Day 1, April 19, 2013: Afternoon Session - 11:45-1:00p.m.
Not Your Typical News Audience — Anymore

Chair: C.W. Anderson, Assistant Professor of Media Culture, **CUNY**

Research Panelists:

- **Irene Serrano Vazquez,** Concordia University, Canada: ***Researching on the New Relationship Between Audiences and Journalism: A Methodological Toolkit***
- **Geoffrey Michael Graybeal,** University of Hartford, **Jiran Hou,** University of Georgia, and **Carmen Hernández-Ojeda,** University of Hartford: ***Read, Not Dead: A Case Study of #Redanddead Viral News Spread***
- **Avery E. Holton, Kanghui Baek, Mark Coddington, and Carolyn Yaschur,** University of Texas at Austin: ***Soliciting Reciprocity: Socializing, Communality, and Other Motivations for Linking on Twitter***
- **Jonathan Groves,** Drury University, and **Carrie Brown-Smith,** University of Memphis: ***40 Million Page Views is Not Enough: An Examination of Christian Science Monitor's Evolution from SEO to Engagement***

C.W. Anderson: Hello. So, Jay Rosen tells a story, you know, when journalists come to him and they often say, "You know, Jay, I think what you do is really interesting, but you're just so academic." And he sort of looks at them and he says, "You should see the other guys." So, you know, I think that one of the great things about this conference is the fact that so much of the research is really deeply relevant to the industry professionals in this room. And that's really one of my favorite things about ISOJ. We've got four fantastic papers that are going to be given here today. And the title of the panel, I think, what is it? Something having to do with audiences, right? Not your mother's news audience anymore or something along those lines. So, the papers all have to do with changing scholarly understandings of what the news business — how the news business is rethinking what it means to have an audience.

I am going to do something risky, which is sort of frame the four of these papers before the people actually present, which means I may say they're about something and then they may come up and say they're about something totally different. But here is what I saw these four papers as being about.

The first paper by Irene Vazquez is titled *Research on the New Relationship Between Audiences and Journalism: A Methodological Toolkit.* And she's going to be speaking first. And to me, that paper is really answering the question, how should researchers come to understand news audiences? In other words, how should we as scholars try to understand what audiences are for the news?

The second paper is by Geoffrey Graybeal at University of Hartford, Jiran Hou at the University of Georgia, and Carmen Hernández-Ojeda. And that paper is entitled: *Read, Not Dead: A Case Study of #Redanddead Viral News Spread.* So, I read that paper as answering the question, how do organizations use audiences to achieve their strategic goals? How do organizations use audiences to fulfill their strategy?

The third paper is by Avery Holton, Kanghui Baek, Mark Coddington, and Carolyn Yaschur. They're all at the University of Texas Austin. The title of that paper is: *Soliciting Reciprocity: Socializing, Communality, and Other Motivations for Linking on Twitter.* And to me, that paper answers a third question, which is, why do audiences do what they do? Why do audiences do what they do?

And then the fourth paper is one of our prize-winning papers by Jonathan Groves of Drury University, and Carrie Brown-Smith, the University of Memphis, titled: *40 Million Page Views is Not Enough: An Examination of Christian Science Monitor's Evolution from SEO to Engagement.* And to me, that paper is answering a fourth question, which is, how do news organization understand audiences? Right? I'll recap those when we get to the Q&A, but for now let's just get to the papers.

So, the first paper, as I said, is by Irene Vazquez of Concordia University: *Research on the New Relationship between Audiences and Journalism: A Methodological Toolkit.* So, Irene, take it away.

[Applause.]

Irene Vazquez: It is a great pleasure for me to be here today. What I'm presenting this morning is a set of methodological proposals for a more critical analysis of audience participation in making the news. And…. [someone adjusts microphone] Okay, thank you. And although this methodological toolkit is being created in an academic context, I truly believe that most of what I'm presenting today can be also very useful for those journalists who are still wondering how to deal with and what is the relevance of future generated content.

So, as a quick introduction to the topic, gradually since the mid-20th century, new media technologies have radically modified, not only our media consumption habits, but also the roles of both audiences and journalists. The digitalization of media has permitted and is permitting a much more

individualized consumption of media, and multiplication of content ala carte. and ubiquitous access to information. And on top of all these possibilities, new media technologies have transformed, as I have already said, the audience's role. Nowadays, audiences have the possibility to not only consume media text but also to produce diverse media artifacts. In this sense, I found so interesting Angela Grant's conceptualization of the *produser* with an 's' instead of a 'c,' a word that joined together the words 'producer' and 'user' and that basically means, and I quote Grant, "a much more actively involved audience in shaping their own media and network usage."

So, these new particularities of the media sphere have, of course, affected journalism. In general terms, the new role of audiences as journalistic content creators, as citizen journalists, has been celebrated assuming that the production and distribution of media content by audiences without the control of journalistic enterprises empowers citizens and fortifies democracy. Generally speaking, as Chris Heron says, scholars have tended to establish media participation as good in itself. But is it?

To answer this question, I want to propose five different elements to take into account when critically analyzing the relevance of audience journalistic content. These five elements are: the audiences, the journalists, the contents, the tools, and the context.

So, first of all, let's talk about the audiences. As I have already mentioned, audiences have now the chance to not only receive and interpret messages, but also to produce and send messages. And according to some scholars, such as Dan Gillmor, these new possibilities for content creation have transformed journalism from a lecture into a conversation. In this sense, there has been a great effort in academia and also in journalism to describe the different ways in which audiences can participate, and also a lot of speculation in relation to how this participation is going to change the world.

However, some key questions remain unsolved or even haven't been asked. As for example, who are those creating media content? Where are they located? Are they representative of the whole population? In other words, are we talking about, "Here comes everybody," as Clay Shirky's book says, or are we closer to, "Here comes the white worse than Anglophone man and his discourses in ideologies."

