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# Editors' Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Volume 3, Number 2, a special and innovative issue of #*ISOJ – The Research Journal of the International Symposium on Online Journalism*. For the first time, the journal is launched at the ISOJ conference where the research articles published here are presented. No delay, no gap between conference and publication. As far as we know, no other academic conference has a publication that makes the research immediately available to the public in this way. On the contrary, conferences and some academic journals are typically very slow in the processes, imposing a huge gap on the researchers between the actual presentation to an audience and the publication.

With the fast-changing pace of digital journalism, this delay becomes unjustifiable. We felt obliged to adopt some of the main characteristics of online journalism, the field we cover with the conference and the journal: to publish information expeditiously readable on multiple electronic devices as well as available in paper. Even the paper edition, however, is non-traditional, as we use an innovative publishing modality: printing on demand.

In fact, the five previous issues of #*ISOJ* have already been published in multiple formats and are available for purchase at Amazon in the Kindle edition and at Barnes & Noble in the Nook edition, as well as in paperback, print-on-demand. In the previous years, we tried our best to shorten the gap between the presentation of the papers at the conference and the publication of the academic articles by the journal. Eventually, we came to the conclusion that that gap should simply disappear, but only if we could figure out a way of producing the instantaneous journal while preserving the strict blind-review selection process for the conference and the additional review and editing process for the journal.

So, we have been aware of the risks of a ramped-up publication schedule. Actually, we have followed for many years now the concern of online journalists of the rapid publication of information that can damage quality and accuracy. We are taking the risk of expediting our publication with extra caution, following the mantra of the best journalists who, even before the Internet, have said, "It's right to be the first, but first we should be right." We anticipated the deadline for paper submissions; changed the rules to start accepting full papers only, no longer accepting lengthy abstracts as before; engaged more colleagues from different universities and countries for the new two-layer blind review process; we adopted a new, more agile content management system; and we hired a professional copy-editor to help our team.

The result is this journal that you are reading on paper or a digital device of your preference, for a low price, which also makes us different from many other academic journals that charge a high price for subscriptions and access to individual articles. Here you will find 16 articles on relevant issues in our field, contributions to the scholarship, carefully selected through a serious peer-review process. All the articles are on research selected to be presented at the 14th International Symposium on Online Journalism, on

April 19-20, 2013 at the University of Texas at Austin.

The studies published here are representative of the main topics of online journalism that are right now catching the attention of academics in the United States and around the world. They range from the impact of social media and search engine optimization on newsroom routines to the evolution of data-driven reporting, from changes in journalism education to how the media in India embraced digital, and how computers were adopted by newspapers in Egypt.

Enjoy this new edition of *#ISOJ*, send us your comments or questions and help us spread the word about this innovative publication, especially among your friends in social media. After all, the first journal that took its name from a Twitter hashtag deserves a buzz on social media :-).

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Co-editors

# Journal Details

## About the Journal

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## About Us

#ISOJ The Journal of the International Symposium on Online Journalism is an international journal devoted to advancing the scholarship in the area of journalism and innovative technologies. Articles included in the journal are based on original research, methodologies relevant to the study of journalism and innovative technologies (online, tablets, mobile platforms, etc.), critical syntheses of research and theoretical perspectives on journalism today. The journal maintains a social scientific and broad behavioral focus.

## Disclaimer

The editors cannot be held responsible for any errors or consequences that arise from the use of information contained in the #ISOJ Journal. The views and opinions in the journal do not reflect those of the publisher or editors.



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Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 6-25

# 40 Million Page Views is Not Enough: An Examination of the *Christian Science Monitor's* Evolution from SEO to Engagement


## *Jonathan Groves and Carrie Brown-Smith*



*This longitudinal study, based on four weeks of newsroom observation over three years and more than 60 interviews, examines how one digitally-focused news organization, the Christian Science Monitor, has struggled to develop a more engaged audience. Using Napoli's model of audience behavior, which tracks engagement from awareness and interest to active participation, this paper offers lessons for scholars and news practitioners alike interested in the future of news. It also expands upon research on conversational and participatory journalism to understand journalists' evolving relationships with their increasingly active audience.*



*This article received the Top Paper award at the 2013 Symposium. This award is given to the authors who received the highest marks on their research paper from the judges during the peer-review process of the research paper competition.*


Engaging audiences and making the news more social, sharable, and participatory are overwhelmingly at the top of U.S. newspaper editors' agendas, according to a 2011 study by the Reynolds Journalism Institute (Mayer, 2011). However, most newsroom leaders have also struggled to figure out what exactly this means in practice and what specific strategies they should embrace (Mayer, 2011). This paper will examine how one digitally-focused news organization, the *Christian Science Monitor*, has struggled to understand engagement and develop strategies to boost it, offering lessons for scholars and news practitioners alike interested in the future of news.

The *Monitor's* transition from a moribund five-day-a-week print publication with a rapidly shrinking readership of 52,000 to today's news website with a print weekly is a tale of both triumph and ongoing challenges. The *Monitor* has achieved success through search-engine optimization and targeted techniques to grow page views from 3 million per month in 2009 to about 39 million per month today (Quantcast, 2012). However, these traffic gains have not necessarily translated into a loyal audience of return visitors, and the organization is now gradually developing a new mission to build a more engaged, committed readership community and become less dependent on the capricious whims of search-driven traffic. As this study will show, one challenge of this approach is that time limitations and staff resistance to an evolving role for journalists in the participatory news environment have limited the kinds of meaningful social interaction required to build loyalty.

This longitudinal study has closely followed the paper's digital transition through four week-long newsroom visits and more than 60 interviews with leaders and staff members between 2009 and 2012. This paper will examine how the newsroom defines and measures engagement, and describe and evaluate its strategies for building a more engaged audience in accordance with Napoli's model of audience behavior (2011), which tracks engagement from awareness and interest to engagement and action. Among the engagement efforts analyzed is the organization's increasing push to develop distinctive content and use social media.

## Literature Review

Audience engagement is a top priority for newsrooms seeking to survive in a digital environment where audiences expect to find relevant news delivered through multiple platforms with opportunities for social sharing and participation, according to a telephone survey of more than 500 newspaper leaders (Mayer, 2011). In addition to building the kind of trust and loyalty necessary to secure subscribers, research has shown that readers more engaged in content are also more engaged in ads — all important to newspapers' shrinking bottom line (Napoli, 2011). However, editors have struggled with defining engagement and finding time and resources to connect with their communities in a meaningful way (Mayer, 2011).

### Defining engagement

The academic literature indicates that engagement remains a fluid concept with varying definitions, whether one is exploring it in the context of advertising or editorial content. It arose as key barometer of effectiveness among media and advertising executives and researchers in part because it is possible to measure a variety of dimensions of audience behavior on the web beyond mere exposure, which was previously the dominant metric for most media. Scholars from multiple disciplines (e.g. Lefebvre et al., 2010; Napoli, 2011) have pointed to the Advertising Research Foundation's definition from a 2006 white paper as a starting point: "Engagement is turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context" (ARF, 2006, in Napoli, 2011, p. 96). As Napoli notes:

> This proposed definition certainly seems to lack the clarity necessary to resolve the persistent debates and discussion over what engagement should mean; and indeed, in the four years since this definition was introduced, the meaning of engagement remains very much contested territory. (2011, p. 96)

In early explications, some viewed the term engagement in an online context as a mix of return visits, time spent on site, number of comments or “likes,” and other easily captured web metrics that indicate loyalty and the sustained desire to interact with the site (Peterson & Carrabis, 2007). Peterson & Carrabis’ work was adapted in practice by *Philly.com*, the online site for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Daily News* (Beckett, 2010). The goal was to determine the percentage of “engaged visits” and provide a systematic way to set benchmarks toward engagement.

The review by Beckett (2010) highlighted the seven variables used by *Philly.com* to count “engaged visits”: page views (visiting at least six pages, excluding photo galleries); duration of visit (minimum of five minutes on the site); return visits (daily); loyalty (those who are registered at the site or visit at least three times a week); brand awareness/appreciation (coming directly to the site by bookmarking or directly typing in the name of the site address or name of site into a search engine); interaction (who is engaging in the comments and forums); and participation (sharing or uploading user-generated content).

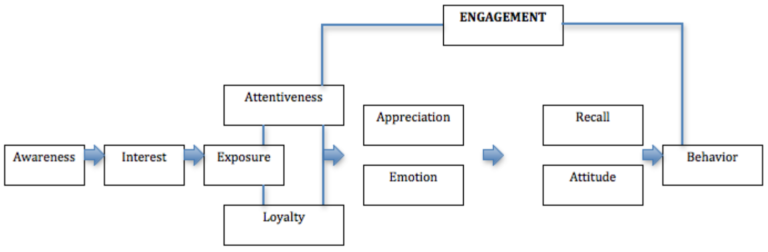
Marketers have described relative levels of engagement with content as a pyramid in which the majority of content consumers are more passive “watchers,” with a gradually decreasing number sharing, commenting, producing, and curating content (Solis, 2010). Although the numbers toward the top of the pyramid are smaller, these participators are heavily involved in improving their online communities and are often influential.

Some have raised concerns about news organizations subordinating engagement to the publishing/marketing operations and have proposed widening the conception of the term. Mersey, Malthouse, and Calder (2010) defined the concept as “the collective experiences that readers or viewer[s] have with a media brand” (p. 40). The scholars focused specifically on experiences that fulfill roles in users’ lives, in the tradition of uses-and-gratifications research (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974; Ruggiero, 2000), developed a framework of eight experiences through interviews and a survey. Those eight were: stimulation and inspiration, social facilitation, temporal, self-esteem and civic-mindedness, intrinsic enjoyment, utilitarian, participation and socializing, and community. In this framework, a media organization should communicate and connect its central concept through audience experiences (Mersey, Malthouse & Calder, 2010).

### Napoli’s framework of audience behavior

Napoli (2011) outlines a summary framework of efforts to define the concept of engagement in what he calls “a post-exposure marketplace” (p. 91), one that must go beyond the “create it, and they will come” content model that media organizations have traditionally relied upon for audience and revenue. His sequential model for analyzing audience behavior moves from cognitive awareness to tangible behavior and action (Figure 1); it will serve as an organizational scheme for understanding the varying attempts of the *Monitor* to engage with its audience.

Figure 1




**Audience dimensions**

*from Napoli (2011), p. 91*

The first stage of Napoli's framework begins with *awareness*: Audience members must first become aware of content before they may engage with it. The next evaluation point along the model is *interest*, or whether the particular content piques the audience's interest enough to lead to the third point, *exposure.* Historically, traditional media organizations have been limited to focusing on this level to gauge audiences, through measures such as circulation for newspapers or viewership for television stations. Online exposure is typically measured through basic quantitative measures of experiencing content: page views and unique visitors. This analysis of the *Monitor*'s efforts will begin at the exposure level.

Closely in line with exposure are *attentiveness*, usually expressed in time spent with the content, also known as "stickiness," and *loyalty*, which considers how often users return to the content or the brand/organization. These two concepts reflect a deeper experience with the content, and in parallel, they form the first level of engagement in Napoli's model. Though they reveal some level of commitment, they provide little insight about the emotional connection audience members feel toward the content.

That qualitative evaluation comes at the next point, where two concepts are explored: *appreciation* and *emotion.* In evaluating appreciation, organizations try to discern whether the audience likes the content, which can be operationalized as social sharing or short comments filled with praise for the content. It can also be measured through the use of a "like" button on Facebook or the favorite star on Twitter. Emotional involvement measures whether the content had a strong positive or negative effect on the audience at a deeper level, or allowed audiences to feel a personal bond with it.

The penultimate phase encompasses *recall* and *attitude.* At this level, the audience is going beyond the piece of content to embracing the brand/organization itself; in the conception of Mersey, Malthouse and Calder (2010), the organization has successfully created an audience experience. The ability to recall information about the content indicates a higher level of engagement as does the formation of attitudes about the organization or brand. The last facet of the model is *behavior*. What action, if any, does the audience take after experiencing the content and the organization?

### Participatory and conversational journalism

In a news context, this behavioral element is meaningfully exhibited through what some scholars have called *participatory journalism*. Singer et al. (2011) define the concept as:

> People inside and outside the newsroom are engaged in communicating not only *to*, but also *with*, one another. In doing so, they are all participating in the ongoing processes of creating a news website and building a multifaceted community. (p. 2)

Participatory journalism fits with Mayer's (2011) holistic definition of engagement: "a focus on, respect for and enthusiasm about the role of the audience." In her interviews with journalists, she found there were three primary kinds of engagement: community outreach, conversation, and collaboration. Community outreach goes beyond hoping the audience will find content; it is taking the content to them, as well as identifying and meeting community information needs. Conversation involves engaging in dialogue, convening forums, and discussions with the community. Collaboration demands soliciting and utilizing user-generated content and actively involving users in editorial decision-making.

Community outreach, conversation, and collaboration closely relate to the concept of *conversational journalism* (Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1996; Marchionni, 2008), which blends the professional and amateur voices and can have implications for credibility online. Focusing Napoli's framework in a news context, this study will analyze the efforts at the *Monitor* to move from seizing the attention of audience members with search-engine optimization tactics to focusing on engagement, and it will explore the issues a news organization faces in moving along this path. The behavior component of Napoli's model will be operationalized in the sense of *participatory journalism* and user-generated content.

## Methodology

This case study focuses on one week of newsroom observation and 17 interviews at the *Monitor* from May 21-26, 2012, but is informed by three previous weeklong visits to the Boston headquarters in 2009, 2010, and 2011 that included 45 interviews. As with previous visits, the 17 interviews included a cross section of the organization, including staffers with the online, national, and international desks, as well as some who work for the magazine and in the publishing department.

Researchers shadowed staffers, attended meetings, and analyzed internal documents and e-mails in addition to conducting interviews, which were transcribed and analyzed for key themes.

The *Monitor* was chosen as a subject of study because it has stood in the vanguard of news organizations jettisoning their print products or reducing their frequency to cope with economic and technological industry upheaval. The *New Orleans Times Picayune,* and *Newsweek* (among others) have recently followed this pattern.

For the latest visit, our revised interview instrument included questions focused on engagement. We sought to examine how an organization that had become successful at exposure turns those eyeballs to deeper levels of engagement, a struggle that has become a central discussion among news organizations (Santo, 2012; see also Mayer, 2010, and her work with Fleming, 2011). In semi-structured interviews, respondents were asked about their attitudes toward and strategies for engaging readers, as well as what specific techniques were proving to be effective or not.

## Results

John Yemma became editor of the *Monitor* in July 2008 (Cook, 2008) and soon announced a strategy to eliminate the organization's print edition, a decision driven by a plan of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, to reduce its subsidy to the news organization. At the time, the website was averaging about 3 million page views a month; Yemma set a goal of 25 million page views a month by 2013. Using search-engine optimization and other tactics to encourage referral traffic from Google and other search engines, the organization reached its goal for the first time in July 2010. By the spring of 2012, the organization was regularly topping 39 million page views a month (Quantcast, 2012). However, some raised concerns about the dependence on Google and the ephemeral nature of searchers who find *Monitor* stories and move quickly to other sites (Groves & Brown, 2011; Usher, 2012). Such concerns prompted an ongoing discussion about engagement.

By April 2012, the organizational structure revealed more changes in the *Monitor* strategy. It had closed two international bureaus, in Africa and India, bringing those staff writers to Boston. International news trailed national news in terms of Web traffic, even though it remained a defining part of the *Monitor*'s identity. The organization also created the position of new venture editor, who works closely with a counterpart on the publishing side to develop new product and market initiatives. In April 2012, the staff also redesigned the magazine and changed the cover to reflect more of a connection to the website. It was retitled *The Christian Science Monitor Weekly* and included the tagline "Read our daily edition online at csmonitor.com." By May 2012, the organization had launched a mobile site and a tablet edition.

The fiscal year that ended April 30, 2012, represented the organization's best financial performance since 1963 (Yemma, 2012a). Despite the successes, members of the organization still expressed concerns that too few visitors came through the home page as loyal readers.

> We're way too Google News-dependent, and they're changing that algorithm all the time, so it's like — it's almost a single point of failure

> because if they could shut it down and decide that's an experiment that didn't work, that didn't pay, and Google just shuts it down — that's like half of our business model…. when you're living in Google News' world, you can't actually put anything on the news agenda. It's already got to be there, and then they just find your version of it. (personal communication, May 21, 2012)

In the context of Napoli's model, the shift to focusing on content that readers demand served as a way to raise awareness and rekindle interest in the once-prominent news organization that had won seven Pulitzer Prizes over the course of its 104-year history. People searching for information on a trending news topic are now much more likely to see the *Monitor* appearing at or near the top of search results or among the selections in Google News.

**Exposure: Page views**

Once an online audience is aware of a medium and interested in it, often thanks to its prominence in search results, Napoli's model moves toward *exposure*, a concept that online is often measured through page views or unique visitors. At the *Monitor*, page views remained the dominant metric of success in the newsroom and were seen as a proxy for reader opinion. On days when the site achieved one million page views in a single day, the online staff would ring a bell in the newsroom, sparking a smattering of applause. During our May 2012 visit, the site topped one million views in part because of a staff-written post explaining how to play Google's interactive graphic "doodle" of the Moog synthesizer (Turcotte, 2012).

***At* the Monitor*, page views remained the dominant metric of success in the newsroom and were seen as a proxy for reader opinion. On days when the site achieved one million page views in a single day, the online staff would ring a bell in the newsroom, sparking a smattering of applause.***

Traffic reports were shared regularly in meetings among editors, and one prominently positioned flat-screen monitor featured real-time Google Analytics statistics for the newsroom to view, including how many visitors were on the site at a given time. Once the number topped 2,500 or so, people in the newsroom would take notice and often try to discern what was drawing visitors. The newsroom put up about 60 posts a day of original material and supplemented the material with wire-service material or content swaps with other news sites and bloggers (personal communication, May 24, 2012).

Despite improving numbers, in the fall of 2011, concern sprouted in the newsroom whether existing gains in page views would translate into enough revenue. Under pressure, the organization set new page-view targets in October 2011, and managers had conversations about traffic numbers with individual reporters:

> Some of our best journalists are actually getting the most traffic. But some of our best journalists aren't. So what's the distinction there? What's going on? So we started that conversation about, you know, 'Well, what's [Reporter A] doing? Well, he thinks about his headline first because he knows that on the Web, the headline is king. If it's not clickable, and it doesn't stand out, then it gets lost in the flood of everybody else covering that topic. And so, that's kind of where he starts' …. 'Hey guys, some people are really contributing a lot, and some people aren't,' and it's the first time we've ever talked about that. And it's not an easy conversation to have. (personal communication, May 22, 2012)

Toward the end of 2011, the newsroom began using what became known internally as "multipliers" as a key component of the strategy to increase page views. Content such as photo galleries, news quizzes, and lists spread their offerings over multiple pages, which increased the page-view count as well as the number of page views per visit, a key metric to try to move toward *loyalty*, the next phase along Napoli's model; loyalty is often measured in terms of frequency of exposure. Monthly global page views shot upward, from 23 million in October 2011 to 39.5 million in December 2011 (Quantcast, 2012). Such results buoyed top managers, who sent a congratulatory e-mail to the staff after the new year. It said, in part:

> We're nimble, responsive, authoritative, and conversational. We are part of the world's daily conversation. And we are working hard to build deeper loyalty to our brand of journalism. With every trending article, with every quiz, list, gallery, and referral, we make a friendly recommendation to visitors to view our more in-depth journalism ...Reach + Depth = Valuable Audience. (e-mail, Jan. 3, 2012)

For the first five months of 2012, the level stayed above 39 million global page views per month. And depth of visit as measured by page views per visit improved: It had risen from 2.2 page views per visitor in May 2011 to 3.02 in April 2012 (personal communication, May 21, 2011). Still, the focus on page views continued to spark some tension and raised questions about commitment to quality among some staffers. One editor said of multipliers:

> In a sense, it almost games that metric on depth of visit because it's not true engagement in the sense that we're leading them deeper and deeper into other content; it's sort of just a stovepipe kind of a depth of visit. (personal communication, May 21, 2012)

Though several staffers echoed that sentiment, others in the organization saw the techniques as new forms of storytelling to connect with readers.

> I think what we're figuring out is that, all right, you might use a new format like a list story or a quiz or, you know, these things that traditional journalists kind of looked down their noses at. But you can use a list or a quiz or a poll or a map or, you know, these different formats, and infuse them with *Monitor*-esqueness and substance and things that are blessing mankind, and that are enlightening and educating and activating our readers, which are, I think, the hallmarks of what we're about. So it's taking these values that we have — and have always had — and putting them into new forms that are relevant. (personal communication, May 25, 2012)

**Attentiveness/loyalty: Depth of visit/return visits**

Napoli (2011) conceives of *attentiveness* and *loyalty* as concepts that work in parallel. In an online news context, *attentiveness* is seen as the depth of visit and amount of time spent on the site; *loyalty* is often operationalized through return visits (p. 90).

As the in-house conversation at the *Monitor* turned toward deepening engagement, some editors began focusing on the design and content on the home page. During interviews, several staffers defined return visits to the home page as loyalty, meaning that users would identify with *Monitor*-branded content; online planning discussions during the study week focused on formatting and redesigning the home page so that it would lead users to the *Monitor's* most original and distinctive content. The organization had begun working with software that recommended story play on the home page, given past audience behavior, and designers pushed for improving the load times and responsiveness of the home page.

One editor who defined engagement as "home page traffic" (personal communication, May 23, 2012) noted the struggle in trying to go beyond SEO tactics to engagement, which is more difficult to measure and test:

> What's interesting is that the SEO side is a lever you can pull. You know how to work it, or we've figured out how to work it. We know if we do X, then we're going to get Y, just like a machine, spit it out. We have no idea how to do the other one, so we're just blind and fumbling around in the dark. And I think sometimes there's a frustration that comes with that, so when in doubt, go back to what you know. But, yeah, if we could pull that lever, that would be great. I'm not sure we know how to do it (personal communication, May 23, 2012).

In the morning news meetings, the discussion had shifted beyond page views to placement of key content on the home page. In one primary position dubbed the "upper lefts," an editor noted that the chosen content should be some more brand-oriented, "what's distinctive to us" (meeting, May 20, 2012).

> I would say that that's the conversation that we're having right now, is how do we maybe allow writers to get off the daily gerbil wheel of page views, and maybe have some time to breathe and do what might be considered more classic, longer, more thoroughly reported *Monitor* stories. (personal communication, May 24, 2012)

Over the course of this study, many staffers have used the term "*Monitor* journalism" to mean solutions-oriented reporting, often with an international perspective. Several were concerned that this type of story, which they equated with higher quality journalism, was being lost in the focus on page views. Indeed, as page views moved to the forefront of success in the organization, traffic reports showed international items — the type of work for which the organization had historically received recognition — were typically less popular than national news or technology stories among the site's readership. A central question became how to remain true to the *Monitor* legacy while embracing the desires of the current journalistic landscape. That concern arose again during our latest study period, especially after the closure of two international bureaus and continued success of national and technology content.

One staffer noted the existential conflict within the organization:

> In the days before online being big, a foreign correspondent position was ultimate prestige. I mean, it was — you were dealing with the most important news as judged by other journalists. You're obviously tremendously expensive to the organization, so that says something. … I just think the traffic numbers are a tremendous blow to that prestige. Because what it reveals is that for decades we may have thought you know, these stories were our best and readers would see that too, and see that as distinctive. And what you learn is that they're just mostly ignored. And so then suddenly the foreign correspondentship becomes a bit of a backwater. You're kind of yelling into the wilderness from half a world away, and is anybody even listening? And, on top of it, you're costing your organization fantastic amounts of money. (personal communication, May 23, 2012)

Said one international staffer:

> … it is really impressive how many hits we get now, compared to two or three years ago. But where are those hits coming from, and are they indicating that we're on a sustainable path or not? And I don't — and this has been one of my issues from the beginning — is you put all this effort into getting lots of traffic, but who are those people that are coming, and what do they think about the experience that they have here? And now the managers are starting to talk more about that experience, and brand and loyalty and things like that, but I just don't see how you can build a brand on writing 'American Idol' stories, or Google Doodle stories, or whatever. (personal

> communication, May 24, 2012)

Cover stories from the magazine became a more prominent part of the content mix, with appearances in key positions on the home page to encourage and reward loyalty. The organization also has continued to sponsor “The Monitor Breakfast” each week, a meal and discussion with top Washington newsmakers, which it has done for the past four decades; it is viewed within the newsroom as premier *Monitor* content. Subscribers receive full video access, with links to the video archives.

Some interviewees focused on the concept of “distinctiveness” as a way of connecting with readers on a deeper level:

> I can’t quantify editorial distinctiveness. However, you know, I can say quite certainly that if people see something that is unique and they say that it’s worth seeing again, I’d see the numbers budging on the people coming back through the home page. …. I’d see an increase in search for ‘csmonitor political analysis’ or something like that. I’d see something where people are seeking us out, and I’m not seeing that. (personal communication, May 24, 2012)

> And so, you know, we’ve created this infrastructure that’s getting us lots of page views, and now we have to layer on top of it the distinctiveness. You can’t destroy that structure and start over, you have to layer on top. … And so the whole focus on SEO and page views and reporters getting a weekly email that has here’s how my stories did and how many page views they got and so forth — that is all a push to relevance. And we’ve become relevant again, which we haven’t been probably since the ’50s or ’60s. (personal communication, May 25, 2012)

Some editors in the newsroom noted no specific engagement goals or targets had been set. Whereas everyone was comfortable and familiar with the page-view metric for gauging success during the first phase of the Web-first transition, those in the newsroom did not have a uniform description or definition of engagement.

One loyalty metric the newsroom tried was dividing up frequency of return visits into three groups: one/two visits, three to eight visits a month, and nine or more visits per month. The last group was considered the most engaged visitor. Using that measure, the newsroom found 0.85% of visitors in May 2011 fell into that “most engaged” category. By April 2012, that had reached 1.35%, which one staffer noted had not reached the level of genuine loyalty. “What you’re seeing is the SEO effect, not a loyalty effect,” the staffer said.

Another metric, time spent per visit, showed that the audience as a whole was not moving toward longer visits. In May 2012, 45% of visits were one to five minutes in length, down from 51% in May 2011. Similarly, 2% of visits were 30 to 60 minutes in length in May 2012, unchanged from May 2011. And 26% of visits were less than a minute long, up from 16.3% in May 2011. However, the number of visits increased from May 2011 to May 2012, meaning a rise in the raw number of longer visits.

