It is a beat like food is, like health is. We're elevating it to that.

And I have no way to segue into this gracefully. And then there's the Royal Wedding. So, it's just another area to show that we're...and an international one too. That we're going to be having some fun with this as well. Our blog called Unveiled just went up a couple of days ago. And we're going to be doing some fun things with Facebook and others around it.

So, let's talk about participation and what that means. We have this wonderful thing at CNN called iReport. I think it's one of the best assets CNN has going for it. And there's something we've created which is a new paradigm for storytelling. It's in beta, and I want to show it to you. It's called The Open Story. So, you take traditional reporting, you take user-generated content, and you take data, right? Those are all three things that usually all sit in different places on websites, right? They could be on the same page,

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but they're generally [is] a link here to one, or the comments are at the bottom, or iReport may be over in a different corner of the site. But what would happen if you wove all those things together? You would end up with something like what we created, which is called The Open Story. So, this just launched. This is actually...this is from the revolution in Egypt, but this didn't go live, but this is using real data. So, this was just purely a mock-up. I just wanted to make that clear.

So if you look at this, it shows you where we were getting submissions. It combines submissions from our iReporters who are there and elsewhere and CNNers, which is marked by this little guy here and some of the video. This isn't going to play but some of the video. This is obviously Tahrir Square, where there are, you guys heard, several thousand people gathering today talking about reviving the revolution. It's not over there yet. This is content we got from people who were on the ground there, in addition to who CNN had on the ground. We had at least a couple of dozen people there for us. And it's very serendipitous, and you just get lost in this.

And we rolled this out for the first time here in Austin a few weeks ago during South-by, and it was great. We had a lot of drunken, crazy people collaboratively reporting [laughter] the story of South-by and what they were seeing. There was a lot that we chose not to push live, but...[laughter]...but it was great. So, you can see we can use this in kind of softer news situations and kind of more big breaking news stories. And if you look on the homepage right now, a couple of days ago we went up with a Japan Open Story, so that's there on the site now. It's in beta. It's our first take at really trying to not put baby in a corner. Don't put iReport over here and don't put the comments over there. We've got amazing journalists at CNN. We've got amazing people who are giving us the gift of what they are capturing on their iPhones and writing to us and sending us photos of what's happening around them. And we want to treat it as precious as it should be treated. Precious in a good way.

So, this kind of illustrates that CNN has 47 bureaus around the world now. But, you know, that's great. It's a big honking news organization, but that's not it. That's not all. We have over three-quarters of a million iReports so far. And if approach journalism, if you approach your daily report that way, if you think about that in just about everything you do, you end up changing storytelling in big ways. That's our ambition. That's our hope.

So, I want to show you guys a little bit about how we're using technology in some interesting ways. This hasn't gone live yet. This is a preview. We first started talking about this a couple of weeks ago at South-by. It's video commenting, is what it is. So, here's our South by Southwest story. But if you look over there, there's this red button that says, "Record your video response." This should be live this summer. We've got it working inside the building. We're just working on a few other issues. So, if you have a screen attached to your—or camera—excuse me—attached to your computer or to

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you iPhone or whatever it might be, you can record it. It'll sniff it out. And then you'll see yourself there, and you can hit record. You could say, "You know what? I think Southwest is great," or, "I think it's overrated, blah, blah, blah." And then you hit 'done.' And then it says, "Thanks." And then for now, it appears in the comments with the rest of the story. Now that's just—that's just kind of cool technology-wise.

Think about the ramifications of that, especially for a company whose core competency, whose core asset is video. Right? Once we work through with our friends in the legal department all the different disclaimers and whatnot, all this could go on air. We can, of course, use it all around the site and will, as we do now with iReport. And we use iReports on air a lot too. But this is going to amplify that. This is going to take the voice of the audience and allow us to do bigger, better, more participatory things together with it.

We have a lot of great partners we're working with; Vimeo, in particular. We're doing a really nice project around video with them. Some of you probably know Vimeo. They do...there's some really great, artful, high-quality video there. And we're working with folks like them.