Furthermore, there is a lack of quantitative analytical research about the audience usage of user-generated content that will actually help to determine its importance. Who is consuming these products? What are the effects and impacts of consuming user-generated content? Without receivers, without audiences, the revolutionary repercussions of this user-generated content can be questioned. The media content produced by audiences needs to be watched, listened, and read in order to be relevant.

So on the one hand, quantitative data about these audiences can show a general portrait of the state of affairs and also the demographic future of the audiences, of the consumers of user-generated content. On the other hand, qualitative research can explore the reasons why these audiences consume user-generated content, the type of use, and the effects it has in their lives.

The next element I consider central in the analysis of audience participation in making the news are the journalists. As our partner, Chris Anderson, said once, "The manner in which journalists imagine their audience has public consequences." In this sense, I'm a great defender of what has been denominated as the second wave of ethnographic research in newsrooms. It is necessary to go to newsrooms and observe the journalists practices and also to talk to the journalists, to interview them, to ask them what do they think about user-generated content. How do they work with user-generated content? Because at the end of the day, journalists are the ones who are deciding to include or not user-generated content into mainstream media. Ethnographic research observation would have to fill the blanks that journalists could have in their conscious discourses on their daily practices.

Finally, I think that one more way to study journalists practices and close this methodological circle is to conduct textual analysis of the news. Does the news reflect what the journalists say about user-generated content? Are they including in their news stories user-generated content?

The third essential element in the analysis of the new relationship between audiences and journalism are the contents them-self. User-generated content has been acclaimed to be an excellent response by the people, for the people to mainstream journalism, especially in crisis events. And studies have tended to quantify the number of audience pictures, texts, or videos that were circulated on the Internet in order to measure the relevance of this user-generated content in crisis events. But what do these photographs, medias, and so on tell us about these crisis events? What is their journalistic importance? How do the images of a disaster seem, with little contextualization in most of the cases, contribute to fulfill the journalistic duties?

We should try to leave behind the excitement in relation with user-generated content and put our critic hats on when looking at this media production. And it's definitely necessary to conduct more textual analysis of user-generated content in the same way different scholars have been doing over the years with mainstream media content.

Same thing with the tools. Online tools are usually described in terms of how to use them and what are the functions. But tools are also political and incorporate dimensions that should be taken into account. For instance, we need to look at the different partnerships, alliances, and fusions between the enterprises that own the online tools and media corporations.

Additionally, we should look more carefully into the Terms of Service and community guidelines of these tools. In which cases can different tools censor a text of whatever nature? Is it specified in the Terms of Service? How can this affect the diffusion of information in conflict and crisis context? How can this affect the safety of citizen journalists? And then the deletion [of] models of remarks on occasion, [like] when Google decided to remove from YouTube a series of videos from Egypt for being too violent. But what these videos were portraying wasn't fiction, but real scenes of police brutality. And Google simply didn't consider the relevance of these images. How do these type decisions affect the political possibilities of user-generated content?

Finally, different countries legislate differently regarding the Internet. Different governments judge the Internet in different ways, and different economic and educational situations have as a consequence different degrees of penetrations on the Internet. How then to generalize about the present and the future of audience participation when it's so dependent on location and context? Censorship can take different forms that are not so obvious just by looking at the online production. And also, citizen online participation can mean a different thing if when looking at the general picture, the majority of the population has no access to new technologies.

So to sum up, in order to conduct a critical analysis of audience participation in making the news, I think that it's important to consider that audiences are not an abstract element, that journalists have definitely something to say, that user-generated content needs to be critically analyzed, and that tools have corporate and political dimensions, and then, of course, the context matters.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

C.W. Anderson: Next up, we have Geoffrey Michael Graybeal from the University of Hartford. And this paper is coauthored with Jiran Hou, University of Georgia, and Carmen Hernández-Ojeda, also at the University of Hartford. The title is *read, Not Dead: A Case Study of #Redanddead Viral News Spread.* And as I said in the introduction, I think this paper looks at a second question, which is how organizations use audiences to achieve strategic goals. So, take it away, Geoffrey.

Geoffrey Graybeal: Thank you very much for the introduction. First, I just want to acknowledge Rosental and Amy for putting truly the best journalism conference in the world. So, it's an honor to be here with you today. And also [I] send regards from my coauthors who regret that they couldn't be here today. Say the title five times fast.

So, a little bit of background. First, the Red & Black is the student newspaper at the University of Georgia. It's an independent newspaper. It is not part of

the university. It's independently owned. It's an educational non-profit. And so, in August 2012, the student editors returned from internships over the summer and discovered that the newspaper hired some additional professional staff and wanted to change the responsibilities from the editorial advisor to be the editorial director. And the student editors felt that control of the newspaper was moving from the hands of the students to professionals, and they didn't like this. So, they resigned abruptly and went about forming an alternative digital publication called The Red and Dead. They created a Twitter account @redanddead815 for August 15th when they did this. They started promoting the hashtag @redanddead. They created a Facebook page and they created a rival website Redanddead.com.

So with that in mind, we thought this would be a compelling case study in how they went about getting their message out and getting coverage for this new rival upstart. And we turned to the literature as academics prefer to do. And we looked and discovered that there having been many studies in Twitter that look at journalism or breaking news; although, if you look at today's programming, of course, that is definitely changing. Some of the studies that have been done found that traditional news organizations were still a primary source of information on Twitter.