Some staffers contended that other colleagues were resisting doing what needs to be done in social-media spaces to make the idea of reconnecting with elite audiences — the experts and decision-makers who historically formed the base of the *Monitor*'s readership during the paper's heyday — a reality:

> I feel like if you're not willing to play the SEO game, if you're not willing to do that, if you're going to write for your sources, then by God, get your sources to read you. And what's one way you can do that? You can try, if I were them, I would be going — if this is what they wanted to do — I would be doing a social-media blitz. I'd be, you know, Twitter and Facebook, and Google+ for all my sources because you've got to have huge buy-in to get the kind of page views that we want you to get. (personal communication, May 24, 2012)

**Appreciation/emotion: Social media/comments**

Once loyalty has been secured, Napoli's model moves toward *appreciation* and *emotion*. A media organization must find ways to understand what the audience seems to like and connect with on an emotional level, and in an online context, one approach to measuring that perception is through social-media interactions such as "likes" on Facebook or Twitter and comments (Napoli, 2011).

Under former online editor Jimmy Orr, the *Monitor* had included promotion of stories on Facebook, Twitter, and Digg, a news-sharing site now declining in popularity, as part of its Web-first strategy since 2009. But several reporters and editors had resisted the push toward using these tools, especially since the original imperative included that reporters use social media under personal names. That strategy had changed by our May 2012 visit; individual reporters and editors were encouraged to use social media, but no specific requirements or targets were set. There was a general sense among leaders that forcing staffers strapped for time to take on an additional task may legitimately be considered unfair, even though personal brands are often more powerful than institutional ones in social-media contexts (Marchionni, 2009).

The primary social-media effort was through institutionally branded accounts, such as the *Christian Science Monitor* page on Facebook, which had 68,204 likes as of Oct. 18, 2012, as well as Twitter accounts, which include @csmonitor (30,042 followers); @CSMPolitics (3,199 followers); and @CSMlibrary (1,962 followers). Some reporters had begun to embrace social media, especially Twitter, but several editors said they felt uncomfortable establishing a personal brand online. In addition to those who use social media voluntarily, two full-time staffers are dedicated to managing the *Monitor*'s social-media efforts, frequently publishing fresh content and regular features as well as making sure the conversation stays civil and avoids personal attacks.

On the institutional accounts, more discussion is encouraged on Facebook than Twitter, as the primary Twitter account is primarily a news feed of the site's latest stories. In thinking about engagement, online staffers— unlike most of the newsroom staffers interviewed — said they view social media as a community-building tool, a sentiment more in line with Napoli's model:

> When I'm thinking of engagement, I'm thinking of social-media engagement, how much of an — when you drop your rock into the water — how far of a ripple does it wind up having? And I think of the distance of that ripple being, you know, how it's doing on social media. (personal communication, May 23, 2012)

Some editors in the newsroom noted the struggle with trying to go beyond the "news feed" aspect of their own accounts in a time- and resource-strapped newsroom:

> The only thing you really have time to do is to treat social media as an RSS feed, and they've been pretty clear that doesn't work. So, then, the default answer is, I'm not really going to do anything, unless I personally have an interest in some particular topic, and it's just kind of on my own time and my own energy. (personal communication, May 23, 2012)

Some Facebook updates, often those that posed questions or featured contests, garnered emotional responses through comments and dozens of "like" pushes on Facebook.[1] However, some status updates received little interaction or spark a reaction that reflects frustration rather than appreciation. The newsroom had begun adding Facebook Insights to the mix of analytics being analyzed; one success point had been using photos from cover stories in promotional updates. Other kinds of visual posts also fared well.[2]

Social-media sharing is another expression of emotion. Managers pointed to one instance in which an influencer on Pinterest linked to a *Monitor* story that sparked 250,000 page views as an example of how social media can dramatically affect traffic. More often, however, the staff has not felt a tangible impact from referrals; social media is responsible for about 3% of referral traffic (personal communication, May 21, 2012).

The organization's primary Twitter account also features little interaction with the audience and serves primarily as a news feed for distributing the latest stories to followers, and few people speak directly to the organization in the Twitter stream. Overall, the organization's use of social media tools mirrors that of many other news organizations that primarily promote and distribute content, rather than listen to audiences (Messner & Eford, 2011).

The most direct audience-to-organization communication comes in the form of comments on stories within the *Monitor* site itself, and this mode of communication often inspired the greatest resistance among staffers. Although the *Monitor* still had comments on all stories during our study week in May 2012, few staffers said they looked at the comments regularly, and most interviewed over the course of our longitudinal study said they had paid little attention to comments since the function went live in November 2010. The comments, which used the Disqus system, were placed on a separate page from the stories and required an additional click for viewing and participating. At the time of our latest study period, several staffers were already suggesting to get rid of the commenting function, although not everyone agreed with such a recommendation.

We often heard a disdain for the comments:

> It is kind of just a corner where stuff goes on that we don't pay much attention to until it gets really bad. We can shut off comments on particular stories, which we do sometimes, knowing that this is just going to go downhill fast no matter what we do … I don't know how valuable comments are in terms of engagement. I really don't (personal communication, May 22, 2012).

During the study period, the organization had shifted its focus to Facebook for audience discussion and interaction, and in September 2012, the organization decided to disable comments on most of the site's content. Yemma explained the move in a September 5, 2012, blog post:

> We've made this change after extensive analysis of the comments our articles have received over the past two years. Some have been thoughtful. Some have added useful information or pointed out our mistakes. Thank you for those. But many comments have been non-productive. (Yemma, 2012a)

**The final stages of Napoli's model**

After attentiveness and loyalty have been secured, Napoli (2011) lists *recall* and *attitude* as a precursor to *behavior*. The fundamental question at this stage of the model examines whether audience attitudes have changed toward the product or brand in question. During the study period, we saw little consideration among newsroom staffers of how direct interactions with the audience could help foster and assess this level of engagement.

In an effort to reward return visitors, the *Monitor* sought to put its best and most distinctive content on the home page, and staffers and managers hoped the quality of the content would be enough to develop a positive *attitude* toward the brand. At the *Monitor*, many in the newsroom saw the ultimate engagement goal as consumption of its original content, the types of stories staffers considered more in line with *Monitor* journalism from the organization's storied past. If audiences were regularly clicking on those types of stories, some in the newsroom interpreted that to mean the audience had embraced the *Monitor* itself, rather than just encountering *Monitor* content through Google or serendipity. Audience members would seek out the content because they could *recall* the *Monitor* brand and have a desire to consume *Monitor* journalism to satisfy their communication needs. In the context of Napoli's model, however, that consumption is more reflective of *loyalty,* a less mature stage of engagement.

The final stage in Napoli's model is *behavior*. Though the *Monitor* staff conceived of the ultimate behavior as subscriptions or consumption of their distinctive content, which conception falls short of truly engaged behavior. Though subscriptions are measurable and meaningful, it is equally important in the online space to gauge community contributions of content, the type of participatory journalism that blends the work of the professional and the amateur.

During the study period, we found the audiences occasionally provided links to information and content in comments. One area of experimentation included tapping into the DC Decoder brand, a column written in the weekly magazine. Online, the staff provides a few topics for the audience to vote upon in an online poll containing the subtitle "You Pick. We Decode." The staff then answers the question on that topic on the Web site.

But the conceptions of participatory journalism that include user-generated content, such as photos, contributed stories, and videos, were not routinely encouraged or used by the *Monitor.* Though the organization had content arrangements with non-staff bloggers, audience members were not systematically asked to contribute or participate in the journalistic process beyond comments on Facebook.

## Discussion

The *Monitor*'s approach to engagement used multiple ways to connect with the audience, through regularly updated and distinctive content, as well as use of social media. However, the strategy was not executed as a methodical pathway toward developing engaged visitors. Instead, the organization depended primarily upon the quality of its content — what the journalists held up as "*Monitor* journalism" typical of the organization's historically respected work — to create an engaged audience. As a result, the newsroom's efforts to engage the audience remain largely fixed at the *attentiveness/ loyalty* stage of Napoli's model.

Applying the model to this case allowed us to identify two structural problems with the *Monitor*'s approach: The organization was not devoting enough resources to the critical *appreciation/emotion* stage along the path to engagement to help foster a sense of community among the audience, and it mistakenly viewed distinctive content as the top level of engagement instead of *participation*. Unless this perception changes, the organization will remain unable to attain the highest level of engagement that ultimately fosters a sense of community in the online space.

With their focus on social media, online staffers had been trying to build a community, but several *Monitor* journalists we interviewed saw their work largely in the traditional one-way conception of older media; they produce high-quality content for audiences and promote it through social media. That finding is consistent with other researchers, who have found that some news organizations have embraced social media — particularly Twitter (Ahmad, 2010; Farhi, 2009) — but have only begun to take advantage of the capacity for interactivity, instead conforming more broadcasting model (Messner & Eford, 2011). But in this interactive era, this traditional model is not enough, especially for a general news publication such as the *Monitor*.

***If the audience's emotional expressions, positive and negative, are not considered by the organization, those users may depart for online locales more open and accepting of their emotions. Without that acknowledgement, a news organization will struggle to connect with audiences, particularly those who are digital natives used to participating fully in the online conversation as equals.***

In the online space, audiences are more selective, and often they have a demand and desire for participation. Indeed, interviews with *Monitor* staffers revealed perceptions that may inhibit efforts to build community, especially with regard to comments from the audience. If the audience's emotional expressions, positive and negative, are not considered by the organization, those users may depart for online locales more open and accepting of their emotions. Without that acknowledgement, a news organization will struggle to connect with audiences, particularly those who are digital natives used to participating fully in the online conversation as equals.

This resistance in traditional news organizations is not uncommon. Journalists and the news companies they work for have historically exhibited a conservative or complacent attitude toward change (Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002), and like all organizations, defensive mechanisms are often triggered when new initiatives that threaten professional identity or one's sense of personal competence are introduced (Stapley, 2006; Kets de Vries, 2001). As Napoli (2011) notes:

> Any shift in the dominant institutionalized conceptualization of the media audience can happen only after a process of resistance and negotiation has taken place among the various stakeholders that either participate in or oversee the audience marketplace. (p. 116)

The aspects of increasing engagement that involve encouraging greater public participation through the contribution of content or offering direct feedback can conflict with conceptions of journalistic professionalism (see Anderson, 2011; Boczkowski, 2004; Groves, 2011; Robinson, 2011; Singer et al., 2012), and we discovered a similar resistance at the *Monitor*. Singer et al. (2012) measured journalists' attitudes toward participation and found that while some have embraced it as a way to improve journalism and make it more democratic, many feel it undermines professionalism, accuracy, and also often means pandering to the lowest common denominator. As the survival struggles of newspapers have become pronounced and the quest for revenue more widely accepted among even the most public-interest-oriented, many journalists have come to see participation through a kind of market logic as a way to boost brand loyalty and traffic rather than as something that might enhance their work (Singer, et al., 2012). Our interviews with *Monitor* staffers found a similar conception at work.

Despite these issues, the *Monitor* has embraced an environment accepting of emergent strategy (Christensen & Raynor, 2003) to survive disruptive change. It is a newsroom that uses iterative experiments to discover what works to move certain metrics among its audience, and its willingness to consistently push in new direction has led to successes in increasing page views and revenues. But the effort to reach true engagement will require a new focus on acknowledging contributions from the audience more typical of participatory journalism. Only then will the organization reach its goal of creating an engaged community of online users.

## Conclusion

Like many news organizations today (Mayer, 2011), the *Monitor*'s oft-stated intentions and firm resolve to build greater audience engagement have not yet been met with the necessary clarity of vision or sustained execution to succeed fully. While the paper's meteoric page-view rise has placed it among the top 200 most-traveled sites in the United States (Quantcast, 2012) and increased its relevance, it has yet to reach the level of engagement that would reliably predict a sustainable future. The organization remains tethered to the whims of a search engine with a changing format and algorithms it does not control, and while this threat has prompted a valuable new focus on serving the needs of its readers, it has also challenged its identity and unique value proposition as a purveyor of serious, solution-oriented journalism.

A news organization that still aspires to serve a cerebral and worldly audience interested in hard-hitting and especially international news cannot expect that this audience will find it and develop brand loyalty based purely on quality of content alone. The days of producing good journalism and simply waiting for the audience to come are gone, as the *Monitor* itself has shown. The organization must now find ways to serve its unique brand of journalism to what has become a niche audience and begin to build a community around it with a sustained commitment to a more participatory style of journalism.

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## Endnotes

1. For example, writer Jake Turcotte's May 23, 2012, post about how to play the Google Moog "doodle" became one of the most popular posts in the site's history and remained atop Google News for most of the day, an unusual feat. As of Oct. 18, 2012, the post had been recommended on Facebook more than 4,200 times and tweeted 312 times. It also received 299 "+1" designations on Google+, that social network's version of the "Like" button.

2. For example, on May 24, 2012, the staff posted an editorial cartoon showing the class of 2012 crossing a rickety bridge from one cliff edge reading "new grads" to another edge with a sign pointing to "jobs." The post received 140 likes, 87 shares, and 23 comments, with additional expressions of appreciation: "Great cartoon!" wrote one. "*..this..*" wrote another.

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Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 26-44

# Blueprint for Change: From the Teaching Hospital to the Entrepreneurial Model of Journalism Education

***Donica Mensing and David Ryfe***

*A number of influential educators and funders recently advocated the "teaching hospital" as a metaphor for how journalism educators should organize their programs. In this essay we argue that the metaphor is embedded in a conceptualization of journalism and of democracy that is unraveling. In response, we explore an alternative metaphor for journalism education based on entrepreneurship, in its sense as an organized response to change. Developing entrepreneurial education programs that instill more enterprise, flexibility and reflection among students and faculty could spur the creation of new forms of journalism and journalism organizations for the future.*

*This article received the Top Paper award at the 2013 Symposium. This award is given to the author who received the highest marks on their research paper from the judges during the peer-review process of the research paper competition.*

Should journalism schools operate programs that resemble 'teaching hospitals'? Since Columbia University Dean Nicholas Lemann suggested the teaching hospital model in 2009, this metaphor has been a dominant theme in debates about journalism education. The New American Foundation dedicated a report to the metaphor (Anderson, C.W., Glaisyer, T., & Smith, J., 2011), and it was a focused topic of discussion by AEJMC members in 2012 (Finberg, 2012). The metaphor also has been vigorously promoted by powerful foundations, which have warned university presidents that journalism schools failing to adopt a teaching hospital model risk being shunned by the foundations that provide a critical source of funding for their programs (Newton, 2012).

Though it has received substantial support, we argue that the metaphor of a teaching hospital is ill suited to improving journalism education. The teaching hospital model can be seen as relying on a "supply-side" theory of journalism: society will improve if we increase the supply of high quality, credible information. In this model, the purpose of journalism education is to teach students how to produce more and better content by learning from experienced professionals. Quality is measured by which program produces the best journalism, published in the most elite outlets, under the most distinguished professionals. The theory assumes that democracy will be served, if only journalists can supply the public with enough complete, well-sourced stories.

Our argument is that this model, if practiced by many journalism schools, could actually slow the response to change. The metaphor implies that journalism is a settled profession with clear boundaries that needs only to be practiced more rigorously, instead of a field with its most fundamental premises unraveling (Ryfe, 2012). Rather than creating conditions for students to help re-think journalistic practices, the teaching hospital model reinforces the conviction that content delivery is the primary purpose of journalism. Put simply, it makes it hard for students to think differently. While specific recommendations in the New American Foundation report make smart and useful contributions to thinking about the reinvention of journalism programs, the underlying assumption of the teaching hospital model is a conception of journalism that has proven inadequate to meet the changed circumstances of the 21st century.

Others have also questioned the teaching hospital model (Fisher, 2012) and proposed alternatives (Schaffer, 2012). In this essay, we build on this conversation by arguing for an open, entrepreneurial model of journalism education, one that stresses service as much as production, reflective practice as much as professional practice. At the risk of misusing the economic metaphor, our argument is that journalism education should be more focused on the demand side of journalism, addressing the needs of citizens, consumers, and publics. This entrepreneurial model would lead journalists to contemplate the disruption of journalism, and, we believe, to invent practices that will ultimately replace the news industry we have now.

This is not to say that the teaching hospital model metaphor has no uses. A handful of well-funded schools may benefit to a great degree by adopting the teaching hospital model. These schools are an important source of labor for the core news industry as it struggles to compete in a new environment. However, if all journalism programs focus on supplying labor for the existing (but shrinking) news industry, we will produce too many graduates and prolong the search for viable alternatives. In the same way that Clay Christensen argues that news organizations ought to build units to compete with the core product (Benton, 2012), we need journalism programs that will produce graduates equipped to compete with the core news industry. We need students ready to provide labor and creativity for the disruptor organizations, so that journalism itself will have a sound future. Otherwise, journalism education programs will be in danger of disappearing along with the existing news industry.

The key questions addressed in this essay are:

- Is the teaching hospital metaphor a useful organizing principle for journalism education? What assumptions are embedded in the model and what are its implications for the future of journalism?

- What might be an alternative metaphor for re-framing journalism education? What might such a model look like in practice?

## Journalism schools as teaching hospitals

Lemann (2009) first mentioned the teaching hospital metaphor in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: "Like teaching hospitals, journalism schools can provide essential services to their communities while they are educating their students." In offering the metaphor, it was clear that Lemann was primarily concerned about the "supply side" of journalism, urging journalism schools to become production centers for journalism to replace losses in the industry:

> Therefore journalism schools ought to explore, and are already exploring, the possibility of becoming significant producers of original news reporting to make up for the loss of the reporting that economically devastated news organizations can no longer afford. (para. 15)

The New American Foundation echoed Lemann's suggestion (Anderson et. al, 2011) in a report that urged a number of reforms for journalism programs. As with Lemann's article, most of these proposed reforms focus on the production of journalism. In fact, the report's very first "call" on journalism education was to "increase coverage of local communities outside the university or college in conjunction with local media" (p. 2). And every one of the experiments it profiled — from a bilingual news tabloid produced at the journalism school at East Tennessee State to digital hyperlocal projects developed at USC — involve journalism schools producing local community news.

As the report acknowledges, the idea that journalism schools should help students produce news is not a new one. The University of Missouri's School of Journalism has produced a daily newspaper for more than a century and dozens of other examples exist of journalism schools producing community news. In fact, hands-on, experiential learning is a hallmark of journalism education and an expected part of accredited, and many non-accredited, journalism programs. Former *Washington Post* editor Len Downie described his own journalism education at Ohio State in the 1960s as learning "primarily by producing" (2012, para. 2). Most any journalism school graduate of the last fifty years would recognize Downie's description.

But the authors of the New American Foundation report go further than embracing this longstanding pedagogy. They argue that journalism schools themselves should make an institutional commitment to production. News organizations are shrinking, they observe. In response, journalism programs should fill the resulting gap in local coverage. This is the reason that discussions of the teaching hospital model quickly turn to questions about how to fill production gaps between semesters, how to fund positions for professional editors and directors, how to deal with legal complications and develop distribution and marketing strategies. Just as teaching hospitals are actual hospitals, the "teaching hospital" model would have journalism schools become actual news production operations.

When thought of in this way, it seems fair to ask how journalism schools compare to teaching hospitals. Teaching hospitals have a number of characteristics that make them successful ventures: they provide consistent, rigorous, in-depth classroom instruction separate from the instruction that takes place in the hospital; they require deep investments of knowledge, capital and labor; they have institutionalized processes for close supervision of students; they closely resemble the workplaces where students can expect to practice when they graduate. Medical students who work in teaching hospitals have completed years of rigorous education and committed themselves to professional practice. They are preparing themselves to be credentialed professionals with a high likelihood of economic and social success. They have an elite status that communicates authority and separates them from their patients and the general public.

From this discussion, it is clear that the situation of the journalism school and the journalism student is significantly different from the teaching hospital model in most every respect. Most journalism schools focus on undergraduate education, working with students who have had only a handful of journalism courses. The students' commitment to obtaining a professional job in journalism is often low; many are undecided about their future career choices. Their prospects for stable careers and income are low. The likelihood that there will be newsrooms ready to employ them after training is low. The commitment of trained professionals to systematically provide them with consistent supervision is low. In nearly every sense, in other words, the differences between the majority of journalism education programs and teaching hospitals are stark.

Proponents of the teaching hospital model know all of this, of course.  Still, they embrace the metaphor because of the powerful assumptions that underlie it:

- The assumption of shared professional identity (journalists, like doctors, have established professional identities in their respective fields);

- The assumed separation between the professional and the object of the professional's attention (the patient/the public);

- The assumption that the professional is treating deficiencies in the patient/public;

- The assumption of shared norms (objective, expert professionals); and,

- That assumption of comparability between institutional structures and organizations (hospitals and newsrooms).

At a time when journalism is undergoing severe disruption, these assumptions are deeply attractive to journalists, in large part because they reinforce a particular vision of journalism and its role in society (e.g., Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). In this vision, journalists are at the center of democratic public life.  Political elites need journalists to convey information to citizens, and citizens need journalists to become informed. Because journalism mediates the relationship between elites and citizens, the argument goes, it must take on certain characteristics.  For instance, it must be fair and balanced;

journalists must be detached from the events they cover and independent of the sources from whom they gather information. This vision of journalism, so deeply embedded in the teaching hospital metaphor, conjures an image of the profession that stretches back to the progressive era of the early 1900s (e.g., Gans, 1978; Schudson, 1998).

> ***Because journalism mediates the relationship between elites and citizens, the argument goes, it must take on certain characteristics. For instance, it must be fair and balanced; journalists must be detached from the events they cover and independent of the sources from whom they gather information.***

In addition to making these assumptions about how journalism works, advocates of the teaching hospital model also make assumptions about the purposes of journalism education. Embedded in descriptions of the teaching hospital model is the assumption that journalism programs exist to "train journalistic professionals in service of the news industry" (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 21). The "Open Letter to America's University Presidents" (2012) sent by six charitable foundations in support of the teaching hospital model, argues "universities must become forceful partners in revitalizing an industry at the very core of democracy" [emphasis ours]. These authors assume that saving the news industry is the core mission of journalism education.

A corollary to this assumption is that journalism programs ought to hire more experienced journalism professionals. After all, there is no better way of ensuring that journalism schools serve as a "forceful partner" to industry than to hire more people with industry experience. Newton argues: "You simply can't run a teaching hospital without doctors. But you can run one without researchers. Please understand: The best do both. Still, the doctors are required. …We need doctors treated equally with scholars" (2012, para. 6). In sum, Newton and other advocates of the teaching hospital model call for saving the journalism industry by turning journalism schools into production facilities staffed by industry professionals who have left an industry in deep distress.

If journalism were a relatively settled profession, with widely agreed upon norms, practices and roles, perhaps this metaphor and all the assumptions it contains would be useful. But this is not the 1960s (e.g., Hallin, 1993). In the 21st century, nearly every norm, value, practice and role within journalism is being questioned (e.g., Ryfe, 2012). It is, to borrow a term from Christensen (1997), a time of "disruptive innovation." At such moments, it may be more appropriate to bring deeply embedded assumptions out in the open and examine each one carefully and reflectively. The idea that journalists ought to be separated from their publics, or that the work of journalism is a delivery system for distributing content, or that newsrooms garner authority based on brand and institutional history, might be in need of serious interrogation. A model that naturalizes such notions might be less than helpful.

Moreover, individuals with experience and ties to established institutions are sometimes the most resistant to engaging in this sort of reflection. Christensen (Benton, 2012) argues that news organizations need to separate units that are engaging in new experiments from the units devoted to the existing product. A parallel argument could be made in journalism schools: that recruiting faculty from places other than the most successful established journalistic institutions might, in some cases, be the more creative and productive path.

In the end, the problems presented by the teaching hospital model can be reduced to differences in diagnoses regarding the current condition and future of journalism. In advocating a teaching hospital model, proponents express the conviction that the core of journalism is sound and the problems faced by the news industry are primarily technological and economic. Train students to use new tools, teach them to report better and deeper, use the university infrastructure to set up a production facility, and the resulting increase in supply will resemble what we had before, only better. The teaching hospital metaphor forecasts a future for journalism that is infused with the practices of the past.

The counter argument, of course, is that the purpose of journalism education is not to save the news industry, but to save journalism. The process of saving the industry through increased production could represent a diversion of resources and attention from the most important work of the university. Saving journalism most likely requires re-thinking some of the most fundamental practices of journalism. What is the role of journalism in an environment where information is abundant? Is journalism a process or a product? Is the story the fundamental unit of journalism? What is the role of citizens in practicing journalism alongside professionals? What if the value of content is reduced but the value of relationships increased? Re-connecting with communities as participants rather than professionals, teaching students the skills of community facilitation and moderation, experimenting with small entrepreneurial businesses, collaborating with computer scientists, artists, and urban planners might not produce coverage of many city council meetings (although it could) but it may help journalism programs contribute research and development that will be more valuable to the long term future of journalism.

The New American Foundation report (Anderson, et. al, 2011) concludes with the hope that journalism schools will become “the anchor for essential community journalism in the 21st century.” This is an important hope that could include a wider scope for defining journalism than what seems to be implied in a teaching hospital model, depending on how one defines “community journalism.” It is this question that animates the search for a more forward looking and relevant model for today’s journalism programs.

## An alternative: The entrepreneurial model of journalism education

Many observers have proposed alternative metaphors for journalism and journalism education. A common one is entrepreneurialism. The CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, for instance, has placed a large bet on entrepreneurialism: “We believe,” the program writes on its homepage, "that the future will be shaped by entrepreneurs who develop new business models and innovative projects – either working on their own, with startups, or within traditional media companies." Dan Gillmor, director of the Knight Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at Arizona State University, agrees. On the Center's homepage, Gillmor describes the program as one which helps "Students [become] fluent in a variety of digital media forms and understand the trends that are redefining journalism, including media economics and product development, business and marketing…" Similar classes and programs are sprouting in journalism schools across the country (e.g., Chung, 2011). Jan Schaffer, executive director of the J-Lab, speaks for many of these observers in a recent article (2012): "I have come to believe," she writes, "more in the entrepreneurial model of journalism over the teaching hospital-model."

As yet, however, the entrepreneurial model and its implications for journalism education have yet to be systematically articulated. What are the assumptions of the entrepreneurial model and how do they compare to the teaching hospital model?