So, let's talk about video. This is our video page right now. If you go on CNN.com/video, you'll find this. And it's fine. It's actually quite good. We think it's, you know, been one of the leaders of the industry in terms of web video, as CNN probably should be. And, but it's got issues, right? The screen is a little small. The resolution is just okay. It still kind of feels like a video silo. It's not necessarily...I mean, you could put it in a story, but you kind of end up in this little cul-de-sac. So, we're going to change it this summer, and it's going to look something like this. And there's a couple of things you'll notice here immediately. It's more cinematic. The video is going to be HD in every instance where we have HD, which is more often than not these days. But there's some really cool—sdthere's some cool bells and whistles here that I want to show you.

So, you have these top videos, these videos that have been aggregated by our editorial team and others. We can combine things together if you want to put together all the Chupacabra sightings or all of the, you know, talking twins or whatever it is. We can aggregate those as a collection. Or, if it's around ac360 or Piers Morgan, whatever. You can pull those, you can drag those into this channel, right? So, you're creating a playlist for your video. It's a video playlist of CNN video. iReports can go in here, all of it, right? So, that's kind of cool. So, you've got this playlist.

And then, let's say you're watching this.... You're at work, let's say. We get a lot of at-work usage. Say you're watching a clip from Piers Morgan talking to Ricky Gervais and your boss walks by and there you are mucking around watching Ricky Gervais at work. So, you have to stop. You've got to do something else. Oh, and this, by the way, just kind of shows [that] we're going to be able to put related tweets, iReports, videos, a lot more closer to

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the video. We're going to bring those things together in new ways. So, you had to stop that Piers clip, and, you know, life happened, you had to get back to it, and then later, you're back home on your couch, and you fire up your iPad. And since you're authenticated through something that's called TV Everywhere, you're going to be able to pick up exactly to the frame where you left off.

Paul talked about this earlier. Where did Paul go? There you are. Hi, Paul. And that playlist will come with you too, right? So right now on CNN.com you have this singular experience of watching a video and then going and finding another. So, you can create what you want to create and view it wherever you want to view it and so on and so forth. So, if you have an interactive TV, if you have a Google TV, you fire that up, [and] you can pick up where you left off on your computer at work or on your iPad on your couch, and the playlist follows you wherever you go.

So, we're really excited about that. We think it's great technology. We think it's going to...we think it's just cool. We think it's going to open up a lot more storytelling possibilities that we haven't even fully realized perhaps in terms of meeting our audiences where they are.

And let's talk about mobile a little bit. Rosental made a specific request, which is great and good. This is a little graphic we have that we like to show. You know, you look at the one-way mediums and their penetration, and then you look at, you know, other platforms and services that are out there and the two-way nature of it. So, it's something we like to look at to remind ourselves that this really has to be truly participatory. It really has to happen on multiple platforms.

A few stats. Again, this is where my mind is still blown away to this day. But CNN Mobile, there's the mobile sites. So it's the number one news site on mobile. It gets...well, in February, it got 174-million page views a month. In March, we don't have the official numbers yet, but everyone's thinking with the response we got from Japan and what we saw that it will be over 200-million page views for the month on the mobile site. It's mind blowing.

We're on iPhone and iPad and have been for a while. We had a million downloads during the Japan quake as I mentioned. So, we recently reached a total of six million downloads for iPhone and iPad apps globally. It's massive! it's just huge! And then we went out on Android when Android came out with their tablet. We were there when that went to market.

So, you know, it's about being everywhere, which CNN, because it's such a big organization, is in a lot of places, but also in a lot of places with our audience. It's about using video, which is a core strength, and innovating on that. It's about doing what we do well on breaking news, but stretching into new areas there too. And it's about using this wonderful thing we have in

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iReport and creating a more personal relationship with CNN and our audience.

So, that's where it's headed. Those are some of the key elements [and] some of the big things we're looking at. And it all comes back to Pilates, [laughter], oddly enough, if there's one thing you say for the rest of the day. So, thanks a lot. Thanks.