We really wanted to look at literature on influences. When we talk about spreading messages and influence, there's this idea that on Twitter the types of content [are]: there's content-based tweets, which news is particularly good at promoting, and then there's conversational-based tweets on Twitter, where celebrities are more influential in that sphere. There's also the idea of topical influence appealing to people with very specific topics that they spread to their followers that they are likewise interested in. And there's a notion of preferential attachment theory or how information flows through Twitter. Often, it goes through nodes, through specific nodes within a network. So to spread your message, you target key influencers that will then spread their message out within that network in looking at connections.

So, we asked a number of questions that we wanted to answer. We wanted to see what role social media played in spreading news of the Red & Dead. We wanted to look at how news of the Red & Black editors' resignations spread through Twitter so quickly. And we wanted to know, how were the Red & Black editors able to build a sizable audience for this digital-only publication?

So to do so, we did a number of things. First, the Red & Dead Twitter account 815 had approximately 500 tweets. This incident took place through the course of one week. So, we downloaded all of those tweets and looked at those and pulled 111 articles from the Internet. As you'll see later, traditional news outlets, blogs, college media all wrote and reported on this story that was taking place in Athens, Georgia. And then for the last part, as the story was resolving, for the latter part, we conducted a social network analysis using a program NodeXL that pulls down tweets and analyzes the type of

connections between users, using the hashtag @redanddead, and discovered that within that network at that time, there were 840 different user relationships that we were able to capture through the social network analysis portion.

So now, I'll get to why you're here—the findings. In looking at what role social media played in spreading news of Red & Dead, it obviously played a huge role. From the outset, they began promoting the hashtag @redanddead. And we found that 80% of those 500-plus tweets from the Red & Dead 815 account were posted in the first three days. So, they were clearly using Twitter to get their message out about, "Hey, we resigned from the newspaper. We started this alternative publication. This is why we did it. This is the larger issue of press freedom that we're grappling with as student journalists." And they began to instantly Day 1 ask for followers to their new accounts. They asked for key influencers to spread the news.

And in our content analysis, we found that half of the tweets on August 15th fell into requesting, requesting, "Hey, follow us. Spread the message. Share the hashtag." And/or others were targeting outsider influencers—celebrities, media outlets, news outlets—that they specifically requested, "Hey, share our story. Tell the world what's going on at University of Georgia's student newspaper."

So if you look at a timeline of what happened, the first actions they did were create — within minutes after they resigned from the Red & Black, they started the Twitter account, they started the Facebook page, they started the website, and they started reaching out to Twitter, to Twitter users. Now, the editor at the time had just completed an internship at USA Today. Twitter accounts associated with USA Today and Huffington Post were among the first to tweet the news of this. I believe the USA Today account was USA Today College. And Huffington Post may have been a branded Huffington Post account, because they have hundreds of Twitter channels.

The other thing they did is they reached out to the Student Press Law Center, which became a key influencer in the story as you'll see later. Within hours, the news started covering it. Local coverage covered it that day—local media. By the next day, it resulted in a lot of national coverage, both online and in print, of national news outlets. And within 36 hours, they had 125,000 website views to their Redanddead.com account. So clearly, social media was instrumental from the beginning. It was part of their sort of strategic plan to spread their message of what was taking place and ultimately help lead to a successful conclusion where they resolved the issues, got control back, and then returned to the student newspaper.

So, the second questions in the findings that we looked [at] is, how did this spread so quickly? And we found that really because it was one of the top journalism programs in the country, they have a lot of alumni that are all around the nation and the world that were influential in spreading this

message. Like I mentioned, the USA Today was one of the first to tweet about it, and the editor who had resigned had worked at USA Today, so probably no coincidence there. There were influential journalists that began tweeting about this early on in the early stages: professional organizations, the student SPJ tweeted about it and was writing about it, the SPLC was very instrumental in writing about this, advocacy groups for first amendment rights were latching onto this, and then student journalists. So they had support from college media all around the country that were writing posts about it and covering the story.

And then the other reason it was able to spread so quickly, sort of like what Chris mentioned in his overview was, they had a very specific strategy about who they were trying to target. They were deliberately targeting influential people and organizations to spread their message to get the word out. And so, you see an example, the Student Press Law Center. Here on August 16th, this is one of their articles. And they really covered this from the beginning to the end and were influential in building coverage.

The multimedia editor of the Red & Black who resigned, she ran the Red&Dead815 Twitter account, Lindsay Cook, who wrote a blog post on her individual blog, Digitize Me, Captain, that we pulled from in writing about this, said that they worked hard to make sure that the right people knew about their situation. Early on, they were asking for coverage from people that had ties to Georgia that were celebrities: Alton Brown from Good Eats, Samuel Jackson, the actor. And then journalists started tweeting. So Peter King from Sports Illustrated—had 950,000 followers at the time—tweeted about this. Rick Riley from SI or ESPN tweeted—had 100,000 followers—started tweeting about this situation. And so, they wanted to get influential people that they were targeting, but also that had large numbers.

So the New York Times tweeted and covered the story. As you can see, they had at the time 6.3-million followers. The AP tweeted about this with 1.2-million followers. Washington Post with 1.2-million Twitter followers. And then earlier on, those first accounts that tweeted about it: USA Today College and Huffington Post College with 50,000 and 39,000 Twitter followers. So this is an example of some of the Twitter accounts that covered this and tweeted the story early on.

The social network analysis. We looked at different connections in the network and found people that were topical influencers. So Sara Gregory was an intern with the SPLC and covered the story from beginning to end. She also was a former student editor of the Daily Tar Heel at the University of North Carolina, so familiar with student press matters and college media. Some journalism professors at the University of Georgia were influential. The Red & Black and Red & Dead accounts themselves had key ties to the network, and various journalism folks like the Charlotte, North Carolina Society of Professional Journalists, who played a key role in disseminating these — spreading the story quickly.