To begin with, entrepreneurialism focuses on what could be, rather than on what was. It is about the possibilities of the future. In this sense, it is often seen as an antidote to a significant problem in journalism, here articulated by Gillmor (2004):

> I'm absolutely certain that the journalism industry's modern structure has fostered a dangerous conservatism — from a business sense more than a political sense, though both are apparent — that threatens our future. Our resistance to change, some of it caused by financial concerns, has wounded the journalism we practice and has made us nearly blind to tomorrow's realities. (p. xxvi)

Entrepreneurialism, by definition, is about pursuing change rather than resisting it. Casson (2010) calls entrepreneurs "a specific class of people dedicated to the pursuit of change." Entrepreneurship can be defined as "processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities" (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, p. 218) and as "acts of organizational creation, renewal, or innovation that occur within or outside an existing organization," (Sharma & Chrisman, 1999, p. 17). It holds promise as an antidote to resistance to change found in some newsrooms and to the despair that many feel about the future of journalism.

This orientation to change speaks to the question of fundamental purpose. Advocates of the entrepreneurial model share with proponents of the teaching model the notion that journalism's underlying purpose is to serve democracy. But they see — perhaps more clearly than teaching model proponents — that democracy itself is changing. Distinctions between public and private life are shifting (e.g., Hague & Loader, 1999; Mossberger, et al., 2008; Papacharissi, 2010) and new kinds of networked interest groups are emerging (e.g., Bimber, 2003; Bimber, et al., 2012). Social movements are taking advantage of new opportunities afforded by digital tools (e.g., Castells, 2012). Civic life is changing (e.g., Shirky, 2009). Not everything about democratic community is changing, of course.

But advocates of the entrepreneurial model see a need for journalists to invent new forms of journalism that add value to new forms of democratic politics.

In the search for new forms of journalism, these advocates have proposed new values, such as transparency and engagement (e.g., Singer, 2010). They have redefined old values, such as authority and trust (e.g, Peters & Broersma, 2012). They have proposed new practices, such as community organizing and facilitation (e.g., Niles, 2010). And they have gravitated to a new set of tools, from Facebook to Twitter, Tumblr to Google maps, to decipher the question journalists have been asking themselves for 300 years: how can they add value to democratic community? The difference between them and their teaching hospital model brethren is that they do not assume that answers to this question are fixed and eternal.

Advocates of the entrepreneurial model also see the purpose of journalism education in different terms. To them, its purpose is not primarily to serve the news industry. Rather, it is to serve the journalism that comes next: the organizations and institutions springing up to compete with the existing news industry and to contribute to new forms of democratic practice. If journalism is going to have an institutional identity in the future, it is likely going to be different from the institutional identity it has now. Journalism education can help bridge this transition by supplying students equipped to work and lead in both worlds, in the legacy institutional organizations as well as the new organizations participating in journalistic acts that have yet to be invented.

These differences large and small make for a dramatically different set of emphases in the classroom. Specifically, they shift the focus of journalism education in the following ways.

### From supply side to demand side

An entrepreneurial model draws attention to the demand side of journalism: the citizens, audiences, companies, and institutions that consume and participate in journalism in many forms. Entrepreneurs focus their attention on what people want and need to run their lives, their organizations and their communities. This is not just about economic analysis nor is it about delivering whatever sells. Entrepreneurship is far more than a purely economic concept. As Casson (2010) argues, entrepreneurialism is as much about cultural production as economic production. It creates and requires social capital and fully considers economic, social, and personal benefits. It requires attention to user experience, to anticipating needs and responding to opportunities. Given the decline in demand for traditional news and the increase in supply of commodity news, it seems particularly timely to shift some attention in journalism education from production and supply to demand and impact. As Jay Rosen (2011) postulates: “The news system will improve when it is made more *useful* to people.”

## From institutional networks to social networks

The most important relationships for most journalists are sources, for they are key to the supply of news. These are institutional players whose jobs require them to interact with journalists. Not all sources are institutional or easy to cultivate, of course, but a great percentage of these relationships are predictable and routine. This makes teaching the source-reporter relationship relatively straightforward in initial journalism courses. The focus is on getting the information more than on cultivating various types of relationships. The teaching hospital model, for example, requires professional interactions with patients (sources) and doctors (other journalists), but those are determined by the institutional structure of the profession, not necessarily by proactive work on the part of the journalist.

Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, are dependent on cultivating deep social networks of partners, supporters, clients and customers to be successful (Greve & Salaff, 2003). Entrepreneurs must proactively seek relationships in order to accomplish their work, particularly in the planning stages. An educational model built on entrepreneurialism would necessarily involve strategies for understanding and developing social networks. Teaching students to develop their own networks of experts, mentors, collaborators, and peers would enable them to be independent, resourceful, and successful in a communications environment structured more by networks than the one-way mass media. As journalism educator Paul Bradshaw notes, employers are frustrated with students “who will buy one source a drink but not invest the same time in building trust with dozens on social networks” (Bradshaw, 2012b). He describes the issue in this way (2012a):

> Networks have always been important to journalists, but in a networked age they are more important than ever. The days of starting your contacts book with names and numbers from formal organisations (sic) listed in the local phonebook are gone. Now those are instantly available online – but more importantly, there are informal groups and expert individuals accessible too. And they’re publishing for each other. (para. 2)

More attention to nurturing relationships and developing networks -- institutional as well as informal, social and diverse -- is increasingly important for journalists in a networked environment.

## From habit to reflexivity

Journalists work in environments that are unpredictable in one sense but entirely routine in another (e.g., Tuchman, 1978). Breaking news events can happen without warning and many journalists thrive on variety in their day-to-day schedules. But to cope with the unpredictability, journalists have developed routines to help them manage their work. These routines are both formal and informal and constitute a great deal of the knowledge that is conveyed in journalism education classrooms. Reflecting on these routines is also recognized as an important part of journalism education but this reflection is practiced in varying degrees (Niblock, 2007). In a teaching hospital, emphasis is on developing the habits and skills necessary to perform complex and demanding work. In an entrepreneurial model, the emphasis is on learning what works from experience and reflection. Habits are questioned and routines are developed in response to specific contexts. At this moment, when many of the routines of journalists are being disrupted, a model that stresses reflexivity more than habit would better prepare students for a changing environment.

**From drill and practice to experimentation**

Journalism training is built on drill and practice: students learn to develop story ideas, write leads, use appropriate style, quote properly, and provide adequate sourcing for their news stories by practicing these skills in multiple lab courses. Regardless of the technology, these basic skills are emphasized so as to prepare students for their first jobs in journalism. News industry managers expect students to arrive with these skills and spend little to provide additional training. In an entrepreneurial environment, however, experimenting with story forms, writing styles, and new ways to collaborate would be encouraged. Reflection on the outcomes of these experiments and encouragement to try regardless of possible failure, are critical for entrepreneurial ventures. Without experimentation it will be difficult to invent new forms of useful journalism.

Experimentation can take place in multiple ways, as well. In addition to practices, faculty and students can experiment with various roles for journalists, from translators to facilitators to moderators to participants. The objective observer role has been thoroughly critiqued for some time (Ward, 1999); experimenting with new roles could lead to a variety of innovations in practice.

It should be emphasized that entrepreneurship is not just about the business side of journalism. Entrepreneurial thinking can be applied to every step in the journalism process, from how students are taught to approach the public, to defining news judgment, to story forms and developing new roles for journalists. It does not mean that journalism courses are obsolete or that there isn't tremendous value in the skills and methods taught in most programs. It is the purpose and strategies that educators employ when organizing, developing, and assessing these skills that could fundamentally alter the mindsets of our students.

**The application of an entrepreneurial model to curriculum**

What then, might constitute a curriculum focused on an entrepreneurial model of journalism education? And how does production factor into it? Here are some elements that such a curriculum might include:

**1. Foundational courses** taught as a form of critical inquiry into the role of journalism in people's lives, rather than an introduction to newsroom practices. Barbie Zelizer (2009) argues, "we lack a shared frame of reference about how journalism works or what journalism is for." This statement is clearly demonstrated in an examination of Journalism 101 courses across the US: some focus on an introduction to news, many focus on a survey of journalism industries, some stress academic theory, others are an overview of latest trends and tools. In a teaching hospital model these courses are almost superfluous, which may explain the disparity in content. Students do not need an introduction to media theory or a general survey course about media industries before they learn to construct leads, write in AP style, or practice journalism. As a result, students learn to define journalism by what they do in skills classes rather than in a more comprehensive way.

***By including for consideration many forms of journalism, what journalism means to individuals and the role of information in society, we could begin to develop a more explicit shared sense of how and why journalism serves people.***

An entrepreneurial approach could help address this drift in purpose. By including for consideration many forms of journalism, what journalism means to individuals and the role of information in society, we could begin to develop a more explicit shared sense of how and why journalism serves people. Pedagogically, giving students a way of thinking about the purpose of information in society, with concrete examples, would help them figure out for themselves what journalism means and what it is for. A commitment to purpose drives passion, imagination and curiosity — qualities educators most want to inspire in their students. By opening up the definition of journalism and giving students a wider sense of what the field might include, educators can help spark the internal motivation necessary to seek success in the work of reinvention.

2. **Skills and methods courses**. There is no question that in an entrepreneurial model, students need to know how to do things: how to create, how to build, how to make stuff happen. In the current configuration of many journalism skills courses, students are taught through drill and practice, and their grade at the end of the semester indicates how well they performed while following instructions. Students with the highest grades earn scholarships, internships, and opportunities, even if their hands-on skills fail to meet professional standards.

In an entrepreneurial environment however, redundancy and incompetency are quickly weeded out. Educators owe students a system that encourages greater mastery of skills and owe future employers a more accurate way to assess competency. The changing economic environment demands more comprehensive abilities, more initiative, greater flexibility, and the ability to continue learning, even after graduation. For this reason, introducing outcomes-based certification through portfolios, as Jeff Jarvis (2012) has suggested, could improve outcomes in skills based courses and make a difference in improving the ability of our students to be more competitive in an entrepreneurial environment. A 2007 UNESCO journalism education report lists competencies that would be expected of any journalism program graduate; it would be an excellent beginning for developing specific assessments for particular competencies (UNESCO, 2007).

Traditionally taught skills courses are increasingly problematic as students arrive with widely varying levels of competency, and faculty have a hard time keeping up with a growing list of skills to teach. This causes a host of problems, from teaching students out-of-date skills to causing bright students to leave journalism programs because they are bored. (To say nothing of burnout among educators.) An entrepreneurial approach to teaching skills courses could address these problems and help educators develop more constructive ways to teach students how to perform important journalistic work. At the same time, students need to develop the ability to engage in more self-paced and independent learning. Systematic experimenting with online tutorials, online courses, and electronic portfolios will help faculty improve the delivery of skills based courses, assess outcomes rather than inputs, and help students take more responsibility for developing their abilities.

One additional consideration in designing new methods courses has to do with the value faculty give various types of practices. Original reporting is often privileged as the most important and valuable skill students learn, and it can dominate many news courses. In the emerging news environment, however, critical evaluation of a wide variety of practices should be a natural component of journalism programs. Programming, data analysis, visualization, and other abilities are of increasing importance. So are other types of skills. Melanie Sill (2011), for example, suggests that value can derive from services beyond providing original reporting:

Value might come from identifying, surfacing, vetting and organizing material as well as from original reporting. As part of a shift away from “we own the story” to “we provide valuable service,” news providers can focus their energies, make their resources count and extend journalism capacity in their communities (p. 26).

**3. Sequence courses**. Traditionally, journalism schools developed sequences to channel students into particular professions based on categories of distribution (print, broadcast, etc.). As online opportunities have grown, schools have added online journalism tracks and dozens of other choices. For example, the Missouri School of Journalism recently expanded its six emphasis areas to 25 interest areas (Coston, 2011). Figuring out how to organize curriculums in a converged environment is a difficult challenge in many journalism programs. In a teaching hospital, students practice their craft in defined jobs within existing organizations. In this model, it makes sense that the educational curriculum should reflect the organization of newsrooms and the institutional structure of the media industries.

In an entrepreneurial model, however, the organization of sequences and tracks can be more fluid. This does not mean however, that students do not develop depth in particular areas. What it means is that areas of strength and focus have to be re-defined. If a student no longer can self-define as a print journalist, for example, what might she identify as? To answer this requires thinking deeply about what specialties individual journalists might seek in the future.

Sequence courses are generally centered on production. Students emulate the work of professional journalists and produce particular types of journalism, sometimes for the classroom and sometimes for the general public. Significant teaching takes place in these environments and it is this aspect of journalism education that the teaching hospital model speaks to most persuasively. Learning by practice is a proven method that works.

Re-orienting the production and practice element is the biggest challenge to adopting the entrepreneurial model in journalism education. The model requires a focus on community and individual needs to drive choices about what to produce. The beginning of every entrepreneurial effort needs to start with considering service, with assessing the demand side of journalism, on meeting the needs of specific audiences and collaborating in a sustained way with the community. This is exceedingly difficult to do in an academic setting with students who come and go, semesters that begin and end, and faculty who are neither paid nor rewarded for community service. Jan Schaffer at the J-Lab, who has funded 23 university news start-ups, has seen these problems doom a number of her grantees. The ones who survive are generally year-round ventures; many did a good job at producing news but did not spend enough time considering sustainability (2012). A recent report evaluating three university news ventures that strive to emulate the teaching hospital model (Lawrence, Meredith & Haelle, n.d.) demonstrates the challenges of editing student work to meet professional publishing standards and of becoming financially sustainable in a difficult economic environment.

Two strategies for dealing with these challenges have gained some traction in other fields, most notably business schools and design programs. Business schools have had to change their own curricula for teaching entrepreneurship, pivoting from a focus on managing large firms to nurturing entrepreneurial interests among their students and constituents. Developing tool kits and model frameworks for thinking through the challenges of entrepreneurial ventures, and then applying them to case studies, has proven to be an effective approach at some schools, including the London School of Business (Mullins, 2006). Given the range of attention devoted to entrepreneurial education (Volkmann, et al., 2009) journalism programs are well situated to benefit from, and contribute to, a growing field in entrepreneurial-based studies.

A second way to practice entrepreneurial thinking in production classes is to adopt user-centered design principles as part of the curriculum. Along with many start-ups, Gannett and National Public Radio have both adopted user-centered design as an effective way to encourage new ways of thinking about journalism (The Bold Italic, 2009; Wright, 2012). Teaching these practices in journalism classrooms would encourage students to design stories, packages, and products with end-users in mind, rather than imitating products that look like the products of professional news organizations. Not every class would need to start in this way, but ensuring that students are familiar with observation techniques, prototyping, and usability testing, and are able to apply these techniques and ways of thinking to their journalistic work, would be one way to emphasize the needs of users as much as the supply of content.

**4. Internships**. An additional component in many journalism programs is a required internship. In the teaching hospital model, the most promising students are siphoned off to prestigious organizations and many others make do with free internships, poorly supervised jobs, and limited opportunity to improve on-the-job skills. As newsrooms shrink, the supply of rewarding and useful internships is significantly reduced. At the same time, some students are put in more demanding positions to produce content that they are either not equipped to provide or for which they receive limited feedback.

Re-configuring the internship component of journalism education in light of entrepreneurial goals could help address some of the weaknesses in the current system. For example, Paul Bradshaw recommends configuring some internships as “consultancies” where students work on identified industry problems for a specific client (Bradshaw, 2012c). He also points out that if students are going to work for free, they should be able to work for free for themselves as well as for whatever organization they think will provide them the most value. He writes:

> If you want to get into a journalism job you can add to your value by being your own publisher, and you can do so without having to spend your own money to work in someone else’s office doing the jobs that no one else wants to do…

When magazine publishers like Future and Reed Business Information are hiring from – and acquiring – specialist blogs and online communities, the canny move is not to spend your own money on months of fetching coffee, but on becoming your ideal employer’s competition (2012c).

In entrepreneurially-oriented journalism programs, students should be encouraged to work for start-ups and a wide range of ventures in their areas of interest; faculty can assist them in taking responsibility to make smart choices about what they want to learn for their own futures. Programs could work to raise money to cover the tuition of students who choose to work in unpaid positions because of the value of the experience. More efforts could be made to connect with organizations that might not think of journalism interns as a resource for their work. And, to encourage reflection about internships and to share lessons learned, faculty could consider doing more to capture the learning that students gain in these practical internships and turn it into grist for applied research and evolving notions of best practices.

**5. Media Literacy**. An increasing number of schools are teaching courses directed to non-journalism majors and to the wider community of citizens interested in learning journalism skills. These courses range from news literacy to hands-on citizen journalism courses. Concern has been expressed (Hobbs, 2011) that some of these courses, such as variations of news literacy, function as cheerleading courses for traditional journalism. Those who advocate the ‘teaching hospital’ model of journalism education often stress the need for students to learn how journalism works so they can appreciate it more deeply (Lemann, 2009). Stony Brook University has developed the most far reaching news literacy program, and its founder is sensitive to charges of cheerleading, arguing that their curriculum stresses the need for critical and independent evaluation (Loth, 2012). An entrepreneurial approach to literacy could take many forms but most importantly, it should not be considered an add-on separate from the work of the journalism school. Literacy is critical for all students, not just non-journalists. Shared literacy programs are one path to increasing the involvement and collaboration of journalists and citizens, breaking down professional walls that at times have made it difficult for journalists to adapt. Literacy programs that encourage collaboration with journalists stress a conception of journalism as a social practice, rather than an exclusive professional activity.

### Educational context

The same forces of economic and political volatility affecting journalism are disrupting higher education as well. The stability of both journalism institutions and educational institutions has been fundamentally altered. This puts journalism educators in a position of being forced to apply the opportunities of disruption to their own work practices as well as the practices they teach. This changes the role of journalism educators as much as it changes the role of journalists. As Paul Bradshaw points out, our students have access to networks of mentors, to learning materials and all the tools of education independently of the university:

> We are operating in an information-rich environment. And so, like the news industry, we need to reformulate what role we play in that: moving from gatekeeping and transmission models to one involving aggregating and curating, challenging and verifying, and providing platforms for connection and investigation. Like the news industry, our role becomes less that of transmitting information and more one of saving time, improving accuracy and guaranteeing quality (2012d).

## Conclusion

It is easy to feel a shudder from journalists who love their craft and feel the values of entrepreneurship are poor companions to rigorous journalism training in investigative, accountability and watchdog journalism. The use of the word “entrepreneurial” is an imperfect choice: it doesn’t capture the full range of what journalism should be any better than the ‘teaching hospital’ model captures all that its users intend.

With that caveat, however, one clear value of entrepreneurship is that of enterprise, and enterprise is a value everyone connected with journalism education can appreciate. Faculty and employers alike laud journalism students who are enterprising and creative, who are passionate about their work and willing to put the boots on the ground to see their work realized in myriad ways. The groundswell of grassroots activity in civic entrepreneurship, social innovation, user centered design and related practices represent a reservoir of potential energy that could invigorate journalism education. Jan Schaffer (2012) summarizes the value of this approach to journalism education:

> Whether or not traditional journalism institutions survive in the long run, we need to impart information-gathering and truth-seeking skills to a broad array of future civic players. It may be that today's student is tomorrow's lawyer or Supreme Court judge. Perhaps they will work for a mission-driven nonprofit that is producing content steeped in journalistic DNA. Maybe they will invent new ways of creating and sharing news and information. Maybe the poorest writers will be brilliant data miners or the next non-narrative genius. If students are steeped in the passion and values of journalism, they will figure out their contribution to a democratic society.

Developing entrepreneurial approaches to journalism education could help educators move beyond debates between scholars and practitioners, between skills and theory. Seizing this moment to create alternative models of journalism could invigorate faculties and inspire students in ways that would allow journalism schools to fully contribute to the next era of journalism.

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Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 45-58

# Researching The New Relationship Between Audiences and Journalism: A Methodological Toolkit

**_Irene Serrano Vázquez_**

*In the examination of how new technologies have affected the relationship between journalism and its audiences, there has been a common celebratory approach to the matter. Most of the conducted research presumes that the production and distribution of news content by audiences empowers citizens and strengthens democracy. This article proposes a methodological toolkit[1] based on the study of audiences, journalists, content, context and tools for a critical investigation on how audiences' participation is affecting journalism.*

Since the mid 20th century and due to the appearance of personal computers and the Internet, the media landscape has changed in such a radical way that it has affected many different and various aspects of human life – from politics to entertainment. The digitalization of media has led into a shift in the industrial modes of production and distribution of knowledge with consequences in different fields that have still to be measured. Among other things, the translation of the information into numerical data has permitted production 'on demand' and individual customization that corresponds to the post-industrial logic and differs from the industrial *mass standardization* mentality (Manovich, 2001, pp. 33-36). In terms of media production, the encounter of computers and media technologies has caused the multiplication of contents à la carte as well as a greater sense of ubiquity.

Apart from fulfilling with this historical dream of individualized media products accessible from everywhere, new media technologies have permitted its users not only to consume but also to produce diverse media artifacts. Thus, armed with a personal computer and an Internet connection, individuals can participate in the production of different media resources, whether it be audio, video, text, etc. Individually or collaboratively, the media users' role has changed from simply consumers to a hybrid between consumers and producers, that has been conceptualized by Axel Bruns (2008) as *produsers*; "a much more actively involved [audience] in shaping their own media and network usage"(p.15). Thus, this new context has been denominated by Henry Jenkins as participatory culture:

"rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands" (p.3).

Moreover, thanks to the networked nature of the Internet, users can connect with each other and share their own media products as well as those that are of their interest. So, *produsers* do not only generate media content but they can also distribute it through their networks, disseminating their amateur content with a range that was previously reserved to professionals. As Christakis and Fowler (2009) pointed out: "Today we can form connections over much larger ranges than our hominid ancestor did, and we find a greater variety of individuals with whom to do so for a greater variety of purposes" (p.266). In sum, new media technologies allow their users to customize, produce, and share media contents in a way that prior media technologies did not.

This relatively new scenario has been studied from different perspectives, considering users as audiences, consumers, fans, citizens or activists, depending on the given context and area of study. Scholars have tried to define the principles of these new technologies (Manovich, 2001; Bolter, 2000), how new technologies have affected the way in which societies are organized (Castells, 2010; Garton, et al. 1997), the relationship between new technologies and markets (Benkler, 2006), potential new ways of organizing due to new technologies (Shirky, 2008), and so on.

In the particular case of journalism and how new technologies have affected the relationship with its audiences, there has been a common celebratory approach to the matter. Most of the conducted research presumes that the production and distribution of news content by audiences without the control of journalism enterprises empowers citizens and strengthens democracy. With this prior assumption, there has been a great amount of qualitative research on user generated content in crisis events, most of the time looking at how users do participate, how collectives organize, how different tools work in case of emergencies, or how mainstream media tries to aggregate citizen content and its consequences. Nevertheless, there is an absence of critical new media studies that analyze the value of the user generated content in terms of quality and bias, who are the content producers or who are their audiences, in order to determine what is the real impact of the user generated content. As Chris Atton (2008) has noticed, scholars have established "media participation as a good in itself" (p.217), which results in utopian and technologically determined envisions of the future.

For that reason, in order to understand how audiences' participation relates with journalism, it is necessary to start questioning the general idea of citizens' content as "good in itself". In such a type of study, and since there are many participants involved, it is also important to use a multi-perspectival approach that takes into account all the elements in a given situation. A consistent empirical analysis should look at audiences, journalists, content, context, and tools. Each of these aspects can be analyzed individually and offer a partial understanding of the audience participation phenomenon. But in order to conduct a complete and reliable research, a study that integrates these five elements will be much more exhaustive and rigorous.

Given an investigation as complex as such, it is not only necessary to employ a multi-perspectival and multidisciplinary approach but also multiple research methods. A convergent methodology that mixes both quantitative and qualitative research that can be applied depending on the case and object of study. That is to say, the research method should be at the service of the inquiry: different research questions will need different methods. Besides, preconceived answers and hypotheses can lead into erroneous and partial interpretations of phenomena. Researchers should not try to prove their own opinions but to look for answers by unpacking a particular set of data, case of study, piece of reality. In the following sections, each of the elements that take part in the new relationship between journalism and its audiences –audiences, journalists, content, context and tools– is dissected. Different methods previously applied in other studies are analyzed, and proposals for possible improvements are done. A template similar to that can be also used in other studies of new media audiences and for this reason examples on different branches of participatory culture and participatory journalism are provided. In general terms, this article aims to respond to the following questions: In the current participatory culture, what kinds of methods and epistemologies productively support how to explore the changing landscape of journalism? How can a researcher reliably navigate that shifting terrain in a critical way?

**The people formerly known as the audience**

In the study of audiences, their role has passed from passive crowds to interpreters of a received text. If mass society research presented audiences as passive receivers of ideologically charged content, certain cultural studies scholars (Fiske, Hebdige, Grossberg, Ang, etc.) argued that "reception, of whatever media form, is a kind of a work, a cultural production" (Marshall, 2004, p.8). Thus, audiences, despite not participating in content creation, are meaning creators: they receive a raw –but ideologically charged– message that they deconstruct and interpret according to their beliefs. New media technologies have challenged previous conceptions of audiences by allowing them to participate in unprecedented ways. Thanks to the digitalization of media and the appearance of the Internet, audiences can create, share, and aggregate media content, taking part actively in the process of production and distribution of media artefacts. In a very popular blog post, where new media scholar Jay Rosen (2007) describes this shift, he refers to the audiences, in the classic sense of the word, as 'the people formerly known as the audience':

> The people formerly known as the audience ... are those who were on the receiving end of a media system that ran one way, in a broadcasting pattern, with high entry fees and few firms competing to speak very loudly while the rest of the population listened in isolation from one another –and who today are not in a situation like that at all.

The change of role from 'the people formerly known as the audience' to *produsers*, in Alex Bruns terminology, converted the listeners of a lecture into participants of a conversation (Gillmor, 2004, xiii). As a result, audiences have a triple function in the new media sphere: they receive, interpret, and send messages. Despite having these multiple and complex capacities, audiences in this media landscape have been studied mostly as senders, or, in other words, *produsers*, participants, creators. In that sense, much have been said about their new features; different scholars have tried to define and characterize how audiences can participate in terms of the possible ways to join the media conversation and its consequences. For example, some scholars have described the differences between sharing, collaborating, and aggregating (Hyde, Linksvayer, et al. 2012 ) and others have looked at how their participation could affect the market (Benkler, 2006) or organizations and institutions (Shirky, 2008). Nevertheless, little has been said about who these content producers are.