[Applause.]

Jonathan Groves: Jonathan Groves from Drury University. I was calling—*calling*. I was *asking* about two things on your site that I noticed. One is that some CNN stories I've seen are long form, almost like long-form print stories on the website. And I also wondered with this new look that you're going to that's so video-centric, what about the people who are still interested in text and reading and engaging with your material that way? Do you still see a place for that on your website.

Meredith Artley: Absolutely.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Just a moment. The next panel of people can go ahead and come up.

Meredith Artley: Thank you for noticing the long-form storytelling that's happening. That is part of the stretching that we're trying to do. CNN isn't always known for enterprise, investigative. We do it sometimes, but we're really trying to hit that daily. So, where there's an enterprise team on...you know, part of my team is a specific enterprise unit dedicated to that kind of storytelling. We're only going forward with that. Text is...text is text, right? It's ubiquitous and great. We want to just make sure that we're doing...it's really not an either/or. You want to...you want to strengthen the video as much as you can and make that as interactive and cool and semantic as possible, and then you want to bring in these strong text pieces and tell those stories together. So, yeah, thanks.

Jonathan Groves: Did I just miss it in that front page then? The mockup that you showed that was so video-centric.

Meredith Artley: Yeah. That was a mockup of the new video page, but not of the new homepage.

Jonathan Groves: Oh, not? Okay.

Meredith Artley: Yeah, thank you.

Jonathan Groves: That's my misunderstanding.

Meredith Artley: Yeah, it's an important thing to clarify. No, thanks.

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Alejandro Cardenas: Hi. Alejandro Cardenas.

Meredith Artley: Hi.

Alejandro Cardenas: From El Universal in Mexico. I saw your new platform or your new design for video. And I was wondering what about ads, advertisement? So, it's like a resign or it's like—maybe it's not. You cannot see it a lot, so are you sacrificing advertisement for much more multimedia?

Meredith Artley: Are you a plant from our sales team? [laughter] No. It's... yes, I think there was one ad on that mockup. I think it's an Adidas ad. I do think our sales team said the exact, like, "Maybe you could put it a little bit higher." We're still...it's very much a mockup. It's coming out this summer. There will very likely be more advertising on the page.

Alejandro Cardenas: The idea was that, you know, when you start, like, trying to make new stuff, you have that problem, and maybe you were wondering or finding something, and maybe inside the video you would have some advertisement or something like that.

Meredith Artley: Yeah, exactly. And there was one mockup where I showed you can squeeze back the video and show related content. You can also squeeze back that video and shows ads as well, so we're looking at different treatments. I know our sales team is very interested in not necessarily—or doing unconventional models for advertising with video, not just putting it at the front or the back or the middle, and not just pasting it to the side, but maybe, you know, you see these lower thirds and these different formats coming up, so we're definitely looking at all that.

Alejandro Cardenas: Thank you.

Meredith Artley: Thanks on behalf of the sales team at CNN.

[Laughter.]

Robert Quigley: I'm Robert Quigley from *The Austin American-Statesman*.

Meredith Artley: Hi.

Robert Quigley: Hi. A quick question. The iReport system is one of the few kind of media-made social networks. What was the thinking behind building your own social network, instead of just leveraging mainstream social networks? And has there been any drawbacks to that strategy? Obviously, it's working, but...

Meredith Artley: Yeah. You know, I can't think of the drawbacks. It's all upside for iReport. It's four years old now. I love the way you phrase it,

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right, that it's its own social network. It really is. I don't know that four years ago when we set out to do that, that we were positioning it that way. I think it was, "We've got this incredible audience who's very vocal and very active. How can we do things together with them?" And it just started to grow. And every time we push it, every time we try something new, readers or users, watchers, viewers respond. So, it's just—it's amazing. It's a gift, right, and one that we foster. So, it is our own social network. Yeah, I hope that answers your question. Hi.

Josh Benton: Hi. CNN.com has a tremendous platform promotion for promotion in the form of the network.