Finally, we wanted to know how they were able to build a sizable audience for this digital-only publication. Well, like I said, in the timeline, they had 126,000 page views within 36 hours to Redanddead.com. One of the ways was the news coverage. The 100-plus articles, all the newspapers nationwide, and the local papers that covered this drove traffic. So, there's a viral nature to this story of how it spread very quickly and it appealed to all these other different key topic areas. So, social media, Twitter drove traffic to the website.

And one key thing was there was a key document that a board member from the Red & Black had said that, driving the change, he'd have the diagram of good and bad, and under the category of bad was, "I suppose you would call this journalism," and so [he was] saying that they should do more grip-and-grins and less like hard-news coverage. And so, this was something that news outlets that covered it pulled from. And the only place that document was, was on Redanddead.com, so this drove traffic as well as name recognition for the Red & Dead.

So, you can see just really quickly, I'm out of time, so I'll jump to the conclusion. Here's the New York Times covering the story, Poynter covering the story, AJC covering the story. Key take away: traditional news still matters. They were key players in spreading content through social networking sites. News coverage helped build an audience. Journalists were pivotal in enabling the story to go viral. The topical influence—why this resonated beyond Georgia is it resonated with people with interest in student press freedom, college media, and journalism.

And thank you very much.

[Applause.]

C.W. Anderson: Okay. The third paper is going to be by Avery Holton, Kanghui Baek, Mark Coddington, and Carolyn Yaschur. They are all at University of Texas, Austin. And the title of the paper is: *Soliciting Reciprocity: Socializing, Communality, and Other Motivations for Linking on Twitter*. And I sort of framed this as kind of a third question about audiences, right? Why do audiences do what they do? And so, Avery, take it away.

Avery Holton: Sure. We'll see if we can answer part of that question at least. Before I start, we have a shameful admission. Our paper is the only one that's not included in the journal. So if you want a copy or you'd like a copy or you'd like to learn more about it, we won't be selling them. We'll be giving them away for free. [laughter] Just send me an email or tweet at us or something and we'll get it to you. The second [thing], one of my coauthors is here, Mark Coddington. If you haven't read his previous work, you should. He's doing great work in the realm of civic journalism, citizen journalism, and recently, I think this week, was awarded Top Thesis at the University of Texas. So just thought I'd say that real quick—[applause]—and see if we can

get a round of applause for Mark. [more applause] It's always good to start off on a good note, right? The applause first and then we'll move forward.

Today, just briefly, we're going to talk about some of the motivating factors for use of Twitter. At this point, we're all very familiar with Twitter as a news and information source. At this point, more than 500-million accounts. About 220-to-280-million of those are active; meaning, people are getting on them daily or weekly and actually engaging and producing about 1.5-billion pieces of content a week. What those looks like depends on who you're looking at. They can be news, can be information, can be just pictures, can be retweets. All sorts of great information is out there. But what we really wanted to know was not just what motivates people to use Twitter, but what motivates them to link with one another through hyperlinks, through posting content on their own, but also linking to external content. So, you'll see that a lot.

One great tweet today was from Seth Lewis, who may or may not be in here right now, who posted about a call for a journal and then posted a link to that right after that. So, we see links popping up in long form, but also in short form, shortened with Bitly or other URL shorteners. Our big question was, what motivates people to actually post those links?

An interesting side note that's kind of relevant to what we're talking about today — yesterday, I had the opportunity to talk to one of the New York Times section editors, and this was for a dissertation project I'm working on, but she said something really interesting. I asked her what she thought motivated her journalists, the people that were working underneath her, and then also the audience to really use Twitter and engage in Twitter. And she said, and this is speaking of the journalists, that she felt like a lot of them were butterflies trapped in a jar. And I'm not really familiar with what that meant, so I asked her to go on. And she said that a lot of them are looking out and checking out what's going on on Twitter, trying to see what's happening, standing to the side almost being like voyeurs, but they feel trapped by the amount of information that's out there and the amount of misinformation and the number of people, the sheer volume of people and content that's out there. So, they try to…. Some of her journalists, and again, this is just her speaking. This is her opinion and thoughts. [They] felt like they were inside of a jar and always looking out.

I found that really interesting, and it leads well into our paper when we're asking questions about, what motivates people to really break outside of that jar and really start engaging in Twitter in a different way? The different way here being links. Links now appear in roughly a quarter of all tweets. So when you hop onto Twitter and you're rolling through a feed, you're going to see a lot of links posted in there. But secondly, does that motivation or do the motivations that we're looking at really affect how often somebody engages in Twitter? And by engagement, we just mean for the purpose of this paper posting a tweet, how often they're going to be on posting a tweet, whether that has a link or not.

So, our method for this, we had a seeded snowball sample. That means that the primary researchers, two of us, selected different users on Twitter that we knew to be high-volume posters, who also used the links with some degree or used links fairly frequently. We invited them to take part in a survey asking them about their motivations, about the number of followers they have, other Twitter habits, frequency of use, things of that nature. And then we asked them to simply share it with others on Twitter. We wound up with more than 500 responses during our timeframe. Unfortunately, we had to slice some of those away because of incomplete responses. There were other people, and this happens a lot, [that] just go through and punch in a bunch of zeroes and think they're done, and that's not helpful. So, we pulled those out. We measured the motivations and frequencies, and we used factor analysis and regression. So for us, we were building on previous research that we conducted as a group, but also on previous research of other scholars in this area.

One of the publications that we used or pieces of research looked at Facebook links and why people post links on Facebook, why they share content in that way, and it was more of an open-ended study. From that, we were able to generalize what we thought would be eight key motivating factors. And those include: information seeking; information sharing; interpersonal utility, such as finding people who are like you, finding good connections; convenience and entertainment; passing time; social control; promoting one's work. That's kind of what we generally expected to see.