Henry Jenkins (2006), one of the most relevant scholars in the study of participatory culture, is conscious about the fact that he is examining "specific case studies of groups who are already achieving some of the promises (...) of a more participatory culture" (p.247). But despite that, he does not offer any information –apart from anecdotes– about those who are portrayed in his research on user-generated content. It would be interesting to know who is joining this new conversation in order to elucidate its magnitude and relevance. Therefore, more quantitative research on these new audiences would lead into a clearer picture of the extent of participatory culture: Who are those creating media content? Where are they located? Are they representative of a whole population? For example, Melissa Wall's (2009) study on the warblogs (blogs devoted to the coverage of news related to concrete war) created during the U.S. invasion of Iraq concludes with a thought-provoking finding, based on public quantitative data accessible on the Internet: "The rise of milbloggers (military bloggers) writing from within the war zone itself suggests that in terms of international news reported from outside the West, citizen journalism –just like mainstream news reporting– is likely to be more easily done by Westerners. Citizen reporting may thus be an elite activity in the global context" (p.35). In addition, she mentions that "being heard on the global stage as a citizen journalist is easier if one writes in English" (p.34).

Case studies are useful and valid when they are placed in context, so such generalizations are more accurate. Clay Shirky (2008) and Henry Jenkins (2006) analyze different situations where networked society and user-generated content have central roles and tend to deduce general statements from specific cases. Their studies would have been more precise if they tried to include, as Melissa Wall does, demographic data about the segment of population they are analyzing. It would be interesting to know whom those fan communities are that Jenkins portrays; their ages, their location in the US, and the percentage of audiences they represent. It would also help for Shirky's studies to have information such as gender, language, or race about those who are producing content based on collaboration through the Internet. Looking at a set of demographic data, it would be easier to understand *Here Comes Everybody* as Shirky has titled his book, or here comes the white, western, Anglophone man and his discourses and ideologies.

On the other hand, there is a lack of quantitative or qualitative research about audiences of user generated content that would help to determine its importance. Who is consuming these products? What are the effects and impacts of consuming user-generated content to its audiences? Without receivers (audiences), the revolutionary repercussions of the Internet can be questioned – the media content produced by audiences needs to be watched, listened, or read in order to be relevant. In his article about alternative media theory, Chris Atton (2008) makes a good point in reference to the audiences for alternative media: “Audiences for alternative media will differ according to their political commitment, their social and cultural background, and their media literacy. How can alternative media speak to audiences beyond the already-committed activist?” (p.219). This can be applied to user-generated content: Who is concerned about fan fiction apart from the fan community? Who is concerned about local citizen journalism news content apart from the citizens directly affected by the news? Quantitative research shows a general portrait of the state of affairs, and the demographic features of the audiences/consumers of user generated content. 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. Without this kind of analysis about audiences, investigations that make general statements about the future of the new media lack  an important empirical base that could invalidate their findings.

**Journalists have something to say**

Journalists represent an important element in the new equation even though they are often ignored and also considered an endangered species. Nevertheless, the reality is that the majority of the population still consumes mainstream media, where the journalist’s role is central. Journalists and media enterprises decide how to include audiences and their voices in their daily routines and final journalistic products. As C.V Anderson (2012) puts it: “The manner in which journalists imagine their audience has public consequences” (p.78). Despite the fact that new media permits other voices to be heard through alternative channels, mainstream media is still the privileged channel of information.

In that sense, Doming et al. (2007) conducted research on how news organizations in EEUU and Europe are integrating audiences into news production. They analyzed the way in which audiences can participate in 16 online newspapers, and from the results, they inferred how professional media is exploring participation. Their findings are intriguing: “The institutional media had largely kept the journalistic culture unchanged even when exploring participation opportunities for the audience. The core journalistic role of the “gatekeeper” who decides what makes news remained the monopoly of professionals even in the online newspapers that had taken openness to other stages beyond interpretation” (p.335). While these deductions based on content analysis open compelling claims, this study should be complemented with a qualitative research that explores the journalists’ explanations and intentions. Domingo et al. are conscious about the way “Interviews with journalists are needed to understand the rationales for the approaches being taken” (p.340) – and something that Domingo has especially done in further studies (Singer et al., 2011).

For instance, Singer and Ashman (2009) conducted interviews with 33 print and digital *Guardian* journalists in order to understand their views on audience participation and how they negotiate this inclusion. They found out that *Guardian* journalists were worried about the credibility of the user generated content, and the challenge that it means to their authority (p.236). These claims and concerns are not only good reflections of the treatment journalists give to user generated content, but they also raise questions that should be taken into account. How does the journalists' perception on user- generated content affect its relevance and distribution? Should we consider those claims when examining user generated content, or are they a manifestation of fear by a profession in its last days? Apart from looking at the journalists' content to see how it reflects the journalists' understandings of their audiences, and by conducting interviews with journalists, in order to grasp the journalists' behaviour, it is essential to observe their daily practices. In that sense, one should analyze what Chris Atton (2008) calls working practices. That is to say, "to examine the ways in which people work" (p.213). Ethnographic research would help to fill the blanks that journalists could have in their conscious discourse in their daily practices. A close observation of working practices will corroborate or refute the journalists' responses about their opinions on audience participation. Perhaps they claim to care about user-generated content, but do they really take it into account when decision-making takes place in their journalistic routines?

The combination of these three research practices –the qualitative study of contents, interviews with journalists, and observation of journalists' practices on newsrooms– can be also applied to various media industries. For instance, it would be interesting to know what the entertainment industry's opinion on fan fiction is through the use and relevance that the industry gives it: the opinions, considerations, and appraisals that directors and producers have about them, and the observation of their work and how it relates with fans responses. It would draw a clearer picture on the industry's conception of fan fiction that will help to better understand the real importance of fans content production on the new scenario.

**User-generated content: Is it so good?**

User generated content have been acclaimed as an excellent response –by the people for the people– to mainstream journalism, most of all in critical events. For example, scholar Stuart Allans (2009) remarks the importance of the citizens response after the attacks in the USA during September 11, 2011: "Less than 10 minutes after the first passenger jet struck the World Trade Center, eyewitness accounts began to appear on the web. People were put into words what they had seen, to share their experiences, even when they defied comprehension" (p.23). The same behaviour has been repeated since then during the London bombings in 2005, Hurricane Katrina in the American Gulf coast during 2005, and the recent earthquake off the Pacific coast of Tōhoku, in Japan; citizens who witness dramatic events as such share images, information, and words of anger and consolation through the Internet. These products have been described in several studies and their impact has been measured in some cases by quantifying the production of contents. However, not much has been investigated about their real relevance as journalistic content in terms of their quality and message. In the case of the images, more research on how these photographs of disasters help to inform about an event –the context, the reasons, possible repercussions – should be provided. How did the thousand images of the Twin Towers during the terrorist attacks help to clarify what was happening? How did the images of a disaster scene, with little contextualization in most of the cases, contribute to fulfill the journalistic duties?

For example, Sophia B. Liu et al. (2009) conducted a qualitative study that looked at the way in which Flickr users organized the images in different critical events. They conclude:

> Sharing eyewitness photography through social media sites had made citizen journalism more visible, particularly through the cross-referencing and convergence of different media sources. Cameraphones have also made citizen journalism even more significant to emergency response efforts, as they are no longer seen as mere personal accounts but also as evidential documents.

They emphasize the citizens' ability to share images and remark its significance to emergency response, but it would be necessary to include an analysis of the images in order to deduce that the citizens participation is related the journalistic practice. In their study, it is possible to find vague descriptions of the images such as "a majority of the photos in these Flickr groups illustrate post-impact response and recovery efforts," but they do not examine the quality of these contributions. What do these photographs tell us about these critical events? They seem to have measured the relevance of the citizens' generated content, taking into account the quantity instead of the quality, and they do not explain how this content improves or challenges mainstream news.

***It is necessary then, to conduct more qualitative studies that look at the accuracy, trustworthiness, and relevance of citizen-generated content in order to understand and determine the significance of audi-ence participation.***

In that sense, Atton expresses that for some scholars "to become a producer of citizens' media seems at times to be more important than what is being produced" (p.217). He remarks the lack of textual analysis of citizen media contents by critical scholars, in the same way they have done it during decades with mainstream media to locate possible bias and incorrect information. Regarding that concern, Farida Vis (2009) conducted qualitative research based on textual analysis and production process on the Wikinews - a site for news that works in the same way as Wikipedia- reporting of Hurricane Katrina. Vis focused on the process more than the quality of the reports – she remarks "it was not the purpose of this study to determine the accuracy and usefulness of these" (p.72). Vis found out that during the process of collective creation of the news, issues on trustworthiness of sources, precision, and objectivity arose between the participants. Most of the time, she concluded, it led into "having to rely on the mainstream media for information" (Vis, 2009). It is necessary then, to conduct more qualitative studies that look at the accuracy, trustworthiness, and relevance of citizen-generated content in order to understand and determine the significance of audience participation.

Apropos of online alternative media, one could wonder about the value of the same sort of questions. Online alternative media has been presented as the real response to the partisan and interest-driven corporate media. But while critical media scholars have examined mainstream media texts to diagnose possible biases, there have not been studies as such in relation to online alternative media. For example, Atton mentions the systematic way in which scholars like Noam Chomsky have analyzed news reports and editorials, in order to produce "generalized accounts of mass media power" (p.215). In this scenario, alternative media becomes the light at the end of the tunnel -- the citizens' response to the ideologically driven and corporate operated mainstream media. However, no research has been conducted to evaluate alternative media texts to demonstrate that they are not as ideologically driven, biased, and agenda determined as mainstream media. Thus, apart from quantitative studies that measure the production of user-generated content, it is also necessary to develop qualitative studies that analyze its quality, accuracy, trustworthiness, possible biases, and interests. It would be also interesting to conduct this kind of textual analysis in fictional contexts. People have more opportunities than ever before to create their own fictional narratives, but what is the relevance of these narratives? How important is the quality in those cases?

**Tools are not neutral**

Online tools are usually described in terms of how to use them and what are their functions. Looking at Liu et al.'s (2009) previously mentioned article on Flickr, this online tool for photo sharing is presented in the following way:

> Flickr allows its members to store, sort, search, and share photos and images easily and efficiently. Social organization around photos and topics of interest is evident through the creation of dedicated groups. According to one Flickr user, "the photographs themselves can be seen as facilitators of community building... [in that]... each photo is like a landmark or a virtual space where people can meet and have a conversation". The capabilities of Flickr support online documentary practice through "photoblogging", where real-world accounts are quickly recorded often with less effort than text-based blogs. (p.44)

Liu et al. (2009) introduces Flickr by enumerating the possibilities it offers to the users to distribute their images that they describe as easy and efficient without explaining in detail as to why. In their report, they even use a quote by a satisfied client whose account on how community building happens is as imprecise as Liu et al.'s explanation on the features of the tool. Moreover, they do not mention the privacy conditions, the terms of service, or that Flickr was acquired by Yahoo! in 2005. That is to say, they do not mention the corporative and political dimensions of the tool. Tools should not be studied as neutral instruments in the hands of the people, and more qualitative research should be done from a critical perspective, or at least it should take their political and corporate dimensions into consideration when describing their possible uses.

In this regard, Shirky's (2008) definition of Twitter simply describes how it works, how to use it:

> To use Twitter, you create an account for yourself, and you send Twitter a message, via the Web, by instant message, or from your phone. A message on Twitter, called a tweet, is a short snipet of text, usually an update about what you are doing; sending a tweet is "twittering". The message goes to your friends who are also on Twitter and, if you like, gets posted to the Twitter "public line", a webpage with the most recent public twitters. (p.183)

As in the case of Flickr, Twitter is superficially portrayed. In the same way a newspaper cannot be analyzed without taking into account to which media conglomerate it belongs, an online tool cannot be separated from its corporate side. Indeed, in *The Net Delusion,* scholar Evgeny Morozov (2011) includes in his scrutinization of Twitter some notes that should be considered in further analysis

> Twitter, a company that received wide public admiration during the events in Iran, has refused to join the Global Network Initiative (GNI), an industry-wide pledge by other technology companies –including Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft-– to behave in accordance with the laws and standards covering the right to freedom of expression and privacy embedded in internationally recognized documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Facebook, another much admired exporter of digital revolutions, refused to join GNI as well, citing lack of resources, a bizarre excuse for a company with $800 million in 2009 revenues. (p.23)

A combination of both Shirky's and Morozov's analysis results in a much more accurate description of Twitter. In order to understand how audiences can participate in reporting news, it is necessary to take into consideration the different dimensions of the tools in order to be more specific about its possible uses. Apart from varying corporative political positions, online social tools have different terms of service and privacy conditions; therefore, more research should be done in that direction. 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 critical contexts? How can this affect the safety and anonymity of citizen journalists? Morozov highlights an example of a time when Google decided to remove a series of videos that were uploaded to YouTube from Egypt because they were too violent (p.215). This time the content was not fiction as these videos portrayed cases of police brutality. Google simply did not consider the relevance of the images. The analysis of various case studies in which user generated content has been censored and eliminated will lead into a clearer picture of what the possible uses of these tools are. It is not as simple as posting a picture or writing a message when the message and the picture have political connotations that have certain impact on a government.

**The offline context**

Different countries legislate differently regarding the Internet, different governments judge the Internet in different ways, and different economic and educational situations have different degrees of penetrations from the Internet. How do we generalize the present and the future of audiences' participation when its use is dependent on location and context? In an article about citizen journalism in Vietnam, An Nguyen (2009) offers the criticism that "the Western media tends to celebrate citizen media as an autonomous counterweight to state censorship" and he asserts that the situation in Vietnam is not so clear despite the increasing impact and relevance of citizen journalism. In his study, he reviews a variety of cases in which citizen journalism has raised issues that have been ignored by the press and remarks that the government has not developed strong censorship policies with respect to the Internet as it has happened in other countries. On the contrary, it has demonstrated relatively great tolerance with the flow of information opposed to the communist regimen. At the same time, he underlines that "there are older but still effective tactics for the state to prevent blogs from disrupting its power," such as "scare tactics to warn bloggers against providing or distributing 'unhealthy content', that is, anything that titillates prurient desires, defame others, reveals state secrets, destroys the 'great national unity', or incites anti-regimes actions" (p.160). Besides, Nguyen notices that the Vietnamese government control is less evident and imperceptible by just looking at the Internet regulation – it is related to the generation of "public fear and stigma". Thereby, he indicates that even if the Internet is global, "its participants are still subject to at least one local legislative and political system in the offline world, which can bring to bear the power of the state". Hence, a superficial understanding of the state of affairs of a country can result in incomplete or false interpretations on the relevance of citizen journalism.

It is also important to have a clear picture of the Internet penetration index when looking at different countries since it is a key element when evaluating how citizens can participate in journalism. Indeed, when talking about warblogs and the war in Iraq, Melissa Wall observes that the estimated number of Iraqis using the Internet is a 0.1% of the population, so "these bloggers in fact represent only a small slice of Iraq" (p.34). In the case of India, Prasun Sonwalkar remarks that despite the fact that "the Internet is reshaping the India's public sphere," there are still "several segments of Indian society that are struggling for the basics of human existence, including recognition as normal and equal citizens" (p.75). In contexts as such, it is possible to wonder how the possibilities of participation in current affairs that the Internet brings to its users affect the population as a whole. It is necessary, then, to take into account the offline context when researching about the impact of the audiences' participation thanks to the new communication technologies. First of all, as the examples show, censorship can take different forms that are not so obvious just by looking at the online production. Secondly, citizen online participation can mean different things when looking at the general picture; the majority of the population has no access to the new technology.

### Research-creation as a method of inquiry

As a final methodological remark, it is necessary to mention research-creation, an emergent model of analysis that in the last decade has been gaining the interest of scholars in different parts of the globe. According to Chapman and Sawchuk (2012), the term ‘research-creation’ “describes a conglomerate of approaches and activities that incorporate creative processes and involve the production of artistic works in the context of academic programs” (p.13). Chapman and Sawchuk distinguish four different ways of practicing research-creation: research for creation, research from creation, creative presentations of research and creation as research. In a field as new media, these methods of inquiry, especially in the form of creation as research, open up novel uses of new communication technologies and can investigate possible effects of these novel uses. For instance, scholars such as Ian Bogost, Simon Ferrari, and Bobby Schweizer (2010), great defenders of the possibilities of games to communicate news and engage audiences, created a series of what they call newsgames (games that explain something related with current events) for the *New York Times*. By creating these games, they wanted to explore how a game can increase the interest of the audiences and more easily explain complicated issues. Despite the fact that the experiment ended unexpectedly – the *New York Times* cancelled their contract–, they left an interesting piece of work that can be analyzed from different perspectives and that goes further than the theoretical discussion of the games’ potential for transmitting meaningful messages. Experiments as such put theory into practice and enrich the quality of the conversation around the possibilities of new media. In the case of studying the ways in which audiences can participate in the new media spectrum, it would be interesting to conduct research-creation experiments that apply the different theoretical considerations.

## Conclusions

The appearance of the Internet provokes an optimistic general response in the academy. With the new possibilities for the creation and distribution of knowledge, citizens would coordinate their efforts through the mobilization of their collective intelligence, and their cooperation and participation would lead into a different market, healthier organizations, new journalism, and a fairer world. Thus, most of the research conducted in the past decades has been trying to grasp the different manner in which audiences can participate, forgetting in most of the cases to analyze the real relevance of this participation. Now that some time has passed and some of the possibilities of these new technologies have been proved and challenged, the efforts should be directed into the creation of a corpus of empirical critical research. This article has proposed five elements that should be looked at closely when examining how the audiences’ participation has affected journalism –audiences, journalists, tools, content, and context.

Since audiences are not an abstract element, it is important to conduct quantitative research that draws a general picture of who is participating in media creation. If new media technologies have converted journalism from a lecture into a conversation, it is necessary to determine who is involved in the conversation. Moreover, more research should be done to identify the consumers of user-generated content (the audiences of the audiences), their reasons to consume it and its impacts and effects. In the case of journalists and considering that they still have the last word in terms of what voices are going to be included in mainstream media, it is important to understand their motives for including and rejecting certain contents. Through the analysis of their work, interviews and ethnographic research, the logic behind their decisions can come to the surface, revealing the real possibilities of citizens' content in the mainstream channels of distribution. It is also pertinent to analyze the texts produced by the audiences. A close inspection into its quality, accuracy, credibility, possible biases, and interests would result in a better understanding of its relevance as informational material.

***If new media technologies have converted journalism from a lecture into a conversation, it is necessary to determine who is involved in the conversation.***

Apart from looking at the implicated actors and the content, more research should be done with respect to the tools where the content is created, aggregated, and distributed. Tools are not neutral, and their functions are determined by corporate decisions that can have political and social effects. Finally, all investigations about the current relationship between journalism and its audiences should include specifications and examinations on the offline context where it takes place. As a closing suggestion, this article has mentioned the relevance of studies based on research-creations, the newsgames created by Ian Bogost, and others that look into the possibilities of digital games to explain the news while engaging audiences by developing more functional examples of such games. More research should be done employing creation as a method of inquiry.

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## Endnotes

1. Testing this toolkit out will be the next step in a larger project.

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#ISOJ
Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 59-78

# Read, Not Dead: A Case Study of #redanddead Viral News Spread

***Geoffrey Michael Graybeal, Jiran Hou, and Carmen Hernández-Ojeda***

*When the student editors of the University of Georgia's Red & Black campus newspaper resigned abruptly at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year, they started a rival digital publication and took to Twitter to spread news of their cause, using the hashtag #redanddead. This in-depth case study found support that Twitter played a vital role in the story's rapid dissemination. Findings also demonstrate how highly-connected Twitter users functioned in the formation of viral news.*

When the student editors of the University of Georgia's independent student-run campus newspaper, *The Red & Black*, returned to campus in fall of 2012, they found a number of sweeping internal changes had been made over the summer that deeply disturbed them (Cook, 2012; Gregory, 2012; Marinova, 2012). A handful of new professional staff members had been hired to help oversee editorial content. The editorial advisor's position and title had changed to editorial director, and an internal draft memo discovered that reflected his new responsibilities to include content oversight through prior review. The students viewed this as a shift that ceded control of the newspaper from student editors to hired professionals. *Red & Black* Editor-in-Chief Polina Marinova, back from a summer internship at *USA Today,* decided to resign around 4 p.m. on August 15, 2012, the eve of publication of the first print newspaper of the semester. Other top *Red & Black* editors followed suit (Cook, 2012; Gregory, 2012; Marinova, 2012; Pérez-Peña, 2012; Stevens, 2012).

Minutes after leaving 540 Baxter Street in Athens, Georgia, the group decided to create a new digital publication to rival the student newspaper they had just departed. Redanddead.com was born. Former *Red & Black* staff became the staff of *The Red & Dead* (Cook, 2012; Gregory, 2012).

*The Red & Black* student journalists had been trained to produce digital journalism when the paper shifted to a *digital first* publishing strategy the prior year (Reimold, 2011).

Without a print newspaper at their disposal, the *Red & Dead* staff created a website, a Twitter account (@redanddead815), and a Facebook page for *Red & Dead*. They turned to social media to spread the story of their cause (e.g., using the #redanddead hashtag) and to build an audience (Cook, 2012). Their efforts attracted thousands of followers and page views of the *Red & Dead* website reached six figures within two days.

To explore how social media played a role in viral news distribution, this study examines the diffusion of information of *Red & Black*/ *Red & Dead* on Twitter networks. Through content analysis and social network analysis, this research provides a compelling case study of an issue that became an overnight viral news story. This is an important online journalism topic given how fast news and information about the *Red & Black* resignations, which spawned creation of the *Red & Dead,* spread through social media, coupled with the rapid rise of the digital-only publication. This case study of *Red & Black*/ *Red & Dead* also offers a response to Brown-Smith (2012)'s call for more research on the use of hashtags as community-driven reports in non-crisis situations (Brown-Smith, 2012), and this research of the Georgia story illustrates the significance of what Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto & Gummadi (2010) would call *topical influence* on Twitter. The *Red & Black/Red & Dead* story resonated with topical influencers in the areas of journalism, college media, and (student) press law, causing the story to rise in national prominence despite being of limited geographic interest.

## Literature Review

### News content on Twitter networks

Twitter has become a top social media platform in the United States. The platform, which allows a user to post an update of 140 characters or less (known as a "tweet"), is a popular tool used to seek and share information online (Albarran, Dyer, Hutton & Valentine, 2010; Johnson & Yang, 2009). Twitter users can reply to another user's messages or mention other users in their tweets simply through adding "@username" in their messages. The "replies" function is a good indicator of social ties between Twitter users, since it tells that a user is tweeting specifically to another user (Barash & Golder, 2011). "Retweet" is also an important function in Twitter that allows users to share the tweet message they have read to all of their followers. People particularly retweet messages to spread information to new audiences (boyd, Golder & Lotan, 2010). Tracking the number of retweets of a piece of message is widely used to evaluate the influence of this message throughout Twitter networks (Cha et al., 2010).

While scholarly literature on Twitter is growing, relatively few studies have examined the platform's implications for journalism or breaking news (Brown-Smith, 2012). Those that have done so have found that most journalists use Twitter primarily for broadcasting news and information, following a standard broadcast model (Brown-Smith, 2012; Greer & Ferguson, 2011; Messner & Eford, 2011; Messner, Linke & Eford, 2011). Traditional news organizations still remain the primary sources of news and information found on Twitter. Twitter for them is a method for news distribution, a resource for journalists to get story ideas and find sources (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009), a way to disseminate news, and a newsroom community organization tool (Armstrong & Gao, 2010). On the other hand, non-journalists are also using Twitter to broadcast information in this era of what Hermida (2010) calls “ambient journalism.” Citizens actively engaged on social tools such as Twitter can help the community maintain awareness of important developments by producing and sharing content rather than merely being passive recipients (Brown-Smith, 2012; Hermida, 2010).

The majority of news sharing occurs on social networking sites, more so than e-mail, text messaging, and instant messenger (CNN, 2010). News links for Twitter users come from an even mix of family, friends, and news organizations; most of these users also feel that without Twitter, they would have missed this kind of news (Mitchell, Rosenstiel & Christian, 2012). Baresch, Knight, Harp & Yaschur (2011) describe the proliferation of users accessing news and information from links (often in social networking sites) as a shift from what they call an *ink economy* to a *link economy*. In a link economy, a news consumer with Facebook and Twitter accounts who pass along stories, become a node in the social information network (Baresch et al., 2011).

Recent studies on news organizations’ Twitter use found the majority of news accounts provide links (Armstrong & Gao, 2010; Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012). A 2010 study found that 86% of tweets were written to drive traffic to individual news sites (to view links) rather than for public service announcements such as road closings and inclement weather warning (Armstrong & Gao, 2010), while a 2012 study found 42% of news account tweets containing an external link, with half of those to the journalist’s own host news organization and a quarter of them to other mainstream news organizations (Lasorsa et al., 2012).

**Information flow & Twitter networks**

Communication scholars have examined how information flows through large Internet-enabled social networks, especially through Twitter networks (e.g. Himelboim, McCreery & Smith, 2011; Himelboim & Han, 2012). A network is described as a collection of nodes and links to one another. In social networks, nodes refer to social actors, which can be individuals, organizations, content, physical or virtual locations, or events; links refer to ties and relationships between these social actors (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2011). Twitter networks are perceived to be self-organized networks, which indicate that Twitter users are “free to establish connections, or links, with others in the network” (Himelboim & Han, 2012, p.6). On Twitter, individual users and organizations can build and develop different types of connections with other users or organizations through the behaviors of following, replying, mentioning, and retweeting. Each type of connection has its special features; for example, the followed/following relationships between Twitter users represent attention and information networks. That is, followers receive information from the users whom they are following, while users having a lot of followers can receive a lot of attention from others in their Twitter networks. That is, the more followers a user can have, the more people are exposed to the messages posted by this Twitter user (Barash & Golder, 2011). The number of followers represents a user’s popularity on Twitter (Cha et al., 2010). In addition, the retweeting action allows users to manage important information and it represents the flow of the information of users' specific interests (Barash & Golder, 2011). Retweeting a user's message represents the content values of the message (Cha et al., 2010).