Meredith Artley: Will you tell us who you are, please?

Josh Benton: I'm Josh Benton from the Nieman Journalism Lab. I'm wondering since you have access to all the data on the website of things, all the things that CNN does to promote its web properties, whether at CNN.com or the Twitter accounts or anything else, on the network, what is effective in terms of driving people to move over to those other platforms? What have you found works well or what have you learned about using that cross-platform promotion?

Meredith Artley: Effective on driving any of the other platforms from the website?

John Benton: In other words, is it promoting individual stories on the site? Is it just an hourly reminder, "Hey, by the way, we have this website thing"? Is it, "Follow us on Twitter"? Are you able to see on the data side actual changes on website interactions based on how it's promoted on the network?

Meredith Artley: There's a little bit. A little bit. We don't have a mountain of data on that at all, but there is a very active effort. It usually takes place over email—at least 8,000 emails a day around—how can we make sure that we're promoting, you know, this great new thing on our multiple Twitter accounts? Or, how can we make sure that this special that we have coming up this weekend is in the right places on the site? And not to do that in a promotional way, but to treat that as exactly what it is, is really good journalism. But you do need to take some care when you're doing that. You can't...readers will know if you're just saying, "Tune in at eight." Right? That's not that compelling. Tell me why, and give me the big headline and give me a nugget and give me something good and interesting. So, that's an active conversation. And then, how do we see that across all the platforms? Absolutely.

John Benton: Right. I guess I'm mostly thinking of promoting the website on TV as opposed to promoting TV from the website.

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Meredith Artley: Yeah. One of the things we did last month [on] Eatocracy, our food blog, we had Richard Blaze. Do not tell [me]. I'm really trying to not find out who won Top Chef, because we're going to watch it tonight at home. But we had Richard Blaze on our air doing Eatocracy segments during our daytime CNN TV, right? And they were all branded Eatocracy. And he was filing for Eatocracy, and we were talking about, you know, he was interacting with our Eatocracy audience. So, it's that kind of thing, right, that works really well. Less like, "Just go to CNN.com," and more connected with an actual journalism.

Pat Thomas: Hi.

Meredith Artley: Hi.

Pat Thomas: I'm Pat Thomas from the University of Georgia. iReport has really caught my attention as well, because I think it's unusual, because it seems like the people who curate the iReport topics do get a kind of relationship. I had a...it was about a year ago, I had a graduate student who was interning at CNN, and he was given—he proposed doing a story called "I am transgendered." And he wanted to...

Meredith Artley: That was excellent.

Pat Thomas: He put the word out on the iReport network. Now, this is not always an easy topic for young people or anyone to discuss, but he got the most amazing, candid...

Meredith Artley: It was amazing!

Pat Thomas: ...moving pieces where he asked people to send in short, short videos, but holding up a sign of one thing that they felt they had not ever been able to say about their lives. And, you know, like a young transgender person holding a sign that said, "I'm not doing this to hurt you." And then what really impressed me about how he was handled as an intern, was that he was given the opportunity to write a long-form piece full of all the medical data, the statistics, and the graphics of the transgender community. And I just...and I don't think those people would have come forth with their stories on your average social network.

Meredith Artley: Isn't that incredible? And one of the things we did with that is we saw that wonderful idea, and we took all that, and we sculpted that into its own original video that's worthy of another one of these reels that's this beautiful, poetic story, and then that had its own life. Right? So, it's just all this great—all that great emotion and participation just kept on. Like, good content begets good content. It just kept on growing and causing more conversation.

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Pat Thomas: We talk about engagement, you know, and I think that's a great example. As I recall, I think it got like 2,500 comments in the first couple of days. Some of them were haters.

Meredith Artley: Sure.

Pat Thomas: But a lot of them were not.

Meredith Artley: Right.

Pat Thomas: So, anyway, I think it's great when it works like that.

Meredith Artley: Thanks, Pat.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Thank you, Meredith.

Meredith Artley: Thank you, guys. Thank you.

[Applause.]