And we measured these using 40 different items. So, just asking folks whether or not they agreed with statements about their motivations. What we found in our factor analysis was that two of those kind of fell to the side, and we still had the ones that we really expected. And none of these are really surprising when we think about what Twitter is used for: information seeking, sharing, finding others, like-minded individuals, promoting one's work, kind of developing a brand, those sorts of things.

But we wanted to dig a little bit deeper. So, we found that information sharing was definitely one of the most salient motivating factors. That's not shocking. That's what Twitter is there for—to share information. All of the factors that we looked at were highly significant, and we found some interesting relationships between information sharing, promoting work, and control that are worth thinking about, but they weren't what we were really after.

What we were really after was, what causes people to promote more frequently? And here we have three key things. I'll start at the bottom. So, passing time. People aren't, if they're on Twitter, they're not really going to be posting a lot of links. They're just going to be on there checking things out, kind of surveying the situation, and hopping off. Jumping up to the top: control and promoting work. Obviously, if you're going to be promoting

something that you created or an article that you're trying to get out to the public, you're going to post a link to that. You're going to be promoting yourself. What we found really interesting is right in the middle, sandwiched in between here—that the biggest predictor for frequency of posting links on Twitter was information seeking, not sharing. So, we're talking about posing a question, asking for information, and then posting a link right next to it, which almost sounds counterintuitive.

But what we hypothesize, what we think is going on here is something similar to the tweet that I mentioned from Seth Lewis earlier. We've got information about a journal coming out posted there, and then we've got a question. And if anybody saw the tweet earlier from Seth, we've got information about the journal, we've got a link with it, and then the question right after it saying something along the lines of, "Will you submit?" Or, "Are you interested?"

To be even more relevant with the events today in Boston, this morning on my way over from class, I noticed a tweet this morning [saying] they basically found the two guys that they believe — or the two main suspects, and they're releasing information about one of them being shot, the other one possibly being holed up. And someone posted an article that was from the Boston Globe talking about where these guys were from. And it just said something about Russia. And so the person on Twitter just commented, "Shouldn't we think a little bit more about this?" And then posted the link. So, you have to click on the link and see what it's about. And it was retweeted by other folks asking similar questions and providing more information.

So, what we start to see is this effort to both seek and share information alongside of one another. And this gets to what academic has identified as communal reciprocity. So, what we imagine this as is soliciting reciprocity, providing information, something that's of value, but also seeking information. Seeking to promote conversation with that information is a key for Twitter use and for linking on Twitter.

So, if we go back to the New York Times editor that I spoke with yesterday and present her with this information, we can start to develop a clear picture and help maybe those journalists and even the audience feel more comfortable with this motivating factor. That when we hop on Twitter, maybe we should be sharing information, but we should also be seeking information and providing information alongside one another in a communal space.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

C.W. Anderson: Fourth and finally, we've got Jonathan Groves from Drury University and his coauthor Carrie Brown-Smith, who will be watching from

the gallery. Both from the University of Memphis with their paper entitled *40 Million Page Views is Not Enough: An Examination of the Christian Science Monitor's Evolution from SEO to Engagement*. And if you've been following the debate kind of on the future of the news world, you've seen that there is a lot of conversation now about engagement and what engagement means. So, super interesting paper, you know. And I think this sort of is the fourth question that I put forward earlier, which is, okay, we see what audiences do to some degree, right, when Avery was discussing the motivations for linking on Twitter. How do news organizations understand what audiences do? Right? How do they take what audiences do and sort of refract it through their own understandings of what they think audiences do? So, Jonathan, take it away.

Jonathan Groves: Just to note, we've got our Twitter addresses on here, and I want to note my partner in crime, Carrie Brown-Smith. We've done quite a bit on the Christian Science Monitor over the past few years, and we've worked together on this. So, I want to start off with this: [plays audio of a bell ringing and someone applauding]. That is the sound of one-million page views in the newsroom of the Christian Science Monitor. [laughter] That bell is run every time they hit it in a single day, and they've become very skilled at this over the years.

On May 23, 2012, you may remember this. This was the Moog synthesizer Google Doodle, and Jake Turcotte told you how to play it. So, if you were interested in playing Soft Cell's Tainted Love or maybe you were more of a Gary Newman fan, he taught you how to peck that out. And that was largely responsible for this very successful day at the Monitor while we were there. One other thing that was saw was that it was shared 3,700 times. And this is something that the Monitor has been struggling with since we started studying them in 2009, is figuring out not just how to garner page views, but how to garner some of these other behaviors that we call engagement. So this time around when we revisited them in May 2012, we wanted to explore this concept a little bit further.

A little bit of background. They started on this road in 2009 when they dropped the daily newspaper and focused on their website. Their goal was to hit 25-million page views per month to reach their revenue targets. They now can hit 40-million page views a month. They have become very successful and very skilled at SEO. They have struggled with this question, and I think this is a question that most news organizations are struggling with: Just what is engagement?

So, what we did is we spent our time talking to the journalists and the editors and the people in the news organization to see how they conceived of this topic. And they have largely defined themselves in terms of their history. They've been around since 1908. They've won seven Pulitzer Prizes. They have become renowned for their international coverage. And now, using SEO, it has made them relevant in today's age, because they watched their

circulation decline as their readers disappeared in the print edition. So, they used the web to become more relevant. And what they found is SEO has made them relevant. What they do now, they are in the top 200 U.S. sites, according to Quantcast. If you search Google News right now, chances are you will find a Christian Science Monitor story related to the top trending topics on Google. They are very good at this.

They are not very good at talking about engagement. In fact, when you talk to people about this, one of the things, this was one interviewee, "We're just blind and fumbling around in the dark."