On Twitter, users who have a large number of followers in a network are considered as "hubs" in their Twitter networks. It is expected that these highly connected hubs could get more attention and have important statute in a network, and their replies and retweets of content can greatly facilitate the diffusion of information among a large number of Twitter users. Literature also suggests that regardless of the characteristics of different large self-organized online networks, online networks tend to show a similar pattern of formation. That is, there exists a skewed distribution of connections among online users as only a few users are highly connected hubs within their networks (Himelboim & Han, 2012).

In the current study, to examine the rapid diffusion of news content on Twitter networks and the formation of audiences for a new publication through Twitter networks, literature of online influence on social media and the concept of preferential attachment are further discussed to explain the emergence and impacts of highly connected hubs on Twitter networks.

**Online influences on Twitter networks**

The traditional view about how trends and innovations are adopted and spread assumes that a minority of members in a society possesses qualities that make them exceptionally persuasive in spreading ideas to others. These informed, respected, and well-connected individuals who drive trends on behalf of the majority of ordinary people are called opinion leaders in the two-step flow theory (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), innovators in the diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1962), and hubs, connectors, or mavens in other work (Baresch et al., 2011; Gladwell, 2002). Past research, tracking user influence on Twitter, has categorized user influence as being conversation-based and content-based; it concluded that news media is better at spreading content, while celebrities are better at making conversation (Cha et al., 2010; Leavitt, Burchard, Fisher & Gilbert, 2009).

Influence has long been studied in marketing and advertising contexts, but fewer studies exist on influence in journalism. Scholars have begun exploring the role social networks play in news content "going viral" (Hayes, 2012; Ho & Dempsey, 2010). For online news content, "going viral" begins with the formation of electronic content being made available to audiences via posting it to various websites. After consuming the content acquired on one of those websites, consumers assess "sharability" and forward worthy content (Ho & Dempsey, 2010). Phillips (2012) therefore argues that "sociability" has joined speed and quality as a third pillar of "good" journalism, which is to say that news must be produced in a manner that is capable of spreading virally, as well as comprehensive, trustworthy, and "first with the news" (Phillips, 2012).

**Preferential attachment**

In a social network, a node's degree describes the number of ties this node has formed. Degree reflects the popularity of a node in a specific social network. For nodes having a higher degree, such as users having a large number of followers in a specific Twitter network, they usually have greater access to resources in their network and can distribute information in the network more efficiently (Wasserman & Faust, 1999). Literature of social network analysis found that common patterns in large self-organized social networks exist — a few social actors in a social network usually have a large and disproportionate number of ties (e.g. Himelboim & Han, 2012; Newman, 2001). Researchers use preferential attachment to explain the pattern of skewed distribution of connections in a social network. The preferential attachment theorem suggests that in a large network, new nodes more often connect to nodes that already have a large number of connections (Himelboim, 2010). Applying the preferential attachment theorem to Twitter networks suggests that for a specific Twitter network, new users often prefer having links with the users who are already highly connected, and connecting with these highly connected hubs can increase news users' connectivity faster than connecting with less-connected users (Himelboim & Han, 2012). In the current study, the preferential attachment theorem explains how *Red & Dead,* as a new Twitter user, built up and enlarged their Twitter networks through connecting with existing Twitter users. The literature of online influence on social media and the characteristics of connections on Twitter networks explain how *Red & Dead* quickly diffuse their news among Twitter users.

***In the current study, the preferential attachment theorem explains how* **Red & Dead**, *as a new Twitter user, built up and enlarged their Twitter networks through connecting with existing Twitter users.***

Based on the literature discussed above, three research questions are proposed:

**RQ1: What role did social media play in spreading news of Red & Dead?**

**RQ2: How did news of The Red & Black editors' resignation spread through Twitter so quickly?**

**RQ3: How were the Red & Black editors able to build a sizable audience for a digital-only publication?**

## Method

### Data Collection

Several databases were created to understand the spread of information related to the *Red & Dead*. The first database was comprised of approximately 500 tweets from the @redanddead815 Twitter account to examine how the story developed from the onset and how the student staff members built an audience for redanddead.com. The @redanddead815 tweets downloaded were from a weeklong period from August 15, 2012 to August 21, 2012. The tweets in this database were coded into four categories: media coverage, outside influencers, requests, and other. The first category included tweets and retweets informing about media coverage of the *Red & Dead,* such as when a newspaper, radio, TV program, press agency, or blog covered the news. The outsider influencers category included tweets posted by influential people outside of the *Red & Dead*, such as celebrities, famous journalists, and individuals representing important organizations who helped disseminate the *Red & Dead* issue. The third category, request, included tweets requesting retweets as well as suggesting to follow the @ redanddead815 Twitter account or to visit the *Red & Dead* website.

The "other" category largely encompassed *Red & Dead*'s coverage of their own issue, *Red & Dead*'s interactions with other Twitter users, and *Red & Dead* providing links to non-*Red& Dead* news coverage on their blog. Two coders, blind to the study, were trained to code the tweet content.

The researchers also created a convenience sample of 111 articles pulled from the Internet that reported on *The Red & Black* student resignations and subsequent creation of the *Red & Dead*. The bulk of this sample corresponded to the same August 15, 2012 to August 21, 2012 timeline as the @redanddead815 dataset. The convenience sample included newspaper articles, columns, opinion pieces, and blog entries that covered the *Red & Black/ Red & Dead* affair during that time frame. The sample was gathered by taking the top results from searching *Red & Black/ Red & Dead* in Google search engine, both in Web and News sections. Links provided by @redanddead815 Twitter account were also used in the sample search.

Lastly, to capture the Twitter talk related to *Red & Dead*, a Twitter dataset, separate from the @redanddead815 database, was collected on August 19, 2012. NodeXL, a Microsoft Excel application add-in for social network analysis and visualization, was used to collect the dataset from Twitter. This dataset contains the most recent 1,000 Twitter users who posted a tweet containing key words corresponding with the topic, their most recent keywords-containing tweets, and the following, replying, and mentioning relationships among these users. Visualizing the users and their relationships on this specific Twitter talk network can allow researchers to understand the information flow and online interaction among Twitter users related to this topic.

### Methods of analysis

Three primary sources were used for analysis: 1) a database of all tweets from the @redanddead815 account, 2) a convenience sample of news coverage, and 3) a social network analysis of Twitter talk pertaining to *Red & Dead*.

### Content analysis

The database of @redanddead815 tweets and convenience sample of news articles allowed the researchers to create a timeline of how the story developed and spread on Twitter. For inter-coder reliability computation of the content analysis of the @redanddead815 tweets, the authors adopted Perreault and Leigh's (1989) Index (P/L Index), which is appropriate when there are only two coders, and items are in nominal scales as was the case in this study. The reliability coefficient was .74, which exceeds the acceptable level (Rust & Cooil, 1994). Other variables included in this database were the tweet date, tweet hour, whether the tweet was original or a retweet, number of retweets per tweet, source biography, and whether the tweet included the #redanddead hashtag.

The convenience sample helped determine types of coverage that resulted from the tweets, and to corroborate, verify, and expand upon the "story" of *Red & Dead* being told through Twitter.

### Social network analysis

A network was created for this dataset, and this topic-specific network includes the most recent 1,000 users who posted tweets about the topic and the following relationship among them. In the result section, only the results of following relationships are discussed because the goal of this study is to understand the information flow and online interaction among different users on this topic-specific network. In addition, for each user in this network, their numbers of followers were calculated. It should also be noted that for each user, they do have many followers on Twitter in general, but in this study, the researchers are only interested in knowing each user's number of followers in this topic-specific Twitter network.

Within this specific Twitter network, there are sub-groups of users who connect with one another more than with others, and these sub-groups are defined as clusters (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2011). In this study's Twitter network, clusters were identified by using the Clauset-Newman-Moore cluster analysis algorithm, which identifies clusters in a network through assigning users into clusters that have the most active interconnection (Wakita & Tsurumi, 2007). In the following results section, key users and the major cluster are identified and discussed.

## Results

### RQ1: What role did social media play in spreading news of *Red & Dead*?

Social media played a large role in disseminating news of what was taking place at the University of Georgia's independent student newspaper. The team of editors devised a deliberate strategy to use social media to get the initial story out and to keep it going.

"Within a few hours of us walking out, I set out to prove that social media CAN make a difference and would," wrote Lindsey Cook (@lindzcook), the *Red & Black* multimedia editor who ran the @redanddead815 Twitter account. "I believed that and used what I already knew to make it happen. Almost immediately after we walked out, Red and Dead had a Facebook page, a Twitter feed and a WordPress site and we were actively posting on all of them. The revolution began and I made sure every single bit of it was tweeted" (Cook, 2012).

The first tweets to come from the @redanddead815 account on August 15 stated that, "The @redandblack's top editors and members of its staff walked out of the newspaper building this afternoon for the last time" and then asked for "anyone with connections to the University of Georgia [to] please follow this new account concerning the Red and Black." This initial tweet was retweeted by other Twitter users 109 times, according to Twitter data. The student journalists began to circulate the hashtag #redanddead and the official account included retweets from the individual Twitter accounts of many of the top editors and staffers of the *Red & Black/ Red & Dead* such as*:*

"@adinars: I and all of the editors at The Red & Black just resigned, along with much of the staff. Stay tuned. #RedAndDead @redanddead815"- Adina Solomon, news editor.

"@DKramerUGA: Everyone follow @redanddead815 -- the former reporters of @ redandblack, incl. myself, who left today in a fight for student journalism. #UGA"- Daniel Kramer, staff writer.

Overall, 13% (n=64) of the @redanddead815 tweets fell into the "request" category, with slightly more than half coming on day one.

The first post to redanddead.com was a news article, "Top Red and Black editors resign," which reported the resignations of top editors and on the creation of the @ redanddead815 Twitter account. According to that August 15 news article, within two and half hours after creating the Twitter account, it had attracted 1,000 followers, including the Student Press Law Center (SPLC) and many alumni of the UGA journalism program. According to the news account, followers on Twitter also tweeted the @ redanddead815 account to CNN and The Daily Show.

Analysis of the @redanddead815 Twitter database reveals that 67% of the tweets (n=334) were original, while 33% (n=163) were retweets. Almost 80% of these tweets were posted during the account's first three days as the conflict unfolded.

SPLC Director Frank LoMonte latched onto the story early on (The *Red & Dead* staff had called SPLC 10 minutes after their walkout). LoMonte's August 15 tweet, "Ominous developments at one of the best student-run newspapers in the country. Updates coming in on @redanddead815," was one of the first to be retweeted by the @redanddead815 Twitter account. SPLC staffers proved to be influential in spreading the news story. Sara Gregory, a publications fellow and staff writer at SPLC and former University of North Carolina college newspaper editor, began to report on the story on the SPLC website and regularly tweeted updates about the situation throughout the week-long ordeal.

The *Red & Dead* student staffers, almost immediately after creating the Twitter account, began to ask for followers and influencers to spread the news of what was taking place with tweets such as:

"@SamuelLJackson as a Georgia fan can you please RT@redanddead815 and help our cause"- August 15 tweet from @redanddead815 to famous actor.

"@altonbrown can you please RT @redanddead815 and read up on the recent article concerning the @redandblack http://redanddead.com/"- August 15 tweet from @ redanddead815 account to famous University of Georgia alum, best known as host of the television show, "Good Eats".

Half of the tweets from the @redanddead815 account on August 15 fell into the request and outsider influence categories. Tweets from the outsider influencers accounted for 15% (n=76) of the overall tweets from the account.

College Twitter accounts of *The Huffington Post* and *USA Today* were among the first news outlets to tweet news of the situation. On August 15 the @redanddead815 Twitter account retweeted the following message from @HuffPostCollege: "Editors & staff of UGA's Red&Black student newspaper resign after major changes taking away student control. @Redanddead815."

The account retweeted @USATODAYcollege's tweet: "Big shake-up at UGA's (formerly) student run paper, @redandblack. Follow @redanddead815 for details and an explanation."

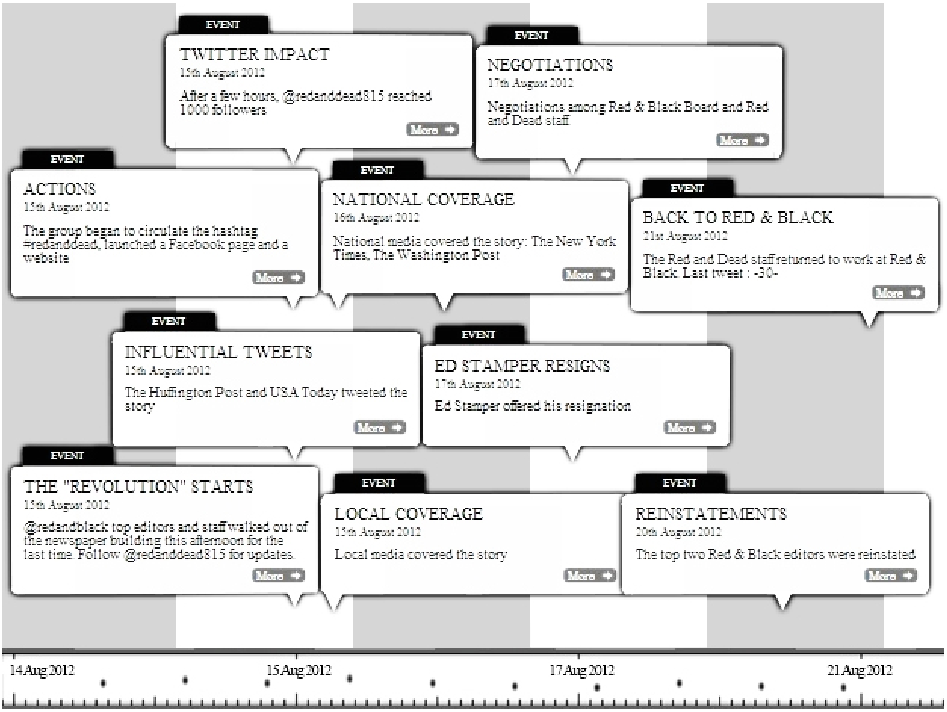
The local and regional daily newspapers, the Athens *Banner-Herald (*@onlineathens) and the Atlanta *Journal-Constitution (*@ajc), immediately picked up the story on August 15. On day two, 24% of the tweets (n=23) from the @redanddead815 account concerned media coverage of their issue, such as this one: "Looks like the NYT just picked up our story and it's letting the world know," which included a link to an article in *The New York Times*. This tweet from the @redanddead815 was retweeted 75 times, according to Twitter data.

Overall, 9% of the tweets from the account (n= 45) pertained to media coverage. By the fourth day the story had become international. For example, on August 18, the @ redanddead815 account tweeted: "We just had an interview with a newspaper in Ireland.

Glad to see the journalism world take interest."

Regular Twitter users, particularly University of Georgia graduates, or those with ties to the university of Athens, began to talk about the developing situation on their Twitter feeds. The @redanddead815 Twitter account retweeted some of the status updates. The story was quickly being broadcasted across the country (see Figure 1 for a timeline of the story's development).

Figure 1**.** Timeline of #redanddead key moments




As news began to spread, the @redanddead815 Twitter account continued to pick up followers at an accelerated pace. The account gained so many users in such a short amount of time that on the first night Twitter briefly suspended the account because it thought it was spam.

About 29% of the @redanddead815 tweets occurred during the first seven hours of the account's existence. By 4 p.m. of August 17, just 48 hours after @redanddead815 was created, 85% of the total tweets had already taken place.

"People say the news never sleeps," Cook wrote. "I'm not sure if I believe that, but I can say for sure that Twitter doesn't sleep (ever) and neither did I for about 72 hours. I worked to answer questions on Twitter and Facebook and lived off coffee and breakfast bars (yum). When we started posting content, I, along with the other editors, stayed up to write, edit and post as much content as possible" (Cook, 2012).

Social media allowed networks of University of Georgia alumni, as well as, journalism professionals and educators to participate in the story in the "ambient journalism" sense that Hermida (2010) describes. The story resonated beyond Georgia with regular users with topical influence in the areas of journalism, student press law and college media (Cha et al., 2010).

The use of social media ultimately played a part in leading to a successful conclusion. The *Red & Dead* staff used the news coverage and favorable social media attention they were receiving to negotiate for an amicable solution to the issues that drove them to resign.

The top two *Red & Black* editors interviewed for their old jobs on August 20 and were reinstated. The *Red and Dead* staff returned to work at the *Red & Black* the following day. On August 21, Cook signed off from @redanddead815 tweeting "-30-", an old journalism practice used to indicate the end of a story.

Social media helped spread the news, as well as helped build an audience for what could have been a viable digital first alternative publication if the editors had not returned to the *Red & Black*. These issues are covered in the next two RQs.

**RQ2: How did news of The *Red & Black* editors' resignation spread through Twitter so quickly?**

Journalism certainly played a big role in this regard. The student editors who resigned were student digital journalists who reported the news and spread the message to their networks. As one of the nation's longstanding top college newspapers, the *Red & Black* have alumni and ties at some of the country's top news organizations. Several of the student journalists' friends were recent graduates working at several publications which picked up the story while others had worked internships there (such as Marinova, who had just completed a *USA Today* internship). Influential journalists and journalism organizations first reported, covered, and tweeted the story on Twitter before subsequently writing in more detail on their websites and in print. Professional organizations and advocacy groups such as the Society of Professional Journalists and SPLC helped advance the story. Student journalists at other college newspapers wrote about the incident, likely because student press freedom was of interest to them.

The Georgia student journalists aided their own cause by tirelessly tweeting, retweeting, and engaging users in conversation. They targeted influential people and organizations and executed a specific strategy.

"I wasn't concerned with the number of people who were following us, but who followed us," Cook wrote. "We worked hard to make sure the right people knew about our situation. I think one of the main reasons we were successful was because the people who followed us closely were influencers with vast and varied networks. We targeted people closely" (Cook, 2012).

They were able to have influencers spread their message. Sports Illustrated's Peter King tweeted about the *Red & Dead* situation to his 950,000 followers on August 15, while ESPN's Rick Reilly tweeted about it on August 16 to his 100,000 followers. The Student Press Law Center Twitter account has 4,000 followers. The national publications also carried large number of followers (see Table 1).

Table 1. Major News Organizations That Tweeted About Red & Dead

| News Organization | Twitter Account | Followers |
|---|---|---|
| The New York Times | @nytimes | 6,326.343 |
| Associated Press | @ap | 1,288.637 |
| Washington Post | @washingtonpost | 1,220.438 |
| Slate | @Slate | 438,804 |
| Gawker | @Gawker | 225,704 |
| Atlanta Journal-Constitution | @ajc | 72,695 |
| USA Today College | @USATODAYcollege | 50,141 |
| Huffington Post | @HuffPostCollege | 39,929 |
| PBS Mediashift | @PBSMediaShift | 20,009 |
| The Daily Tar Heel | @dailytarheel | 13,502 |
| 11Alive | @11Alive | 8,622 |

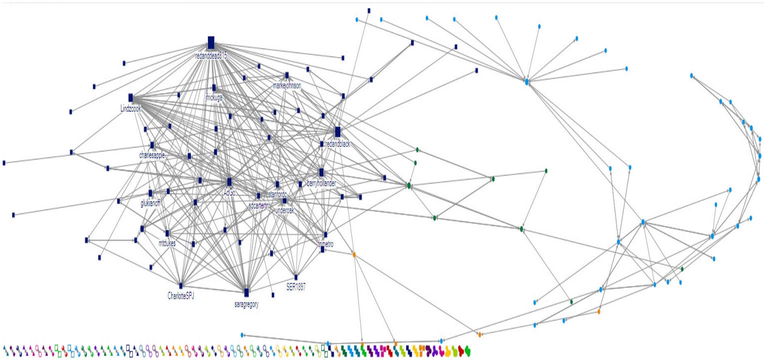
On the afternoon of August 17, just slightly under 48 hours after the @redanddead815 Twitter account was created, it had 284 tweets, 3,776 followers, and was following 863 users. By the following day, the *Red & Dead* Facebook page had more "likes" than the *Red & Black* Facebook page, a fact tweeted by Sara Gregory, the SPLC fellow covering the story: "@saragregory: And it's happened: @redanddead815 has more 'likes' on Facebook than @redandblack (3,541 vs. 3,530)".

Findings from the social network analysis of the Twitter talk network reveal how news information spread quickly on Twitter:

There are 304 Twitter users and 840 user relationships among them. The overall density of the entire Twitter network is .008, which indicates that this network is a less-connected network overall. The pattern from Graph 1 shows that the majority of Twitter users are only connected to a limited number of other users. However, there still exist several key users who have a large number of followers, and they maintain high statuses in this network. Lastly, the modality of the entire network is 0.43, which is higher than 0.4 (Newman, 2006). This modality number indicates that several clusters in the entire

Twitter network exist.

Graph 1. Twitter network




*Note.* In Graph 1, the authors lay out the less connected users at the bottom of the graph.

## Key users on the Twitter network

From Graph 1, we can identify that there are several key users on this Twitter network. There are 11 users who have more than nine followers within this specific Twitter network, and six of these top users have more than 20 followers within this specific Twitter network. These top six users are @redanddead815, @redandblack, @saragregory, @Lindzcook, @AdGo, and @barryhollander. The most important users are @redanddead815 and @redandblack—the official Twitter accounts of *Red & Black* and *Red & Dead*, who are the primary information senders. @saragregory is a journalist in D.C. working for the Student Press Law Center and @Lindzcook is a journalism student who served as the multimedia editor for @redanddead815. @AdGo is an attorney with the Student Press Law Center in Arlington Virginia, and @barryhollander is a journalism professor at the University of Georgia. Among these top users, @redanddead815, @saragregory, @lindzcook, @barryhollander are the top replied-to and top mentioned in this Twitter network.

Most of these users were active participants in the story. @barryhollander became a de facto adviser to the *Red & Dead* students and also covered the story on his professional blog. The SPLC and its publications fellow @saragregory wrote often about the story.

## Top cluster

There is one top cluster (nodes are colored in navy in Graph 1) in this Twitter network. All of the key users identified above are in this top cluster. This cluster includes 73 nodes with 458 links (including both following and followed relationships). The density of this cluster is .071, which indicates that this cluster is a much connected group compared to the entire Twitter network. This top cluster includes a diverse group of users who are interested in this issue.  Within this specific Twitter network, a large number of links are actually built within this cluster, especially built with the key users who are *Red & Dead*'s journalists.

From the results, we can tell that *Red & Black*'s student editors and journalists are key nodes on this talk network. Each of them has a large number of followers on both their Twitter accounts and on this specific *Red & Dead* talk network. From Graph 1, we can identify that top users include *Red & Black* newspaper and its student staff. These users' Twitter network is a highly connected cluster and heavily includes their existing offline connections as well as new connections of a variety of users (including regional and national news organizations, professional journalist organizations, and journalism educators from other universities). When news information was sent out by these top users, their followers on this specific network could receive the latest information, and if these followers retweet, reply, or mention these top users in their tweets, the news information could be spread even further through these followers' general Twitter followers.

In addition, the literature of preferential attachment explains the emergence of key nodes in a social network. When applying this concept to the *Red & Dead* Twitter network, new users often prefer having links with the top users who are already highly connected, and these top users can increase their connectivity faster than less-connected users in this network. The growth of new users connected to top users also explains how the news about *Red & Dead* spread quickly on the Twitter network, particularly as the story neared its conclusion.

**RQ3: How were the *Red & Black* editors able to build a sizable audience for a digital-only publication?**

Clearly, the viral nature of the news story helped build an audience in quick succession. As news of the story disseminated through social media, people began to pay attention to the website. Tweets from the @redanddead815 provided links to the readanddead blog website, which drove traffic to the new publication, as did posts on the group's Facebook page. Journalists covering the story went to the site to obtain documents and to source material in their articles. Stories covering the incident referenced the blog publication, which exposed its existence to a nationwide audience of millions. The blog had instant credibility and name recognition because the student journalists associated with it previously worked for *The Red & Black*.

Two days into the story, at an August 17 meeting, *Red & Black* Publisher Harry Montevideo was involved in an altercation with a broadcast journalism student who worked for the university's student newscast that led to both men falling to the floor. That incident, which was caught on still and video camera, also attracted a lot of viral attention on social media sites and from news outlets; it even spawned a parody account of the publisher (@FakeMonte).

While news of the editors' initial resignations spread on Twitter, the *Red & Dead* team was uploading content to its new website. The first blog post provided a statement of their goals to produce content by and for university students and Athens residents.

They posted pictures of themselves at work, and a statement from Marinova, the recently resigned *Red & Black* Editor-in-Chief, but the most sought after item on the newly created website was a document that led to its creation.

The student journalists obtained and posted to redanddead.com the draft memo from one of the *Red & Black* board members that led to the student staff resignations.  The memo called for a balance of good and bad. Under “Bad,” it reads, “content that catches people or organizations doing bad things. I guess this is ‘journalism.’ If in question, have more GOOD than BAD.” According to August 16 tweets from the @redanddead815 account, the memo had so many views that it crashed and they had to repost it to the site. According to another @redanddead815 tweet, the website had over 125,000 page views in its first 36 hours of existence. This document, a key element to the story, drew traffic to the site as did subsequent media coverage.

News outlets that picked up the story cited from the posted document. By August 16, many national news outlets were reporting the story for their publications, blogs, websites, and broadcasts.  The *Red & Dead* team tweeted on August 16, “we are taking all requests for interviews: redandblack815@gmail.com.”  Coverage continued to come in droves. With each subsequent story, the @redanddead815 retweeted links to the articles. The student staffers eventually put an August 16 post on redanddead.com titled “Articles about us” with excerpts and links to stories in *The New York Times,* Slate, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, onlineathens.com, Huffington Post College, 11 Alive News, Poynter, The Student Press Law Center, College Media Matters, Inside Higher Ed, Athens Patch, FIRE, Gawker, Jim Romenesko’s blog, *Reason*, *The Daily Californian,* and Peach Pundit. The story was also in *The Washington Post* and the *Associated Press* wrote a wire story about the incident.

The student staffers began releasing statements and posting information about the situation on their website. They included “letters to the editor” and opinion pieces in support of their cause from *Red & Black* alumni. The *Red & Dead* site also began August 17 posting news, sports, music, and opinion stories about topics other than their own cause.

## Discussion

This study offers a number of key insights into online journalism, particularly on the spread of news in an era of social media and the advent of a digital only publication.

### Practical Implications

The findings from this study that news sources were instrumental in spreading the story on Twitter offers evidence that supports previous research that the news media are best at spreading content-related tweets and the content value of a tweet drives a retweet (Cha et al., 2010; Leavitt et al., 2009). The findings from this study suggest that traditional news outlets still maintain large followings online and are key players when it comes to spreading content through social networks, as are newer outlets for news and information such as the *Huffington Post* and *Gawker*.