One of the ways that they do try to measure their success is through page views. That's largely their survival technique. If we can get enough page views, we can get enough revenue. One way they do that is through what they call multipliers. We heard mentioned here today about lists, the importance of lists in getting traffic. Photo galleries are SEO gold, page view gold, so are quizzes. And what happens on a quiz? They're usually related to a news topic. This was the one about the NCAA championship. So, I answered the question incorrectly, because I know nothing about NCAA. [laughter] And then I moved onto the next question. Three page views. So, one can raise questions about what this means from a user perspective, but from the journalist's perspective, it's page view gold.

So, the other issue that you run into with this is, you get your numbers, but you don't necessarily get people to what you consider your distinctive content. So, in the Monitor's view, "Hey, international coverage, that's what we're known for. That's what we're respected for. That's what we see as distinctive." The problem is when you look at the traffic numbers, no one is reading it. They are reading the national news. They are reading the technology news. You're devoting all this effort to these international bureaus, and the reality is people aren't reading them.

Also, in this discussion of engagement, they're starting to realize this dependence on Google is a little frightening. Because so much of their traffic comes from that, what they're goal has to be is, "How do we build an engaged audience that's coming to us for us, instead of just having this drive-by traffic? Because so much of our traffic is drive-by. So, we've got to get a handle on this and figure this out right away."

So, in thinking about how people talk to us about this topic, we used Philip Napoli's model of engagement in the book Audience Evolution. If you are interested in this topic, you really should read this book. It sums up all of the research that we know and how we talk about this very elusive concept. And what we found is that the Monitor is stuck at this stage. They are not along the path to true engagement, which is behavior, the kind of engaged behavior where people are so immersed in your brand, they become proponents of your brand.

And so what we thought about, is true engagement in a news context really participatory journalism? It's user-generated content. It's having those people become part of the journalism process and separating that barrier between the journalist and the audience. Meg Pickard of the Guardian has this as a model when thinking about community engagement. Journalists are stuck at pre-publication. Users are stuck at post-publication. We've got to find a way to get in each other's business. How can we connect so that we're filling in those blank spots?

In January 2012, they hit 30-million page views. And they sent a — management sent a congratulatory email to staff and talked about how good the organization has gotten in getting part of the conversation. And here, the conception that we saw was stuck at loyalty. Can we get people coming back to the site? Not necessarily engaging with the brand, but engaging with the content.

And so, a lot of energy during our study period we saw was focused on the home page. "How can we get people to our home page and use it in a way…? We'll use this as a reward. We'll put our most distinctive content in specific spots on the home page." They use visual revenue to try and see, "What makes sense to put our content in specific spaces?" There's a lot of discussion in budget meetings to talk about the upper lefts. "That's where we're going to put our stuff. We're not putting wire's stuff up there. That's going to be the distinctive Monitor content." And it's supposed to reward the people who bookmark this home page and come to it as their source of news. They've not reaped the benefits from this strategy in terms of page views yet.

Another way that they consider [and] think about engagement is through return visits. How often are people coming back in a month? And their conception—nine or more return visits in a month is an engaged user. This number has not moved very much either in the time that they've been trying to ramp up their strategy towards engagement.

Time spent on site. This one is also not improving. They are actually seeing less time spent on site over the course of this transformation and trying to think about engaged users. And they are puzzled by this behavior. They're saying, "We're trying to engage. We're seeing the numbers go up. More people are coming. Why aren't they staying?" And we argue it's because they are thinking in terms of loyalty. They're not thinking about deep, engaged behaviors. Everyone we talk to, there's no clear consensus in the newsroom about what engagement is. They are still trying to figure it out. And they have all these differing conceptions among the online people, among the tech bloggers, among their international journalists, and no one has this clear agreement on what this term means.

So, it has also led to a little bit of finger pointing in the newsroom, that people are trying to figure out, "Okay, if our international journalists aren't

getting the coverage, who is getting the coverage? And it's not always our best journalists. And so, is that who we are? Is that what Monitor journalism is? Do we want to be in the business of writing American Idol stories and Google Doodle stories? Is that really creating the type of engaged user we want as journalists?"

Now, there are pockets of innovation within this newsroom. There is somebody who is dedicated to their Twitter feed. There is someone who is dedicated to their Facebook page. The thing that we see in these spaces is largely one-way communication. It's a distribution mechanism for their stories. They put links on there. They don't necessarily engage the audience and talk to the in pure conversation. They may ask them questions. You know, "What do you know about the Boston explosions? Have you seen something? Send us something." So, it's more solicitations than actual conversation. So, they don't get a lot of referral traffic.

And this becomes almost a self-fulfilling prophecy in a way, because as one editor we talked to said, "You know, the only way I see Facebook generating revenue for us is if people click on stories and come back to our site." So, it's not working. It's only working if they do the kinds of behavior that will reward us, instead of just putting it out there and trying to build this audience in a way that may not have a tangible benefit. That's where true engagement happens.

So, you see things [like] they're viewing social media in terms of appreciation and emotion. "Are we getting likes? Are we getting stars on Twitter? Are people retweeting us?" Instead of seeing something more, where we're actually communicating with them and conversing with them, and we view them as equals.

There are places. There is a new ventures editor, who has done a lot of thinking about this idea. And he has made an effort working with some other people on staff to say, "How can we do more? How can we include them in the process?" One of those is DC Decoder. And this is one where they ask the audience, "What do you want us to cover? What do you not know about Washington, DC? And how can we fulfill that for you, so you become partners in this process a bit more?"

But for every step forward, there is a step back. And in September 2012, after our study period, they shut down comments on their stories. By default, they do not have comments on the story. And in a letter to the audience explaining this, Editor John Yemma referred to the comments as being non-productive, which is not very — not very welcoming if you're a user to their site. [some laughter] And if you're trying to create an engaged user and have them view you as equal, you're sticking them at arm's length.

And so, what we found in our conversations with the Monitor is that when you think about this model, they remain stuck at the early stages. They are

not thinking in terms of true behavior. And that's because they use social media as a distribution mechanism. They don't use it as a way to communicate. When it comes to comments, which is an opportunity to get user-generated content as a way to get the audience to participate in the journalism, they shot it down. So, instead of guiding the conversation, they are trying to control it, which is a big mistake when you think about true engagement.

So for those of you that are interested in this topic, I urge you to consider this model and look at your behaviors in your own newsroom to say, "Where are we? And are we doing the kinds of behaviors that truly build a community around our content?"

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Q&A Session

C.W. Anderson: I just wanted to jump right to questions from the audience. So there are microphones here and here. So if you have questions, please come on up. While I'm waiting for folks to…. Oh, we've got some folks. Great. And when you ask a question, just say your name, so the cameras know where you're from and who you are.

Daniela Gerson: Hi. My name's Daniela Gerson, and I'm with USC Annenberg. And I had a question for the last speaker. It was a really interesting presentation, especially as a former contributor to the Christian Science Monitor. But I was curious—and this is something that comes up a lot—the question of, how do you actually create a conversation, instead of you mentioned solicitation? And even the DC Decoder, I would say, it's really soliciting. So, how do you actually generate that conversation?

Jonathan Groves: Are you asking that specifically? I'd prefer…[inaudible].

Daniela Gerson: Oh, yeah, of course.

Jonathan Groves: I would encourage Carrie to answer that. She's kind of the Twitter [person]. But the way I see to create that is that you are…. One of the things you want to do are engage in behaviors with your audience that don't expect anything in return. That you're basically…. And rewarding those contributions from the audience and acknowledging those. One of the things that I think that we see in looking at the Monitor, you don't see a lot of use of photos that are submitted by the audience or necessarily reporting or research that's submitted by the audience. There's always this line in the sand of, "This is what we've done. And this is what you've done." And I think when you start to blend that content a little more, and they start to see, "Oh,

okay, you're actually acknowledging that we can contribute something," it goes a long way towards that idea.

Carrie Brown-Smith: Yeah. And I'd just add, I would check out, there's some research by one of our friends, Doreen Marchionni at Pacific Lutheran, who's actually studied, you know, how do you get audiences to respond with a level of trust and credibility? What are some of the more specific techniques that you can use that work? And, I mean, a lot of it is what Jonathan just said, but a lot of it is also very much in your journalism, making very clear how the audience has contributed, how that conversation, you know, that you've been having, whether it's on the comments or in social media or whatever, has enhanced your journalism. You really have to telegraph that. You have to let people know. And that will really increase your credibility, they found in studies.

Beth Elderkin: Hi. I had a…. Oh, this is loud. I had a question about the….

C.W. Anderson: Who are you?

Beth Elderkin: Pardon?

C.W. Anderson: Who are you?

Beth Elderkin: I'm Beth Elderkin. Hi. [laughs] I had a question about the Red & Dead paper. You know, I was following it last year. It was really interesting to me. But, of course, we all value student press freedom, but there's other freedoms like student religious freedom, political freedom, and those kind of things. And if a similar situation were to happen where students walked out from a religious organization or a political organization, do you feel a similar response would have happened in the community or on Twitter? Or, do you feel that because we're also journalists that we would hold a higher value to it and share it frequently?

Geoffrey Graybeal: That's an excellent question. Thank you. I do think there is a little bit of inside baseball, because it was a journalism topic, that you had journalists writing about journalism and press freedom. And so, I think that certainly played a role in it. But the ways in which they went about getting feedback and coverage, I think, would be similar. I mean, the literature would indicate that, and sort of our findings would indicate that as the press freedom, while dealing with journalism, still was a very topical area. And so that's why I think this story resonated beyond Georgia, was the fact that people that had an interest in press freedom, that had an interest in college media, that had an interest in journalism were the ones that were latching onto the story. One of the things you didn't see in the presentation is, I talked about, you know, the traditional media and the role that they played, and they played a large role in spreading that story. But there were also regular users that were talking about it. I remember one of the tweets was a person in North Carolina saying that she learned about the story

through Twitter before people in Athens that she knew, her cousin, who went to UGA, did. So, there were regular people that weren't directly affected by this that were talking about it. So, I mean, the lessons learned would be to target, in this case, with the religious example, you know, bloggers that are influential in religion. That topical influence, I think, really resonates there.

Michelle Shavity: Michelle Shavity. And I have a question on comments in general. In some cases, I just feel like comments are broken. And, you know, if you are reading an article and you take the time and you make a comment, it just sort of hangs out there. There's no real conversation. And I feel like there's some way that news organizations or bloggers, anybody, could make that more of a real conversation. I know there's privacy concerns and all that. But I'd love to hear your thoughts about making comments conversational and meaningful.

Carrie Brown-Smith: I mean, I think it is definitely a challenge. I mean, I don't think this is something where it's ever going to be easy for anyone to do this, but I think, you know, featuring excellent comments, you know, having them at the top of, you know, the page, actually interacting with people, promoting that, you know, I think that goes a long way. I mean, I think the garden analogy is like if you don't tend it, a lot of weeds are going to grow there. I mean, I think that really is what happens with comments. And news organizations just don't do a good job featuring the good stuff and promoting it and trying to get that conversation going.

Jonathan Groves: The other thing that I would add to that is that the Monitor, with comments, they had one person who would look at them occasionally. And I think as was mentioned on the earlier panel, you have to decide how to allocate your resources. So if it's important to you, then you set up a panel of comment moderators or community builders who are going to be talking with those people, encouraging them, modeling the kinds of comments that you want to see, and so that the community starts to police itself. Kind of like what Twitter does. I mean Twitter is very good at policing people who are out of the realm or they say the wrong thing. So if you can model that in your comments, I think you can see that happen as well, but you've got to work at it.