The student editors of *The Red & Black* were able to quickly turn their incident into a viral news story. Journalists and journalism organizations can play a pivotal role in enabling a story to "go viral," although had the University of Georgia student's cause been deemed *unnewsworthy,* the results would have almost certainly been quite different. In this instance, the judgment of news worthiness between members of a social network and journalists aligned.

The study also illustrates that nodes are important in disseminating news and information to communities as users on the social network took up the cause independent of journalists and not only communicated with each other through the #redanddead hashtag but also became engaged with @redanddead815 either through conversation or retweets.

From a practical standpoint, news coverage can help build an audience and get an organization's attention. Whether the *Red & Dead* effort would have been sustainable in the long-term, however, will remain unknown.

***The findings from this study suggest that traditional news outlets still maintain large followings online and are key players when it comes to spreading content through social networks, as are newer outlets for news and information such as the Huffington Post and Gawker.***

**Theoretical implications**

This study makes a few contributions to existing theories of influence, social networks, and journalism. The findings lend further support to the concept of "ambient journalism" and Twitter being used as a tool to actively produce and share content to help a community maintain awareness of important developments (Brown-Smith, 2012; Hermida, 2010). In this instance, nodes within the University of Georgia and journalism communities, in particular, gave rise to maintaining awareness of developments of interest to the respective communities.

The study supports the network theories because key users within this specific Twitter network had a large number of followers and were capable of building followers in a short period of time. The majority view on influence as well-connected, respected informed opinion leaders, innovators, and hubs played a pivotal role in spreading the news story to mass audiences (Gladwell, 2002; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Rogers, 1962). The story resonated beyond Georgia, however, because in accordance with the literature, ordinary users, so-called topical influencers, actively spread information about controversial news pertaining to topics they find interesting (Cha et al., 2010).

## Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it relies exclusively on publicly available information, mostly from social media. This research does not deal with the human subjects themselves, however, but relies on their insights offered in interviews, articles and blog posts.

Another limitation is the primary focus of this study is on Twitter, while subsequent analysis could include Facebook and other social media means. The short time frame of the data set is problematic, however, given the limited duration of the story this is understandable.

As a single case study the findings are not generalizable, but nevertheless offer some useful insights.

## Future research

One future study could examine the strategic decision processes the student editors undertook after their abrupt resignations through interviews and surveys. There are a number of unanswered questions and unique circumstances to this case that open the door for future studies. While the actions that made the story newsworthy were not planned (the sudden resignations), the effort to spread the story was. One has to wonder whether a similar digital only publication could generate a sizable audience without the accompanying news coverage and previous name recognition. Experiments could be conducted examining factors of starting a truly new digital only publication. Likewise, further experiments could be conducted on reaching influencers to make a story go viral. The journalistic nature of this news story involving journalists also is a unique circumstance that could skew the results. Further studies could examine other hashtags and events of interest to a community, as Brown-Smith (2012) suggested. The strongest relationships in the nodes were from users who had offline connections.

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## Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge Dr. Itai Himelboim (University of Georgia) for his support and assistance in the collection of the Twitter network data.

#ISOJ
Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 79-92

# iPerceive: Platform Priorities and Workplace Innovation in America's Consumer Magazine Industry

*Elizabeth Hendrickson, Vandana Singh, and Caroline Redmond*

*This research examines magazine content creators' perceptions about the magazine industry's transition from print media to digital editions for tablet readers and mobile devices. This study utilizes both survey data from magazine professionals and in-depth interviews with this target group and provides a scholarly snapshot of an under-examined sector of the media industry as it negotiates workplace responsibility and routine changes following a technological disruption. By addressing this research gap and accurately conveying magazine professionals' perceptions of both workplace innovation and organizational leadership, we can best locate and describe this industry sector within today's vibrant technological ecosphere.*

Today's dynamic media environment holds a tacit institutional imperative that commercially competitive media organizations both adopt emergent technology and create strategies for its workplace implementation. While the initial digital disruption that accompanied the first generation of tablet readers in 2010 is hindsight for competing legacy print publishing powerhouses such as Conde Nast, Hearst, Time, Inc. and Rodale, the media organizations must now create multiple versions of content to accommodate consumers' myriad mobile devices, known as the "fourth screen" (Smith, 2012).

However, if taken literally, this "fourth screen" moniker might be considered semantically misleading, in that portable devices include numerous types and styles of both tablet and smartphone. To address such factors, publishers and editors must consider the device's size dimensions and functionality when conceptualizing the digital strategy (Conde Nast, 2012) that provides the opportunity to present print content in a dynamic and even, personalized, way (Clifford, 2009; Giner, 2010; Joss, 2010).

Outcomes vary from titles offering subscription bundling options that include print and tablet versions, to publishers opting to create independent application stores to sell their digital products, to company investments in costly content migration to new content management systems that optimize the mobile experience in HTML5 code (Adams, 2011; Kinsman, 2009; Smith, 2012).

Industry press accompanying this content innovation is largely optimistic, with giants such as Hearst Digital Media group reporting a 2000% increase in overall mobile access of its magazine properties from 2011 – 2012 (Smith, 2012). Similarly, companies like Conde Nast (2012), which in March implemented tablet media and creative guidelines for its digital editions, report a substantial increase in its 18-to-24-year-old audience for non-news categories (Bazilian, 2012). In this evolving media ecosystem, content production for mobile such as smartphones is emerging as one of the industry's next priorities (Lima, 2012; Joss, 2011).

Taken together, these numbers portray yet another sector of the media industry responding to change. And while such magazine metrics certainly warrant industry and academic attention, the discussion rarely attends to one vital component of this equation: the labor required to meet increasing content demands. This research attends to such oversight, and considers the perspectives of magazine professionals responsible for producing content to accommodate recent innovation. While media scholars (Deuze, 2004; Singer, 2004) and industry innovators (Moggridge, 2010) have helped shape our understanding of new technologies' impact on workflows, content, management, and relationships in journalism, there is a research gap in literature that locates the magazine industry within today's vibrant technological ecosphere.

Accordingly, this research examines magazine content creators' perceptions of the magazine industry's transition from print media to digital editions for tablet readers and mobile devices. By considering perceptions, that is, what magazine professionals espouse at this juncture in publishing history, we can better ascertain the overall state of the magazine industry and its ability to adapt to change. This pilot study utilizes survey data from magazine professionals to inform in-depth interviews with key editors, both editorial and creative, to provide an accurate scholarly snapshot of an under-examined sector of the media industry as it negotiates transformations within the workplace culture following a technological disruption.

## Literature Review

This research considers the perceptions of magazine journalists as they negotiate technological innovation and its workplace outcomes, and as such, applies theoretical concepts found in both organizational theory and mass communication literature. Specifically, it adopts frameworks from Schein (2004), Stapley (2004), and Harrison (2004) to examine perceptions and workplace culture and seminal communication studies by Pavlik (2000), Deuze (2004) and Singer (2004), among others, to explore technology's impact on media production. This study also considers more recent scholarly inquiry focused on exemplary cases of technological disruption and the subsequent cultural shift within the newsroom.

Schein (2004) defines culture as a dynamic and evolving phenomenon that is continually created by our communications with other people, and conceptualizes an organization as network, composed of many parts unified under a governing culture. He writes that our behavior within this network is limited by a set of rules, norms, routines and structure, and the culture of any group is difficult to change because people prefer stability to instability, and a stable culture offers predictability and coherence (Schein, 2004). This consistency offers group members self-esteem and connectedness with others, thus helping to satisfy their ego ideal; however, leaders may also utilize stability as a means of organizational control by slowing down long-tail change (Stapley, 2004).

In contrast, Harrison's (2004) "open systems model" of organizational diagnoses describes an organizational system created from interdependent components, whereby feedback and demands from inside and outside the organization mandates dynamic interplay between components, resulting in organizational improvement. In this case, internal processes, whether they align with top management priorities or not, operate efficiently and effectively (Harrison, 2004).

This research conceptualizes a magazine brand as organizational system, whereby interdependent components work to improve the product, rather than disrupt the process. As such, the magazine's parent company can be considered top management that allocates "input" (Harrison, 2004) for each title, which creates "output" in the form of content, innovation, or job satisfaction. It follows that this funneling process and organizational behavior can shape a particular magazine's workplace structure, and correspondingly, its culture. Hence, leadership plays an integral role in both organizational culture formation and maintenance (Schein, 2004).

Organizational theory and mass communication research are conceptual complements with regard to newsroom culture and innovation. Mass communication scholar Pavlik (2000) examined proposed four broad areas in which changing technology influences journalism: (1) how journalists do their work; (2) the content of news; (3) the structure or organization of the newsroom; and (4) the relationships between or among news organizations, journalists, and their many publics. He notes that although new media such as the Internet, World Wide Web, and digital video are perhaps the most visible examples of technologies that are transforming journalism, the history of journalism is in many ways defined by technological change. Deuze (2004) addresses this shift with the concept of "media logic," a theoretical framework that examines how "multimedia" impacts both the practice and self-perception of journalists, and how this process in turn shapes and influences the emergence of a professional identity of multimedia journalism.

Singer (2004) examines newsroom convergence, defined here as a combination of technologies, products, staffs, and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television, and online media, through the framework of diffusion of innovations theory. Singer locates convergence as a global trend, as media companies continue to expand their holdings beyond their original core products. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data drawn from case studies of four American newsrooms, Singer (2004) suggests that despite culture clashes and other issues of compatibility, journalists see clear advantages for convergence, among those being career enhancement and sharing the workplace with colleagues whose strengths differ from their own. However, Singer (2004) concludes that this diffusion may be hindered by cultural and technological differences in approaches to newsgathering and dissemination, as well as by a lack of training to alleviate concerns about the perceived complexities of new media formats.

Similarly, Quinn (2005) examined the motivations of editorial managers and journalists who embraced convergence in order to learn whether they did it for business reasons or to do better journalism. The author cites several factors that influence and drive the adoption of convergence, also called multiple-platform publishing. Principle among these factors is media's desire to reach as wide an audience as possible, consumers who want access to news in a variety of forms and times (news 24-7), and editorial managers' drive to cut costs, as the availability of relatively cheap digital technology facilitates the convergence process. Quinn (2005) concludes that most journalists believe that because technology makes it relatively easy to convert and distribute any form of content into another, it is possible to produce new forms of storytelling and consequently do better journalism.

These formative studies aptly dovetail with more recent studies by scholars such as Usher (2012), Groves and Brown (2011), and Royal (2010), who analyzed NPR, the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times*, respectively, as the company negotiated considerable changes within their legacy news organization. This research applies particular concepts from such recent studies to both align and differentiate itself from traditional news media.

While most mainstream magazines ascribe to the principles of American journalism and abide by the American Society of Magazine Editors' "Editorial Guidelines" (American Society of Magazine Editors, 2011), a magazine's content is largely shaped by a self-defined "Mission Statement" rather than a watchdog-of-society role. As such, magazine research often must parse relatable concepts from studies aligned with more traditional news organizations. However, as all media companies progressively prioritize new methods of expanding audience reach, a conceptual synthesis seems increasingly suitable.

For example, Usher (2012) describes core values of a legacy news organization amidst a transition to digital as those relating to quality, and thus credibility and audience loyalty. The authors also cite an organization's ability to maintain continuity within its culture as best defense against workplace tensions and conflicts. Similarly, Groves and Brown's (2011) longitudinal examination of shifting news routines and values during tremendous organizational transition offers insights about leadership and organizational culture during such change.

An additional consideration is the evolving role of journalists during technological change, a concept central to studies by Royal (2010) and Krumsvik (2008). As an organization's news values and routines may change during a digital disruption, so might a journalist's responsibilities, for instance, additional technological tasks. Within the magazine industry, the implementation of new digital platforms such as e-readers and tablets further augment roles of many journalists, providing both challenges and opportunities to the media worker (Haeger, 2011; Staughton, 2012).

This exploratory research seeks to build on this literature about organizational culture and technological innovation by contributing a scholarly snapshot of the 2012 magazine industry. It utilizes magazine professionals' perceptions about current organizational systems to provide a starting point for further research and exploration of the following questions:

**RQ1: Which platform do publications prioritize over others, and how are they prioritized (e.g., budgeting, benefits to staff, etc.)?**

**RQ2: How has the magazine industry's stance toward innovation changed in the past several years?**

**RQ3: How are editorial and creative leadership equipped to handle innovation?**

## Methodology

Similar to the work of Santos and Pinto (2009), this research looks at "the complexities of reality" and its myriad challenges. In this study, content creators at major magazines were first surveyed about print and electronic platforms and how changes in platform production have affected their individual workloads, job responsibilities, and attitudes. Questions also addressed the magazine staff members' perceptions of their magazines' platform priorities and potential for innovation and creativity in leadership.

Snowball sampling was used to distribute an electronic survey to 70 personal LinkedIn contacts via email. The contacts were encouraged to share the survey link with colleagues and other professionals they thought would have insights on the questions. A total of 44 magazine staff members including editors, producers, writers, and digital media staff responded to the survey.

To encourage the magazine staff members to describe their perceptions on platform changes in their organizations in more detail, the surveys were followed with in-depth interviews. The interviews gathered rich information that could be analyzed using qualitative methods. 44 survey respondents said they would be willing to be interviewed and provided personal email addresses for the purpose of scheduling. The researchers emailed various respondents and scheduled and completed interviews with ten of the survey respondents. This number of interviews represents the point researchers began seeing patterns and repetitions in the participants answers, and given the nature of this pilot study, researchers decided this interview sample was a sound representation.

The staff members in this group represented five editors, one senior reporter, three art directors and one online producer. Only one art director worked specifically with iPad production; the rest had more general responsibilities. An interview outline with four basic research questions was created, but each staff member was encouraged to speak about his or her own unique experiences. The interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length, with an average time of about 45 minutes.

To obtain a professional's perceptions about the organization's platform priorities, specific questions included: (1) Which platforms does your publication prioritize over others; and (2) How are they prioritized (e.g., budgeting, benefits to staff, etc.)? Questions pertaining to perceptions about workplace innovation included: (1) Have you observed a shift in your publication's stance toward innovation in the past several years; and (2) Do you feel your publication's editorial and creative leadership is equipped to handle innovation?

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys (including demographics) were organized into tables and analyzed to determine general trends (Appendix, Table 1 – 4) Interviews were transcribed, and identifying information was then removed from each of the transcribed documents. The research team used an iterative process of qualitatively analyzing the resulting documents. This method used multiple reviews of the data to initially code large excerpts which were then analyzed twice more to extract common themes and ideas. Upon review of the transcriptions and in discussions about the interview process, researchers began a content analysis of the qualitative data. Codes or themes were created based on this initial analysis to aid in categorizing the data from the interviews. Both researchers coded the entire dataset, specifying categories and themes to the excerpts of the interview transcription.

Results from the interviews were divided into the themes or categories identified above as platform priorities, personnel modification, learning resources, and workplace innovation.

## Results and Analysis

The 10 interviewees were selected from a pool of 44 respondents who completed the survey and had indicated that they would be willing to participate in an in-depth interview to share their experiences about the tablet technology and its impact of their work routine. The survey as well as interview responses are kept anonymous as promised in the consent form. For the purpose of this study, respondents will only be identified as *creative* or *editorial*. Creative employees are those responsible for visual elements of content, as well as production aspects. Editorial employees conceptualize the story content and shepherd primarily textual elements.

In general, demographic information about the journalists reflects experienced magazine professionals who have a steady employment history within the publishing industry. In terms of gender and age, the majority of survey respondents were female (66%), and 45% were over 40 years of age. With regard to work history, more than half of the journalists have worked for less than five publications so far, 75% have worked for less than five years at the current publication and about 20% have worked between six and ten years at the current publication.

These statistics dovetail with magazine industry leadership profiles, such as the American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME) Board of Directors (ASME, 2012), where nine of its 18 board members are female, including its president and vice president. Also similar, every ASME board member's biographical material found online (ASME, 2012) highlights the individual's 20 – 30 years of experience within a variety of consumer magazine titles.

In terms of respondent's current job and its magazine audience, over 60% of the survey participants work in a publication with more than 1,000,000 circulation, and nearly 75% of this group cite females as the magazine's target audience. More than half the respondents said that their target audience is over 40 years of age.

All respondents (100%) report their current publication has a website in addition to its print product, and cite videos, slideshows, and links as content most offered. The majority (82%) of survey respondents have a tablet version of their publication, and more than half (61%) say their publication creates special applications, while nearly half (48%) produce a mobile (smart phone) version. 61% have special apps

**Perceptions about organization's platform priorities**

**The print product drives all platforms**

The majority of respondents (82%) said their organization prioritizes one platform over others, and over half (60%) reported that platform as print.

This finding seems on the surface to be logical, given that the print publication dominates most media budgets, as it takes more people and money to put out the legacy print product. In addition, other platforms require only minor alterations to the print content before reformatting layouts for tablet and mobile use. While additional production processes might seem to require added labor force, most publishers offer magazine brands limited additional funding and resources. Quite separate from all this discussion is the online content, which effectively split from this conversation in the late 1990s, when magazines and publishers introduced separate online staff to the mix.

***The majority of respondents (82%) said their organization prioritizes one platform over others, and over half (60%) reported that platform as print.***

The present-day result: the staff members who create the print product now also produce the additional platforms, such as the magazine's tablet version. This shift, acknowledged by all interview participants, emerged as the inherent core of this analysis. The increase in content production and thus, work responsibilities, was manifest throughout discussions about priorities and workplace innovation. Aside from one respondent noting a rare spot bonus for additional tablet production, magazine professionals across the board recognize that the adoption of new content platforms signifies increased personal workload.

However, as one editorial participant remarked, “Overall, all platforms should be considered part of every editor’s core job and we need to embrace them. If we editors don’t own these platforms somebody else (like the ad sales side) will.”

Professionals say organizational priority remains with the print content, and as illustrated by comments from this editorial staff member, the tacit expectation of company leadership is that other platforms offer brand extensions and multi-dimensional opportunity:

> One of the things that we’ve learned is that even if we work in all these new areas, you know, you need to keep the print product healthy, and that is, remains the kind of definitive statement of your brand and the highest execution. And everything good that comes in tablet is usually, much more so than on the web, everything good in the tablet starts with a good idea in print, and then it can be further enhanced.

Other respondents echoed this sentiment and describe the print product as the veritable king of the company, cemented to the organizational throne while the knights get Wi-Fi. However, as this example exemplifies, magazine professionals acknowledge, with more resolve than resistance, a certain end to this print platform monarchy:

> [Print] It’s recognized as kind of the legacy, the backbone of the company. And even though I think everyone from the very top to the mailroom would acknowledge that the future is digital and we have to get going on this and we have to create products that will work and do great in the digital world, there’s a kind of overriding thought which is that let’s not forget print. Like most of our readers consume us on print. Most of our revenue is on print for now. That won’t always be the case. But let’s not take our eye off that anyway.

**High esteem equals higher investment**

While one might presume additional platforms would denote additional staff members, interviewees described variable systems of adding extra personnel. Nearly all those interviewed cited the magazine titles seen as experts or tastemakers within a particular content category are given more support for maintaining all platforms, whereas less-regarded publications must be parsimonious. As noted by this creative participant, rewards do not come as individual monetary gain, but increase in publication staff and technology assistance:

> For instance, in *Magazine X*, I know that they have an enormous amount of, you know, they'll have like five people just in their production department that have like three, four, or five people on staff, and then they'll have like 15 freelancers. And the freelancers will literally sit around for hours and hours and hours and do nothing, and then, you know, like one thing will come in and they'll work for an hour, but you know they sit there and do nothing, whereas like at *Magazine Y*, for instance, there was a staff of just one full-time, permanent person, and the rest, freelancers, and that was it.

Although some editorial staff members allude to this imbalance of allocated resources for personnel, participants from the creative side were markedly more corporeal in their explanations. In fact, the latter group seemed to accept their magazine's position of lower profile and thus, decreased support. While numerous participants voiced displeasure about this staffing system, none suggested alternatives to this distinct organizational culture. Indeed, many of the espoused notions about an organization's priorities, such as the following excerpt, seemed to rely upon an assigned personality or organization status of a magazine:

> I guess the perception, like the more prestigious, like *Magazine M* gets an enormous amount of Organization X – *Magazine Z* gets whatever it wants. And as I understand it, they're not a big moneymaker. For years and years and years, they lost money. But they are very prestigious. *Magazine W*, for instance, can get whatever it wants. For many, many years, *Magazine U* was the number one moneymaker, and it was funny because even though *Magazine U* was the number one moneymaker and they had a lot of pull, *Magazine W* still kind of trumped them because it was cooler and again more prestigious, you know.

**Perceptions about workplace innovation**

After previous missteps in technology's timeline, professionals report a new collective mindset about innovation, and 73% of respondents report seeing a positive change in how their organization perceives digital innovation.

Interviews with editors indicate this result relates to a more deliberate, but optimistic response to technology, in contrast to the industry's error-laden push for magazine website creation in the late 1990s. In fact, some interviewees, such as the following, noted the benefits of not being first to digital: "I think they were probably a little slow to start, like they kind of wanted to see if it was going to be a real thing or not. They weren't going to be in the forefront."

However, despite the industries initial trepidation, interviewees, such this editorial staffer, note overall progress of the mainstream magazine mindset within the organizational culture:

> They took some team leaders from the magazine and put them in charge of the website, which I guess was probably the best thing to do at the time. But it can be difficult nowadays when the market is so flooded with young people who know, who understand new media and how it works and the importance of Twitter and this and that. Sometimes I think that there's difficulty for us in getting that across. But I think for the most part they really are trying.

In perhaps the most revealing interview response, an editorial participant articulates the nuances within this emerging optimism, and attributes its origins to professional proprietorship and opportunity:

> In so many cases it was print designers, you know, who put their mark on it, print editors who really seized the opportunity. And all of a sudden, they created these experiences that were so much more elegant, so much more, you know, visually, aesthetically pleasing. And so in tablets we have the opportunity to really control the experience. And I think that's been a really meaningful, meaningful outcome. So creatively, it's been really, really important, not just in how we do our job day-to-day and learning all these really cool new challenges, but it's been very affirming because it shows that, you know, editors I think in the past have sometimes had a little bit of an inferiority complex when it comes to the web and digital… Like yeah, we're not really experts in that. Well you know what? We actually are experts in this.

**Leadership and innovation preparedness**

Overall, respondents say the magazine's editorial and creative leadership demonstrates a willingness to adapt to technological change, despite imperfect digital strategies. Similarly, 64% feel their respective organization effectively addresses and manages shifts in innovation. The participants' perception of responsive management is manifest in their choices of adjectives that describe their publication's approach to digital innovation. In this case, respondents most frequently cite "Adaptive" as an adjective to describe their publication's approach to digital innovation, with "Upbeat" and "Confident" as second most descriptive terms.

***Overall, respondents say the magazine's editorial and creative leadership demonstrates a willingness to adapt to technological change, despite imperfect digital strategies.***

While the majority of survey respondents feel their publication's editorial and creative leaders value innovation, interviews illustrate diverse organizational approaches. Interestingly, 34% of respondents cite "Fast feedback, low risk" and 34% cite "Slow feedback, low risk" as defining their workplace culture, while 11% say "Fast feedback, high risk" and 20% cite "Slow feedback, high risk."

These divergent perceptions play out in the responses from top editorial and creative professionals, illustrated below. The first excerpt, from a creative director who oversees a two-person full-time art and production staff and rarely interacts with the company's leaders, reveals frustration with the parent organization's digital success in light of its own company employer and other titles under its ownership:

> The company itself isn't really, you know, pushing people because they don't quite understand it. I think a lot of their success that they are having is the people are motivating themselves, but then quite frankly, they're not utilizing the people that they have. They don't recognize that there are some people that are doing more than is expected, and they want to do more, and I, you know, quite frankly, set a pointer to challenge people to leave and go to other places.

In contrast, a creative director who oversees a four-person full-time art and production staff and whose position mandates a level of engagement with company leaders portrays their magazine's leadership as one open to change, but slowly learning the adaptable skills. This participant's anecdote illustrates a perception based upon observed leadership action that demonstrates an effort toward learning:

> She's only started using the iPad recently, and she's really taken to it. It's taken awhile, but she's really warmed up to it. She still doesn't know how to do a lot of things with it, but it's the same thing with her computer. I don't think that she is, or I don't know any editor who would be 100% fully equipped to wrap their head around it and move it forward in a real meaningful way, but then you're asking for someone to be really techy, do you know what I mean? So I think that I've been very lucky to have somebody who at least is interested in the product and can listen well enough and make decision well enough.

While the majority of editorial and creative respondents report their publication has hired additional staff on a freelance or contract basis to help with added platform production responsibilities, feedback from the two magazine components about whether the extra help is sufficient was distinctly different. Creative staff reported feeling overwhelmed with personnel turnover and increasing production demands, while the majority of editorial members acknowledged this stress but did not articulate a direct effect to their personal routines and responsibilities. In one exemplary case, an editor who works for a magazine known for industry innovation even cites the added workload as an opportunity for editorial expansion, albeit with caveat:

> They've even allowed us to do things like bring in editors who mostly work on print. But because they're here, they allow Editor B, my

> deputy editor who kind of runs our tablet projects, to spend most of his time on tablets. So they've been really flexible and helpful with us. But it's not a great long-term solution.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The organizational culture of top management within the magazine industry's largest companies exercises substantial influence over the evolving output now required of most magazine brands. Findings illustrate an industry with robust organizational systems in place that safeguard a magazine's legacy platform product and relegates additional demands to largely one component of the system: production. This governing culture maintains stability within the network-as-whole, in that editorial news workers experience only minimum changes to established rules, norms, routines, and structure. Metaphorically speaking, one component of the body, in this case, the hands, might be dangerously wounded while the rest of the body appears to be in good health. However, an individual can always find methods to keep his or her hands hidden from open view. Yet short-term solutions such as pockets, mittens, or bodily shield, neglect to attend to hands desperate for medical attention.

As such, these findings diverge from mass communication studies involving disruptions to conventional newspaper or broadcast cultures. During the last three years, the largest media publishers have utilized varying strategies to address additional content platform adoption and accompanying new technologies, but this slow-but-steady industry momentum is dissimilar from the majority of mass communication research involving disruption. Whereas newspapers experienced a complete culture shift during rapid digital transformations, often marked by layoffs and management changes, the majority of magazine professionals have been able to adapt to organizational changes in a way that both preserves their employment and addresses the magazine's new needs.