Geoffrey Graybeal: If I could just add one thing to that, [it] is that with the Red & Dead, they didn't sleep for like days working on this. And after they got the coverage, they deliberately responded and started a conversation about it, so that they were continually doing that. And I just wanted to mention Brittany Binowski. She works at Huffington Post. Before that, she worked at Forbes, who Clay was talking about with DVorkin's sort of disruptive innovation strategies. And she was on a job that did exist five years ago in terms of building an audience. And she did her master's thesis at NYU looking at engagement that CNN was doing, so how to build audience engagement and have response and generate that conversation. And then she tried to do some of those things at Forbes and now at Huffington Post.

But one of the things she found was looking at the types of content leads to the types of conversation. So, they ask a question like, "What's your favorite watch?" And people respond to that and tweet pictures of their watch. So, these are things that you wouldn't think of a traditional news organization doing; particularly, Forbes. But, you know, "What's your luxury brand? What's your favorite watch? Tweet us that?" So, it's a new level of engagement that sort of relates to the earlier conversation of trying to find new jobs that start that conversation.

Cindy Royal: I'm Cindy Royal from Texas State. And this is for Avery and his coauthors. I totally agree with you on the value of linking. It's the majority of what I get value from—linking on Twitter, sharing things, even more so than the information seeking. I really find it that if anybody follows me on Twitter or sharing with my students, that's like where I get the most value out of Twitter. So, what are the implications as more and more organizations institute paywalls?

Avery Holton: Oh, gosh. The 'p' word.

[Laughter.]

Mark Coddington: I've been kind of wondering during the previous panels when paywalls were going to start coming up. And apparently, I get to be the one to break the ice. [laughter] So, I think a lot of it depends on how the paywall is built. We're seeing generally the prevalence of this metered model in which under some variations links from Twitter are safe. You know, they're not counted against the meter, or if you've already reached the edge of the meter, you can just keep hitting the meter and being fine as long as the link is from Twitter. So generally speaking, I think with those types of models, we may not see that much of an impact.

It's not necessarily clear how much the user understands how that model works and what's acceptable and what's, you know, what's immune from the paywall, what's included and not. But generally, a lot of times on Twitter, you don't know where — you don't necessarily know where you're going before you go there. The hard paywalls, I think that is a real tradeoff that those publications are making, because I think there is an understanding that people are less likely to link to you on Twitter, because they know that people — why link to somebody who's just going to run right smack into a wall? And I think they probably make that tradeoff knowingly, knowing that they don't want that leaky sort of paywall.

So, I guess the short answer is, if the metered model is really what prevails, we may actually not see a huge, you know, difference. But if we start seeing harder paywalls, like I believe the Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News paywall just instituted this week as a hard paywall, and if we start seeing more paywalls like that, I think that might really influence who gets linked to and how often on Twitter.

Carrie Brown-Smith: Yeah. I'd just add real quick [that] the Memphis Commercial Appeal in my city has a harder paywall, and people get very angry. Like, there's just like a lot of tweets of people that are really pissed off, which can't be that great for your brand. You know, we found it was 3%, right—

Jonathan Groves: Mm-hmm.

Carrie Brown-Smith: —of referral traffic for the Monitor is coming from these sites. So, it's really a question of like, is that enough, you know, for you to justify putting up more of the hard paywall? I mean, it doesn't quite make sense to me at least in terms of social media sharing.

Cindy Royal: But I think there's a lot of things that need to be figured out in this. Because if people are just going to start getting all their information by Twitter and Facebook, then they're not going to have any paywall customers.

Carrie Brown-Smith: True. Yeah.

Cindy Royal: And I think that's what we're starting to see is that people are looking at their news stream and gaining information from a variety of sources and not necessarily loyal to one source. So, I think your research was really kind of on point in terms of, like, the motivations for doing that. I mean, I think it's very strong motivation.

C.W. Anderson: You know, I have a dream — just to jump in for a second. [laughter] I have a dream—[more laughter]—to do a study where you would do a social network analysis of a local media ecosystem before and after the introduction of a paywall, right? So, you would actually map the linking structures of a particular region. You know, and you can know, right, when a news organization is going to put a paywall in. I mean, they usually give you warning…. Like, we've known that Philly newspapers are going to do it for months now. So, you know, anyone want to join my dream … [laughter]

Finally, we're about out of time. So, Irene, you haven't been bothered yet. So, I wanted to ask you a question just to finish us up.

Irene Vazquez: Thank you.

C.W. Anderson: You're welcome. And then we're going to go to lunch. So, five minutes and then everyone will get to eat. So, you talked in your paper sort of about another way to do this sort of analysis, and that had more to do with videogames and art and everything like that. So if you don't mind, would you be interested in sort of telling us what that sort of model is like or involves? Because in some ways I thought it was the most interesting.

Irene Vazquez: Part?

C.W. Anderson: Yeah, or at least the most promising or the one that was most different than stuff I'd seen before.

Irene Vazquez: Yeah. Well, it is this interest in academy in some universities at least on research creation projects, where you don't only research on your topic but you actually create a tool or something to prove what you are studying. And, yeah, basically, what I mentioned in my paper [is] that it's a new way, a new methodology of analysis, a new research methodology that I think is great, and it can really prove things that we can just speculate about.

C.W. Anderson: The idea was if you're going to study videogames, you actually build a videogame.

Irene Vazquez: Exactly. Exactly.

C.W. Anderson: I think [there are] certainly a lot of applications there to the news business as well, in particular with the increasing interest in sort of maker journalism in the world, the maker ideas that are so popular right now.

Okay. You guys have been a fantastic crowd and a fantastic panel and fantastic everything. And now, let's get some fantastic lunch.

[Applause.]