However, the sectors of the magazine industry under tremendous professional pressure are those with creative responsibilities, the journalists responsible for additional platform production. These individuals must implement the technological innovations as per the parent organization's directive and do so with little control over additional staff resources. The result of this dynamic is that a vital portion of the magazine staff, those in creative, are producing the print platform, plus additional tablet content, plus any special apps management wants to create. In other words, all the new and exciting ideas that can now come to life via new platforms are still often relegated to the staff responsible for putting the print platform to bed. This sector now puts multiple platforms to bed, with little additional help. While industry and academic discussions (ISOJ, 2011; ISOJ 2012) focus on emerging platforms and content boundaries, few attend to the human resources within the magazine industry who facilitate this content's functionality.

However, exemplary cases do exist, where magazine brands perceived by top management as emblematic of company culture and are therefore supported via more resources for production personnel. But for now, such conditions are the exception, not the industry rule. Unless the management decisions for the allocation of additional platform production resources is made transparent to those within the larger organizational system, key interdependent components such as creative production are vulnerable to issues of personnel burnout and staff turnover.

This research recognizes its limitations due to limited feedback from those journalists in creative roles. However, this study is the first phase of a longitudinal study that examines how the magazine industry responds to technological innovation, and as such, aims to more deeply explore production components of the organizational system in future research. So authors of this research hope to apply such limitations as points for expansion in future studies about magazine industry workplace culture amidst technological change.

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#ISOJ
Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 93-111

# Excellence in Journalistic Use of Social Media Through the Eyes of Social Media Editors

*David A. Craig and Mohammad Yousuf*

*This study explores what constitutes excellence in journalistic use of social media through the perspectives of nine social media editors from both long-existing media outlets and online-only operations. Five elements stood out: adherence to traditional accuracy standards with recognition of a new environment, sophistication in verification practices, sophistication in engagement, tailoring use of social platforms, and adding value by being human (in use of tools and in transparency). The study provides preliminary insight into how journalism as a practice (as defined by MacIntyre, 2007) may be evolving as journalists integrate social media and reshape the nature of excellent journalism.*

In the past few years, the development of social media platforms – particularly Twitter and Facebook – has provided journalists new tools and opportunities for story development, verification, and engagement. With the growth of journalistic use of these tools, many editors and reporters have become increasingly familiar with their capabilities and used them creatively in the service of good journalism. But the use of social media in journalism is young enough that understanding of best practices is still in development. Regular professional discussion about social media use in journalism – on media blogs (e.g. Buttry, 2011), in professional settings such as conferences (Coulson, 2012), and on social platforms themselves – has produced ideas about what excellent journalistic work with social media means and how to achieve it, as well as the challenges involved. But significant unresolved areas remain such as the proper handling of unverified information, and the most constructive ways to engage users. At the same time, journalism researchers have done few studies so far directly addressing what excellence looks like in this context.

The purpose of this study is to explore what constitutes excellence in journalistic use of social media. This study contributes to professional and scholarly understanding of excellence by bringing together theory and systematic discussion of practice through insights from interviews with social media editors. These editors are playing a key role in development of standards and best practices in journalistic use of social media. The social media editor role sometimes involves big-picture issues such as strategy and staff training; for others the focus is on managing a news operation's social media accounts alone or on a team (Jenkins, 2012). But either way, these editors are at the center of the evolution of journalism in the social media era and identified as a kind of model simply by their titles. Liz Heron, social media director at the *Wall Street Journal* and previously a social media editor at the *New York Times*, has said she thinks her job will be gone in five years (Coulson, 2012; Garber, 2011). Whether that proves true or not, the specialized position in which the editor is paid to focus on social media use gives social media editors an important vantage point on the evolution of journalistic practice and the integration of social media into the work of journalists.

The study draws on perspectives of nine social media editors – seven from interviews by the authors and two from online sources. Though these editors do not provide the full picture of the views of social media editors, they offer an important piece because they represent major news organizations including long-existing media outlets such as the BBC and Reuters along with online-only operations such as the *Huffington Post* and *Mashable*.

The conceptual framework for this study is philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's (2007) theory of a practice, which is a perspective particularly well-suited to discussion of excellence in evolving fields. The next section will examine relevant scholarly studies on excellence and on social media, along with explaining this framework.

## Literature Review

This section explores the literature about the meaning of excellence in traditional journalism and the similarities and differences in the online environment. The literature review also looks at studies about the role of social media in journalism, which might point to rethinking of the meaning of excellence. It also covers studies of ethical issues and challenges in journalistic use of social media. The last part of the section explains the theoretical framework of the present study.

### Meaning of excellence in journalism

The search for the meaning of excellence in journalism is not new. Journalism researchers have been exploring this for many years. Back in 1968, for example, Merrill suggested a number of quality indicators for journalism, mixing subjective and objective criteria. The subjective criteria included integrity, social concern, good writing and editing, interpretive analysis, professionalism and intelligence, and the power to influence opinion leaders. The objective criteria included independence and financial stability, world consciousness and emphasis on politics, international relations, public welfare, culture, education, and science. In 1977, Newspaper Advertising Bureau surveyed 746 editors who ranked accuracy, depth, and impartiality as the top subjective attributes, which were followed by investigative efforts, literary style, and sophistication in treatment (Burgoon, Burgoon & Atkin, 1982). The editors also rated 23 objective criteria. Those rated highest were ratio of staff-written copy, amount of non-advertising content, and ratio of news interpretation and backgrounders to spot news reports.

Studies show that many American journalists have shared a consensus on the criteria that constitute excellence. Examining previous studies about standards in journalism, Bogart (2004) came up with a long list of criteria that most American journalism scholars and practitioners agreed constitute excellence. The list includes: "integrity, fairness, balance, accuracy, comprehensiveness, diligence in discovery, authority, breadth of coverage, variety of content, reflection of the entire home community, vivid writing, attractive makeup, packaging or appearance, and easy navigability" (Bogart, 2004, p. 40).

Recent studies have addressed excellence criteria in online journalism. Gladney, Shapiro and Castaldo (2007) surveyed 723 online news media editors, who rated the quality of online news. Gladney et al. (2007) suggested that traditional journalism values remain largely unchanged on the Internet. In the study, online journalists rated 38 criteria of news quality. Credibility was the top-ranked criterion for news quality. Then came utility, immediacy, relevance, ease of use, fact-opinion separation, clear paths, simplicity, and exclusivity. Hayes, Singer and Ceppos (2007) analyzed the challenges to media roles in a digital environment and came up with three broad journalistic values—authenticity, accountability, and autonomy.

***Taken together, these studies suggest that some aspects of excellence – such as accuracy, depth, and comprehensiveness, and even navigability – have stood the test of time as markers of journalistic quality.***

Craig (2011) proposed four elements of excellence in online journalism—speed and accuracy with depth in breaking news; comprehensiveness in content; open-endedness in story development; and the centrality of conversation. Speed and accuracy with depth refers to using the capacity of the Internet for speed and confirming the accuracy of the information but going deeper into the story than previous media enabled with breaking news. By comprehensiveness, Craig means making the best use of multiple storytelling forms, which include text, graphics, audio, photo, and video. Open-endedness refers to developing a story in multiple stages and drawing on public contributions. The centrality of conversation means "fostering interaction with and among users through means including distinctive voice and personality, direct address, balancing monitoring and self-direction in discussions, and establishing a wide presence through social media" (Craig, 2011, p.8). The discussion of these four elements, drawn from interviews with journalists, showed that social media have a role to play in achieving excellence in each of these areas, but this role was in early stages of development.

Taken together, these studies suggest that some aspects of excellence – such as accuracy, depth, and comprehensiveness, and even navigability – have stood the test of time as markers of journalistic quality. At the same time, the new-media environment has changed the focus from writing to multimedia (both text and otherwise) and brought new emphasis on public engagement and interaction.

As Zion (2012) has argued, it is important to continue identifying best practices in journalism. He found initiatives that pursue best practices have certain characteristics in common, including collaboration and identification of emerging situations. The current study uses the perspectives of the social media editors based on their emerging realities.

**Role of social media in journalism**

Literature focusing specifically on social media shows that social platforms have been playing an important role in gathering and disseminating news. Many news media rely on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter for information and sources (Rosenstiel & Mitchell, 2011). A recent study examined the journalistic use of social networking tools in seven countries—Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela (Torres et al., 2011). The study found that editors focus on certain features of both Facebook and Twitter. It found that Twitter brings speed and immediacy; Twitter is straightforward; it is more professional and mature; and people are more ready to receive information on Twitter. According to Torres et al. (2011), the key features of Facebook include the following: it helps find people interested in content; it is entertaining; it is more valid than Twitter because Facebook "gives a richer, more personalized collaboration; and it engages readers" (p.18). The study sought to determine if the use of social networking tools affected the dynamics of news production and found positive response.

Torres et al. (2011) concluded, "Social media have entered the Iberoamerican newsrooms to challenge old agendas and traditional newsgathering and editing culture" (p.21). They found that many news media have networked with their audiences using social media. Preference for Facebook is greater for obtaining and disseminating information. Some media outlets prefer Twitter to Facebook, but others rarely use Twitter. "There are Media that 'are' more Facebook, but Twitter cannot exclusively be associated to the Media with the most circulation."

Stassen (2010) suggested that "social media facilitates a type of journalism in which the audience is much more involved in the news-creation process" (p.13). Jeronimo and Duarte (2010) examined the use of Twitter by Portuguese news media and found that Twitter was good for a massive amount of information but it is not as interactive as Facebook. Besides, one would not find as many politics and official sources on Twitter as available on Facebook (cited in Torres et al, 2011).

According to the *State of the News Media 2011* report, reliance of news organizations on social networks and aggregators is increasing. Rosenstiel and Mitchell (2011) suggested that future leaders must understand the changing behavior of the people and produce content and advertisements that only fit the users.

With only a few studies focusing so far on what social media contributes to journalistic practice, the current project provides a worthwhile additional picture of what excellent practice in social media means.

**Ethical issues and challenges in journalistic use of social media**

Little systematic study has been conducted about the ethical issues and chalenges in journalistic use of social media. But the topic has been implied in the heart of scholarly discussions since social media are being used by news media to engage with the audience and provide them with real-time news and information.

Several scholars have recognized the challenges and impacts of integrating social media tools into the process of gathering and disseminating news (Bruno, 2011; Hermida, 2012; Newman, 2009). Hermida (2012) said the way social networks are being used for real time news or breaking news had raised concerns about the erosion of the standards of journalism. But he argued that social media are reshaping the meaning of verification in journalism by creating a more collaborative mode of verification in which journalists are not at the center of authority in determining what is true but are rather part of a networked, collaborative environment.

There has been discussion about challenges connected with the quick spread of information through social networks, sharing of online information by journalists, and the pursuit of providing real news using social networking tools. Some scholars feared that these three things could loosen the process of verification. Whitehouse (2012), discussing a case involving spread of an Internet hoax, claims that media reaction to the viral spread of information on the web “indicates something far beyond gullibility and deadline races is at play” (p.58). Whitehouse (2012) suggests that “the major ethical challenge comes not from deadline pressures or reposting without investigating, though those are clearly ethical problems, but rather from within assumptions on what stories to cover” (p.59). Consequently, she argued, more important stories might get lost as they remain outside the worldview of journalists. The information might be verified but the proper selection of news remains a challenge.

A competition among journalists to be first on social media is evident (Millner, 2012). According to Millner, ethical challenges emerge when journalists retweet news without verification. Ward (2010) gave a much wider view, instead of focusing on social media. Ward (2010) suggested that it would create the potential for great harm if any media thrive on speed and sharing. Lowe (2012) put emphasis on establishing high ethical standards for the social networking platforms when they are used by news media.

Craig (2012) analyzed the ethical challenges of social media through a framework based on the ethics code of the Society of Professional Journalists. According to Craig (2012), challenges lie in the implication of truthfulness in reposting and sharing information. Passing on unverified information from social networks also goes against the premise of independent journalism.

These analyses suggest that social media use in journalism creates new questions including the place of verification and new challenges in handling rapidly spreading, false information. This study is aimed at contributing to what excellence means in navigating these questions and challenges.

## Theoretical Framework

This study uses Alasdair MacIntyre's (2007) theory of a practice as its conceptual framework. MacIntyre's theory was developed and applied to journalism by Lambeth (1992) and then Borden (2007). The theory was applied to online journalism by Craig (2011). A key consideration of MacIntyre's theory is the pursuit of excellence. The theory explains how standards of excellence in a field can advance as practitioners pursue excellence. The theory is applicable for this study because it offers practical insights into how excellence in journalism develops.

According to MacIntyre (2007), a practice means:

> Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (p.187)

The definition suggests that a practice is a social venture, which members of a society can identify. And the individuals functioning in a practice would excel depending on its standards rooted in the best traditions of the practice. The best traditions are those leading the practice to some distinctive achievements that MacIntyre calls internal goods. For journalism, Craig (2011) followed Borden (2007) and identified internal goods of journalism as knowledge, inquiry, originality, discovery, and newness, and he added fostering community. The pursuit of excellence should lead to achievement of these internal goods and a reshaping of what excellence itself looks like in the practice. Borden (2007) conceptualized the goal, or *telos*, for journalism as "to help citizens know well in the public sphere" (p. 50). According to MacIntyre, virtues or qualities of good character (such as perseverance, courage and honesty) are necessary to achieve excellence. But the process can be hindered by external goods such as profit, status, and power that exist in institutions and might corrupt a practice.

Lambeth (1992) argued that computer-assisted reporting was an example of an extension of the meaning of excellence in journalism as journalists used it to uncover social problems in the late 20th century. Likewise, Craig (2011) argued that journalists pursuing excellence online with its new technological tools were reshaping the meaning of excellence again. Though his work touched on social media, the current study goes deeper into how social media, as they have continued developing, are influencing what excellent journalism looks like.

### Research Question

The emergence of social networking tools and integration of these tools into journalism raises questions about what constitutes excellence in journalistic use of social media. The existing literature does not cover this in depth, which leads to the following research question.

**RQ1: How do social media editors understand the meaning of excellence in journalistic use of social media?**

## Method

The data for this study came from interviews with social media editors – seven of them interviewed by the authors, and two from online interviews and a talk on video. The interviews were aimed at getting deep into the understandings of those editors about what constitutes excellence in journalistic use of social media. Interviews are appropriate for such study because, as Lindlof and Taylor said, “Interviews are particularly well-suited to understanding the social actor’s experience, knowledge, and worldviews” (p.173). The experience and knowledge of these editors in journalistic use of social media are central to what they contribute to the study.

Social media editors are appropriate for discussing excellence in use of social media because they are highly engaged on social platforms for journalistic purposes themselves and play a role in their organizations in thinking about and modeling best practices. These particular editors are thought leaders in journalistic use of social media because of their level of engagement and their visibility in online and social discussion. They also work for news organizations with broad reach and visibility and with significant presence in social media. The selection of these editors thus followed the logic of purposeful, or purposive, sampling commonly used in qualitative research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 110) in that the intent was to identify people with a base of knowledge and experience suitable for thoughtful discussion of the meaning of excellence in journalistic use of social media.

The editors were identified by their presence in online discussion of practices in social media, or they were recommended by others, who were interviewed or themselves active in journalism with social media.

These social media editors were interviewed by one of the authors:

- Eric Carvin (@EricCarvin), social media editor at the Associated Press.
- Chris Hamilton (@chrishams), social media editor at BBC.
- Matthew Keys (@TheMatthewKeys), deputy social media editor at Reuters.

• Craig Kanalley (@ckanal), senior editor (big news + live events) at the *Huffington Post*.

• Lauren McCullough (@lfmccullough), editorial supervisor at breakingnews.com and ex-social media manager at AP.

• Meghan Peters (@petersmeg), community manager for *Mashable*.

• Daniel Victor (@bydanielvictor), a social media producer at the *New York Times* and formerly social editor at *ProPublica*.

The study also used data from a blog interview, a video interview, and a video presentation on similar topics, though these were not as comprehensive as the interviews by the authors. The two journalists whose insights were considered from those sources are:

• Liz Heron (@lheron), director of social media and engagement at the *Wall Street Journal* and ex-social media editor at the *New York Times* (Zak, 2012; Heron, 2012).

• Andy Carvin (@acarvin), senior strategist at NPR (Sreenivasan, 2011)**.**

The interviews by the authors lasted from about 30 to 70 minutes. They were done by phone or Skype to reach these individuals in various locations easily. Interview questions addressed issues related to the research question including what constitutes excellence in journalistic use of social media generally, excellence on Twitter and Facebook specifically as well as other platforms, and excellence in verification and engagement. Interviews were audio recorded and notes were also taken during the interviews. Partial transcriptions were done additionally. For the two others, the authors watched the video segments and read the blog post with the research question and same issues in mind.

Based on review of notes and transcripts, recordings, and blog post, interviews were coded according to the question topics and specific issues that emerged across multiple interviews. The authors organized the categories together and cross-checked each other on coding, with one of them doing the initial coding and the other reviewing.

## Results

The editors interviewed pointed to a number of elements of excellence in journalistic use of social media. Five elements stood out because they emerged in multiple interviews and are connected with the broader evolution of excellence in journalism, based on the perspective of MacIntyre (2007) in relation to journalism. This section will lay out these five elements. The Discussion section will tie the findings back to MacIntyre's theory and its previous application to journalism by other scholars.

**Adherence to traditional accuracy standards with recognition of a new environment**

The editors communicated a commitment to accuracy and verification, but some made clear that the networked environment of social media in which they function reshapes how their commitment plays out and alters some of their expectations.

Kanalley of the *Huffington Post*, though working at an online-only news organization born during the new media era, said he thinks standards of excellence should not change from what they were previously. “I’m a big believer in traditional journalism in terms of standards. And it’s more important than ever that we get our facts right and when we post things on social media that we get things correct” with so many people able to make their own reports but many not fact checking (personal communication, June 13, 2012).

***The editors communicated a commitment to accuracy and verification, but some made clear that the networked environment of social media in which they function reshapes how their commitment plays out and alters some of their expectations.***

Peters of *Mashable*, another online-only operation and one particularly attuned to social media, acknowledged the importance of speed but gave priority to the old standards. “I think we’re going to see a lot of what is excellence in traditional journalism as well” such as accuracy and strong ethics, she said. “I think the things that are different are speed is a very necessary skill, and not that it isn’t in traditional news reporting as well. But I think it’s even more important with the immediacy and the expectation of real time reporting online” (Peters, personal communication, July 27, 2012). Peters’ perspective shows a recognition of the unusual degree of immediacy expected in an environment with social media posts possible every second, along with a desire to maintain an expectation that what is communicated will be right.

Eric Carvin of AP, an old organization active in the new social media era, said he does not think verification standards “have changed or what we need to do to feel satisfied that we’re going to go with a piece of content” (personal communication, June 20, 2012). He said the organization still places accuracy ahead of speed. “As fast as we want to be, we still are willing to be a beat behind if it means that we’re more confident that something is true. And that’s saved us a number of times.”

The editors showed varying levels of comfort with what Jeff Jarvis (2009) calls “process journalism” – the idea that journalists should acknowledge both what they know and what they do not know as stories are developing, including in at least some cases information that is not verified.

Victor of *ProPublica* and more recently the *New York Times* said he is “conflicted” about process journalism. He said he thinks that in general, whatever a news organization produces, “you need full confidence that it is confirmed” (personal communication, June 12, 2012). He related his concerns about process journalism to situations including a shooting scare in Philadelphia in which two reporters worked carefully to check out unconfirmed public tweets about gunfire during a downtown fireworks event (also in Victor, 2011). He also points to a mistake he made as a journalist in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in which others retweeted his error in reporting the possibility that shots had been fired near the capitol building. He said he thinks giving readers a view of the “sausage making” of journalism is sometimes valuable but sometimes not. He said he thinks “individual reporters probably have a little more wiggle room” for reporting the process than institutional accounts.

Kanalley said it is important that journalists couch their language to indicate that information is not verified. “You can say things like ‘we’re hearing reports of … have you heard anything?” (personal communication, June 13, 2012). Keys of Reuters placed his perspective in the context of historical reporting of major breaking events, saying that news organizations have always reported unverified information. He said that is not a bad thing with events such as 9/11 where reporters provide a sense of a chaotic day as news unfolds (personal communication, June 15, 2012).

From the vantage point of the editors interviewed, then, long-standing journalistic standards of accuracy are important, but these standards play out for some with recognition of what is known and not known amid the constant wash of information on social media.

**Sophistication in verification practices**

Even though some of the editors acknowledged a place for unverified information in some journalistic use of social media, they talked about a multifaceted set of practices they or their organizations employ when pursuing verification. It is not as if careful verification is new to journalism, but one message of this set of interviews was that these practices involve both traditional application of journalistic judgment and use of recent technology.

Use of good journalistic judgment is evident in the ways they use Twitter. Peters said the main thing to remember is “it’s really important to take a step back and really dig into what you’re learning from something on Twitter.” Something as simple as spelling errors may carry implications about the quality of the content, she said. Looking at the person’s Twitter account and at past tweets, along with who retweets them, provides additional clues to reliability.

For organizations doing substantial international reporting, the challenges of verification multiply. Both the AP and the BBC face daily questions about how to verify social media content. Before the prominence of social media, but as user-generated content was becoming more important, the BBC created a designated User-Generated Content Hub in 2005 to assess this content (Turner, 2012). In the trajectory of international developments, along with the development of social media, verification of social media content through social media became critical during the Arab Spring upheavals in the Middle East. Hamilton of the BBC said much of what he called the “forensic side” of verification – using technological tools such as Google Earth and reverse image searches – advanced with Arab Spring. However, for the BBC and others, the use of human expertise remained vital.

Andy Carvin of NPR became perhaps the highest-profile journalist using Twitter to report on Arab Spring. He tweeted hundreds of times a day, building on a network of trusted sources he had gotten to know over time before the upheavals began (Sreenivasan, 2011). He used the capabilities of Twitter aggressively to watch the network of communication around the events – who was following whom, how long they had been on Twitter, how often people he trusted were retweeting or replying to them. He also watched whom his trusted sources were talking to and sometimes sent direct messages to probe whom to rely on and to whom to pay attention. By monitoring sources’ Twitter use, he established a “mental map” of core sources. Carvin actively questioned information in tweets, often annotating them with “source?” or “verify?” Even with people he knew, he would ask for more information. By using this active and constant process of verification, he capitalized on the capability of Twitter while exercising his critical judgment. In doing so, he helped set a standard for verification of distant news on Twitter.

### Sophistication in engagement

As with verification practices, the editors showed a good deal of nuance in their approach to engagement with users. Hamilton said excellence in engagement means realizing the potential to build the relationships, talking directly to people, and building communities. In his view, there has been an evolution from a more “narcissistic” time in which journalistic use of social media was more self-focused (personal communication, June 15, 2012).

For McCullough, real engagement is about “authenticity,” rather than being for the sake of engagement, and leads to conversation. Her view of what excellence means on Twitter reflects this sense of reality in engagement:

> There are a few different ways you could define it. But I think a reporter that is kind of living and breathing in Twitter and is not just kind of popping in there to promote a story that’s already been published or to kind of put out periodically these kind of big, broad crowdsourcing requests. But someone who’s there and who’s having conversations that relate to his or her beat, that relate to the community that he or she is reporting on and again is able to find legitimate, meaningful ways to bring users into his or her kind of reporting process. That to me, that’s excellence. (personal communication, June 20, 2012)

Real engagement, then, goes well beyond just checking off a box that a conversation has happened; it means connecting in a way that is valuable to the community and truly draws in users to the process of journalism.

Kanalley pointed to a long-term commitment as being an important part of engagement.

> It's over a long period of time that you build up a community and you build up engagement. I think one thing you should definitely do is be responsive to your audience and kind of listen to what they're saying and try to actually engage with them at times. Sometimes they'll offer you story tips and ideas, and a different way of looking at things. And sometimes they'll be sources for your stories (personal communication, June 13, 2012).

An example of a deeper engagement than was common in the early days of social media in journalism is the Patient Harm Community created by *ProPublica*. The community, on Facebook, was created as a way to connect people who had been victims of medical harm and others concerned about the topic (Victor & Allen, 2012). The open Facebook group, which had nearly 1,300 members by mid-October 2012 (https://www.facebook.com/groups/209024949216061/), was maintaining an active discussion several months after its founding. Victor said he saw value in the idea both from people connecting with each other and from opening up new possible sources (personal communication, June 12, 2012).

**Tailoring use of platforms**

Another aspect of excellence that the editors identified is using different social media platforms according to their distinctive strengths. Most of the discussion centered on Facebook and Twitter, but it was evident that they were also thinking carefully about other, developing platforms. In Hamilton's view, it is possible to tailor output to the strengths of platforms and the audiences using them instead of using a "one-size-fits-all approach" (personal communication, June 15, 2012).

Facebook works effectively for conversation. Peters said:

> To me, I think the interesting thing about Facebook vs Twitter is Twitter works so well for breaking news because it allows you to just get a quick message out very quickly whereas Facebook is more about dialogue and sparking conversations. So I think with posting with Facebook, you really have to have a good sense of who you're talking to, and how you're framing the content that you're posting. I guess if I had to use one term to describe it, it would probably be just awareness and just that sense of being in touch with your audience, and understanding how your wording is going to come across, and how they're going to react to a specific type of story or update (personal communication, July 27, 2012)

McCullough pointed out that Facebook is naturally a place for conversation because so many people already use it for that purpose.

> Because you're not limited by the character counts, I think there's more opportunity for conversation on Facebook and to really kind of engage in back and forth. And I think Facebook has become the kind of ubiquitous place that everyone is. And so a lot of times I think we used to think of those kinds of conversations as we would want to have them in the comment section on our websites. And now I think Facebook's come to represent just a migration. It's important for journalists to always be going to the places where the users are, and not just expecting users to come and find us. (personal communication, June 20, 2012)

It would be strange to users, then, for journalists not to make Facebook a central tool for conversation. Similarly, Hamilton noted that Facebook provides "access to a mass audience." As he put it, "I think that journalists tend to obsess about Twitter more than they should." Facebook is much more important "in terms of scale" and provides the possibility to have meaningful engagement and debate in one place. (personal communication, June 15, 2012)

Eric Carvin pointed to the strength of Facebook as a crowdsourcing tool. Although Twitter has been noted for that purpose, he said Facebook is especially good to get the stories and experiences of individuals and put their voice in. stories (personal communication, June 20, 2012)

For Twitter, Kanalley pointed out strengths for ongoing updates:

> I think that Twitter gives us the unique ability to live tweet, to constantly provide updates on a story over even a long period of time, even for weeks. You can stay on a beat or stay on a specific story and be relentless with updates (personal communication, June 13, 2012).

Aside from updating, Twitter enables sharing the best work of others on a topic, Kanalley noted. Hamilton likewise pointed to the power of Twitter to do linking and curating, and he noted its value for listening (personal communication, July 13, 2012).

The editors also made clear that they monitor the emergence of new platforms, watching both the development of their audiences and their capabilities. Keys illustrated this in talking about Google+.

> The engagement on there is incredibly hard to gauge because we really don't know who the people are that are on Google+. We kind of know who the people are that are on Facebook. We kind of know the people who are on Twitter. It's kind of a crapshoot right

> now as to who's on Google+. But that's kind of our job to figure out who those people are, how they consume our content, how we can better engage with them, and how we can effectively monitor how they're consuming our content so that we can produce better content and also so that we can provide our content better. (personal communication, June 15, 2012)

Keys' comment underlines the need for news organizations to persevere in watching platform trends.

Heron of the *Wall Street Journal* and previously *New York Times* cited an example of the use of Google+ Hangouts for half-hour conversations between "political junkies" in the *Times*' audience and correspondents covering the 2012 presidential campaign. The conversations have connected a smart audience to reporters to a new degree (Heron, 2012). This example reflects creativity in adapting to strengths of a platform.

**Adding value by being human**

An interesting element that stood out from the interviews was the place of humans in the use of social platforms. In the broadest sense, all of the choices and practices discussed are a product of human decisions. But it was notable to hear specific reference to the ways that people using the tools add value through their choices of how to use the tools' capabilities.

Heron, in the blog interview, described an approach they used at the *Times* to add value:

> We do a lot of what we like to call "hashtag science", which is just thinking about what's going to be the perfect hashtag that's going to be universal enough for people to glom onto and want to contribute to but also specific enough that we're going to get back good insights that we're going to want to highlight somewhere. Then what are we going to do with those insights after. We're training a lot of the desk to come up with their own hashtag science based on their specific projects and breaking news events. (Zak, 2012)

This "science" reflects human judgment about how to use a Twitter platform convention to foster engagement.

Similarly, Hamilton noted that the BBC's breaking news Twitter feed used to be automated, but the organization decided to scrap that approach and maximize the benefit of the tool by using hashtags and links (personal communication, June 15, 2012).

Even a potential value added in acknowledging fallibility as journalists surfaced in the study. Keys places a great priority on the importance of individual journalists being willing to admit mistakes and provide a "looking glass" into what they do. He thinks this connects with audience members (personal communication, June 15, 2012).

## Discussion

This study has drawn on interviews with social media editors at major news organizations to explore, through their eyes, what excellence looks like in journalistic use of social media. As the findings section has detailed, five elements of excellence emerged from the interviews. These journalists profess to adhere to traditional journalistic standards of accuracy and verification, but they also are well aware of the networked environment in which they work, and some of them acknowledge a place for saying what they know and do not know to be confirmed at various stages in story development. When they talk of the techniques of verification, they show sophistication in practices that reflects critical journalistic questioning of social media posts and sources, as well as an openness to using technological tools – including social media platforms themselves – to verify information. Likewise, in engagement, they pointed to a sophistication of approach that goes beyond just being out there trying to converse on social platforms. They and their organizations are purposeful about the goals of using platforms for conversation and are aware of the need to build genuine relationships – including ones that last more than a short time. For these editors, excellence also means tailoring particular platforms to their strengths – such as Facebook for dialogue and Twitter for updating and sharing of curated content, while also staying aware of platforms that are less used but may have distinctive potential. Finally, they prize the human element and what it adds to the use of social media technology – for example in choice of hashtags and even transparency in acknowledgment of errors.

These findings add to previous literature on the meaning of excellence in journalism, especially excellence online as defined in Craig (2011). He pointed to four standards of excellence: speed and accuracy with depth in breaking news, comprehensiveness in content, open-endedness in story development, and centrality of conversation. The interviews for the current study reiterate the importance of accuracy while elaborating on the particular difficulties of verification for developing stories on social media, as well as approaches to overcoming these difficulties. The findings about tailoring use of platforms suggest new ways that content may be presented comprehensively and become the subject of robust conversation. The finding about sophistication in engagement suggests a well-developed mindset that increases the likelihood that conversation will be of real value. The idea of the importance of being human accentuates the general need for journalists to think about what they contribute in the use of technological tools whether for breaking news or longer-term stories.

The findings also help to flesh out the understanding from Torres et al.'s (2011) study on the use of Twitter and Facebook for journalistic purposes in seven countries. Among other things, the current study points to a role of Twitter in updating and curation, and it underlines the value of Facebook that they found for engagement. In relation to ethical challenges, the present study highlights the difficulties that remain in pursuing verification even though, as Hermida (2012) has argued, journalists live in a new world in which they are not the only ones doing the verification.

*Through increasing sophistication in use of social platforms, journalists can enhance communication of public contributions and therefore enhance discovery.*

This study is of particular importance theoretically because it provides at least preliminary insight into how journalism as a practice in MacIntyre's (2007) sense may be continuing to develop as journalists integrate social media into their work. Just as journalism gained in its capacity for excellence in the 1970s with computer-assisted reporting (Lambeth, 1992), journalism in the past few years has gained an expanded and reshaped capacity for excellence through social media platforms with their ability to multiply source possibilities, share information more quickly, and engage much more fully with users. As journalists are finding ways to verify information carefully while working within the open networked environment, and to engage for more than the sake of saying they are doing it, the capacity for both story development and conversation grows. In MacIntyre's terms, by pursuing the elements of excellence noted in the study, journalists can begin to achieve internal goods of the practice. Craig (2011) noted how online journalists could advance the internal good of inquiry (Borden, 2007) by interaction and dialogue that engages users "more actively in seeking information" (Craig, 2011, p. 19). With the continued development of social media use in journalism, this capacity for engaging people to seek information strengthens. Similarly, Craig (2011) said the good of discovery (Borden, 2007) is advanced in online journalism when information contributed by members of the public "helps users to discover new insight and perspective about events, particularly as people continue to add contributions over time and report from angles or locations that the journalists may not have been able to see" (p. 19). Through increasing sophistication in use of social platforms, journalists can enhance communication of public contributions and therefore enhance discovery. Another internal good cited by Craig, fostering community, can be achieved in greater measure as journalists engage on social media more effectively.

It would be a great mistake to assert based on any number of interviews that social media carry no challenges for journalism. MacIntyre's theory underlines the fact that external goods such as profit and status can eat away at the ability of the practice to achieve its potential. Similarly, competition (also discussed in Craig, 2011) may lead to shoddy uses of social media that do not realize their true possibilities. However, thoughtful efforts to maximize the potential of social media tools – by practitioners exercising virtues (MacIntyre, 2007) such as perseverance (Craig, 2011) and transparency – increase the likelihood that journalists will blunt the effects of these external goods.

This study contributes to the discussion of excellence and ethical challenges in social media at a time when professionals are wrestling with how best to use social media and the best practices to follow are not a settled matter. This study has limitations based on the fact that a small number of editors were interviewed and they represented mostly large, mainstream news organizations. While they represent organizations that have committed resources to thinking about social media, that does not automatically mean they are on the leading edge of journalistic practice – and their views are likely to be similar to one another because of the similar sphere in which they function.

Future research could approach the same questions of excellence using additional interviews for depth with additional people, perhaps in tandem with surveys aimed at capturing an even broader view. Researchers could pursue the views of journalists who are at small organizations and independent to see how their perspective on excellence differs. Social media are so widespread and changing so quickly that it is important to continue looking at how journalists are thinking about excellence with social platforms.

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#ISOJ
Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 112-139

# Interactives of Olympic Proportions: The Diffusion of Data Journalism at *The New York Times*

*Cindy Royal*

*This study analyzes the evolution of graphic and data visualization at The New York Times through the lens of Olympic coverage since 2008. The Olympic Games provide an appropriate case study of data-driven interactives, with engaging content and visuals, potential for multimedia and a plethora of data for presentation and interaction. By comparing the graphic coverage of NYT for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing to that of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, this provides a good barometer for the types of graphic work being done and the diffusion of innovation influencing the field of journalism.*

## Introduction

Programming and data techniques are rapidly influencing the ways news organizations and other professional communicators tell stories. Few organizations currently have the resources to deliver comprehensive, online, data-driven, interactive news presentations, but many are seeking to gain these competencies. This type of work includes any method of storytelling that engages the user with customization and interactivity and presents data in a visual manner through charts, maps, and simulations. Some organizations are innovators in this area, and *The New York Times* has pioneered various methods in engaging storytelling on the Web.

This study analyzes the evolution of graphic and data visualization at *The New York Times* through the lens of their Olympic coverage since 2008. The Olympic Games provide a good case study for this type of analysis, with engaging content and visuals, potential for multimedia, and a plethora of data for presentation and interaction. *The New York Times* graphics and multimedia desks have been in existence for some time, but in 2007 the Interactive News Technology department was developed, conceived by Aron Pilhofer and Matt Ericson. Since then, the team led by Pilhofer, has grown to include a group of journalists who understand coding and data. This team works collaboratively with other desks, including sports, news, graphics, and multimedia, and now includes the social media function of NYT. In less than six years, the data and programming emphasis of *The New York Times* has evolved to be a leader in data visualization with the growth of this team.

Starting with the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, the influence of this team on the graphic work of the organization can be observed. By comparing the graphic coverage of NYT for the 2008 Olympics to that of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, this provides a good barometer for the evolution of the types of graphic work being done and the diffusion of this type of innovation in the organization and the field.

## Literature Review

The concept of publishing data-driven interactives may seem new, but it has roots in the well-established fields of graphic design and computer-assisted reporting. Edward Tufte, in his book *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* (2001), defined a clear mission for statistical graphic design. “Excellence in statistical graphics consists of complex ideas communicated with clarity, precision and efficiency.” This definition places the presentation of data firmly in the realm of the mission of journalism.

Philip Meyer, Professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina, wrote the definitive book on investigative reporting, *Precision Journalism* and *The New Precision Journalism*. Meyer said “knowing what to do with data is the essence of the new precision journalism” (Meyer, 1991). This was considered new 20 years ago.

What is current, however, is the ability to present graphic visualizations online with an interactive component that allows for user customization and the use of databases to populate the graphics with dynamic information. Adrian Holovaty, formerly of WashingtonPost.com, used the phrase “programmer as journalist,” defining an emerging technical role in news development for people with the skills to launch visualizations to the Web (Niles, 2006). Holovaty was awarded $1.1 million by the Knight Foundation for his EveryBlock.com community news site. He ultimately sold EveryBlock to MSNBC in 2009. In 2013, however, NBC made the announcement that they had decided to shut down EveryBlock. Although interested buyers have emerged, EveryBlock’s future remains uncertain (Sonderman, 2013).

Rich Gordon of Northwestern’s Medill program received Knight grants in 2007 and 2009 to recruit programmers to their graduate program and to develop a News Innovation Lab (Gordon, 2008). Brian Boyer, one of the enrolled programmers defined a sixth W of journalism: who, what, where, why, when, and *Web* (Boyer, 2008). Boyer now leads news application development at NPR. Recruits with the skills to create data-driven interactive graphics will be highly sought after as more organizations seek to emulate these practices. An online spreadsheet identified more than 50 positions open in newsroom around the country (http://www.newsnerdjobs.com/,accessed Oct. 6, 2012). Other academic programs, like Columbia University, are looking at interdisciplinary programs that will train people to meet the programmer-journalist needs of the industry.

*The New York Times* Interactive News Technology department was featured in a New York Magazine article (Nussbaum, 2009). The system at The Times was described as one that “elevated coders into full-fledged members of the Times—deputized to collaborate with reporters and editors, not merely to serve their needs.” This area represents enormous opportunity and demand for graduates with these skills, and currently a short supply of such people exists.

*The Guardian* is another organization that has pioneered data-driven presentations. Rogers (2011) used their Data Blog to define and explain data journalism as a valuable method of storytelling, thus demonstrating its importance to the future of journalism. He identified ten points that illustrate data journalism, including curation, open and large data sets and skills necessary to work in this area.

This is an area that has not yet been fully explored by scholars. Royal (2012) published a case study of *The New York Times* Interactive News team, identifying the personnel, skill set, work flows and culture of an organization that integrated programming with storytelling. A search of the Communication and Mass Media Complete research database for “data journalism” yielded one peer-reviewed article that dealt with the role of Wikileaks in investigative journalism (Dreyfus, Lederman, Bosua, 2011). Searches that included the words “journalism” and “programming” were dominated by the concept of “television programming,” and searches that include the words “journalism” and “data” yielded results that discussed the data associated with typical scholarly work. A search for the phrase “data-driven interactive” did not yield any results.

***This analysis will explore the concept of interactivity as it relates to function of specific online, interactive presentations, as opposed to features of an entire website.***

The topic of interactivity has been evident in research since 2000, but is mostly focused on assessing interactive features of websites (Downes, & McMillan, 2000; Kiousis, 2000; Larrson, 2012). Interactivity can be viewed as process, function or perception (McMillan & Hwang, 2002). In literature, interactivity has been defined in a variety of ways, but this analysis focuses on those that recognize user control. “Interactivity may be defined as: a measure of a media’s potential ability to let the user exert an influence on content and/or form of the mediated presentation or experience” (Jensen, 1998, p. 201). This analysis will explore the concept of interactivity as it relates to function of specific online, interactive presentations, as opposed to features of an entire website. Several studies define features of interactivity. Ha and James (1998) identified five characteristics: playfulness, choice, connectedness, information collection, and reciprocal communication. Downes and McMillan identified six characteristics: direction of communication, time flexibility, sense of place, level of control, responsiveness, and perceived purpose of communication (Downes & McMillan, 2000). These characteristics were considered when developing the coding mechanism for the online graphics, focused mainly on playfulness, choice and level of control and response.

This analysis was executed through the theoretical lens of diffusion theory, which explains how, why, and at what rate technology spreads through cultures. Everett Rogers formalized the theory in his 1962 book (updated Rogers, 1995) *The Diffusion of Innovations*, describing "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system." Studying how innovation occurs, Rogers argued that it consists of four stages: invention, diffusion (or communication) through the social system, time and consequences. This study focuses on the time element. Ultimately, it will be important to comprehend the professional and cultural variables that are affecting all stages of the diffusion process to understand how other organizations may or may not adopt these competencies.

## Method

*The New York Times* has used infographics, data visualizations, and data-driven interactives in covering the Olympics since the 2008 games in Beijing. The main visual stories done by The Times have been conveniently captured and archived for each of the games on topic pages.

- 2008 Beijing Olympics Interactives http://www.nytimes.com/ref/sports/olympics/2008_OLYMPICS_INTERACTIVES.html

- Vancouver: 2010 Olympics Multimedia http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/02/22/sports/olympics/olympics-interactives-index.html - this presentation identified Interactive graphics, videos, photographs and multimedia features from the 2010 Olympics.)

- London 2012: Olympics Graphics: http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/08/06/sports/olympics/olympic-graphics-collection.html

These pages are assumed to represent the majority of the work completed by *The New York Times* in covering the Olympic Games in each year. Work presented on these pages was developed by teams in the graphics, multimedia and interactive news departments, and based on bylines, many indicate collaborative efforts.

Each interactive was coded on several dimensions. A discussion of the overall approach for each year of the Games was executed, as well as a comparison of techniques.

**RQ1: How has the presentation of online graphics on *The New York Times* website changed since the 2008 Olympics?**

**H1: Over time, *The New York Times* will present more Olympic graphics that are interactive.**

**H2: Over time, *The New York Times* will present more Olympic graphics that present data.**

## Results

The total projects presented on each Olympics project page are as follows:

2008: 30

2010: 29

2012: 22

The Olympics project pages for each year include various types of presentations, intermingling multimedia, graphics, and animations. For the purpose of this analysis, the goal is to identify data-driven interactives, so it was useful to individually identify the use of each of these variables: interactivity and data.

### Interactivity

Interactivity, as used in this analysis, is defined as the level and type of choice and responsiveness a user has in engaging with an online graphic. Each project was coded for the level of interactivity assessed on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being the highest. The codes are defined below:

1 – Limited interactivity for the user; pushing a play button; no ability for non-linear navigation.

2 – Some interactivity and ability for non-linear navigation (i.e. stepping through a slideshow that allowed you to select any slide from within any slide).

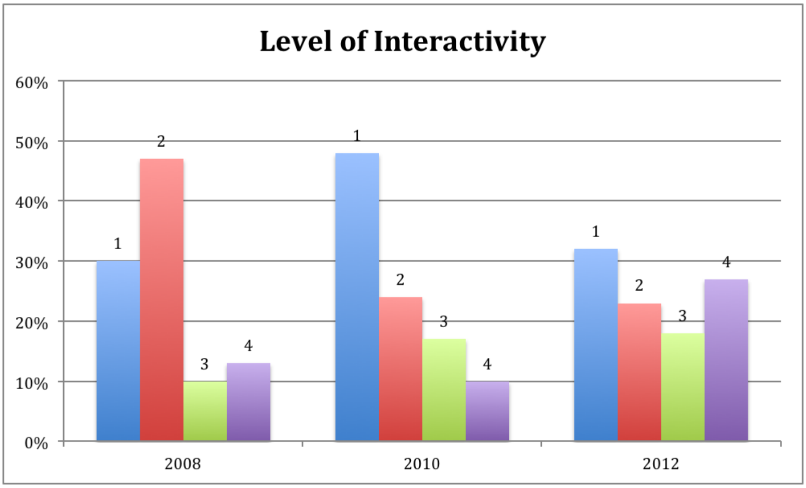
3- More advanced interactivity; ability to interact with more than one event or section.

4 – Very advanced interactivity; non-linear navigation; ability to interact with multiple events or sections.

Chart 1. Interactivity Levels for Olympic Graphics

| **Interactivity Levels for Olympic Graphics** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Beijing** | | **Vancouver** | | **London** | |
| | **2008** | **%** | **2010** | **%** | **2012** | **%** |
| 1 | 9 | 30% | 14 | 48% | 7 | 32% |
| 2 | 14 | 47% | 7 | 24% | 5 | 23% |
| 3 | 3 | 10% | 5 | 17% | 4 | 18% |
| 4 | 4 | 13% | 3 | 10% | 6 | 27% |
| | 30 | | 29 | | 22 | |

Chart 2. Level of Interactivity




The chart above shows that H1 has been found to be true, that over time, more presentations would demonstrate more interactivity.

### Data

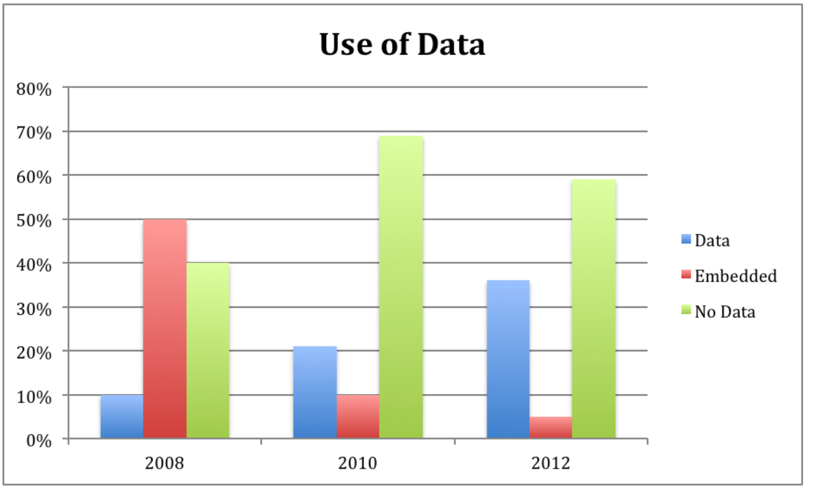
Data, for the purpose of this study, is defined as numeric results, times, scores, medal counts, etc. This does not reflect the ability to interact with the data. In some cases, data was presented as part of a slideshow in which the user simply pressed play. This definition also does not reflect the concept that data can be more than numerical, so it does not include presentations in which photos or other items may be held in a database for the presentation.

The “some/embedded” category reflects the presentation of a limited amount of data within a slideshow or animation, but it does not offer any or much interactivity with the data. The “significant” category represents the presentation of a large amount of data, with the ability to interact with the data or with different sections of the presentation.

Chart 3. Use of Data in Olympic Graphics

| **Use of Data in Olympic Graphics** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Beijing** | | **Vancouver** | | **London** | |
| | **2008** | **%** | **2010** | **%** | **2012** | **%** |
| None | 15 | 50% | 3 | 10% | 1 | 5% |
| Some/embedded | 12 | 40% | 20 | 69% | 13 | 59% |
| Significant | 3 | 10% | 6 | 21% | 8 | 36% |
| | 30 | | 29 | | 22 | |

Chart 4. Use of Data




The chart above shows H2 to be true, that over time *The New York Times* will present more graphics that use data.

A second coder was used to code a 20% sample of each year. The overall inter-coder reliability for interactivity was 94% and for data it was 100%, which indicates an acceptable instrument. A codebook of the original coding can be found in Appendix A.

## Discussion

The following discussion further elaborates on the research question of how the presentation of online graphics on *The New York Times* website has changed since the 2008 Olympics.

In viewing the results, a clear trend since 2008 emerges. *The New York Times* Olympics coverage has grown more interactive and has included more presentations of data, even while the total number of presentations on their topic pages has declined. This may demonstrate their improved focus and ability to execute more complex projects. Changing use of technologies and various themes in coverage were recognized over time.

### Use of Flash

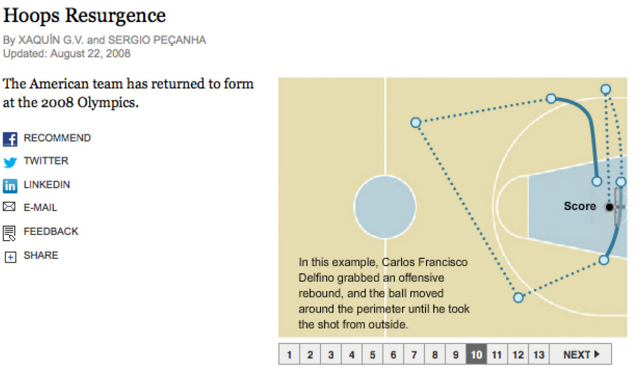
In both 2008 and 2010, Adobe Flash was used to present most of the interactives. By 2012, however, the use of Flash was limited to items with a primarily multimedia focus. Graphic presentations had been converted to technology that works in browsers without the aide of a plugin, like HTML5 and Javascript. This demonstrates a commitment to deliver content that can appear on mobile devices, which generally are unable to access Flash presentations.

## 2008 Beijing

### Slideshow Presentations with Animations and Limited Data

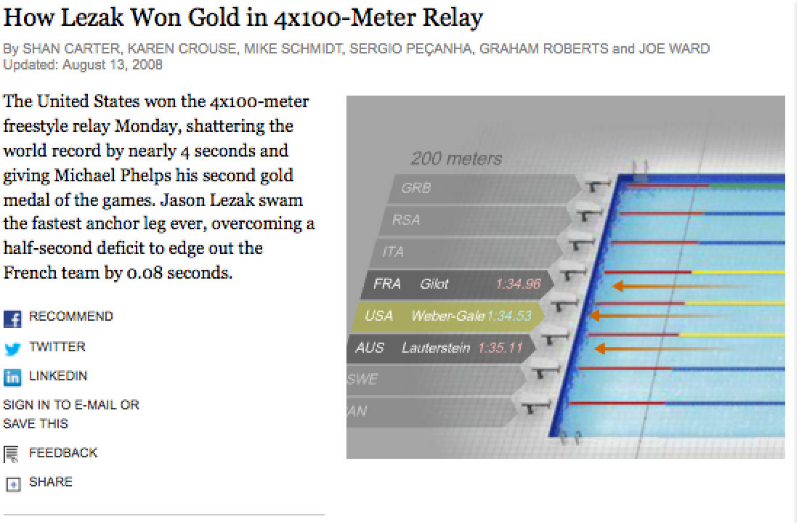
The graphic presentations in 2008 were primarily characterized by photo slideshows that allowed the user the ability to step through a presentation. While some slides presented data, there was no ability to interact with data in these projects. In some cases, animations were built into the slides that demonstrated techniques, as in the Hoops Resurgence graphic featured in Figure 1. This technique was used in 53% of the 2008 presentations.

Figure 1



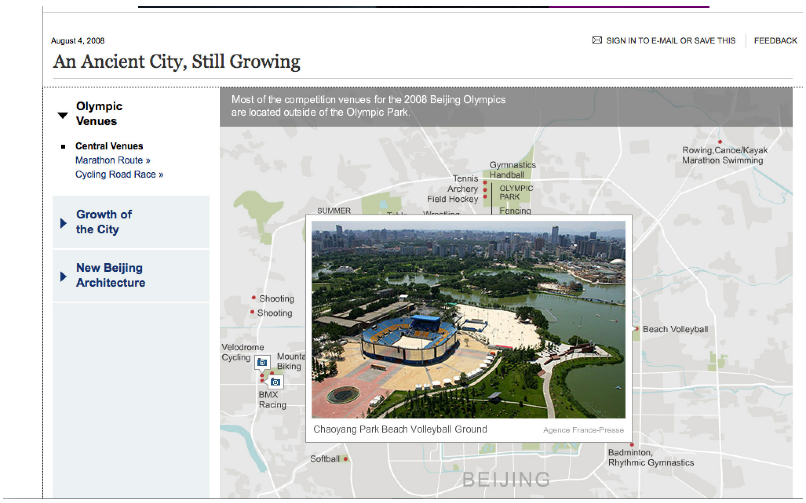

Another common presentation in 2008 was the simple audio slideshow. The interactivity in these presentations was limited to pressing a play button. These presentations included voice over, interviews, photos, video, and animations depicting techniques, routes and in some cases, data, as in the presentation entitled How Lezak Won God in 4x100-Meter Relay shown in Figure 2. This technique was used in 27% of the 2008 presentations.

Figure 2. How Lezak Won Gold




In a few cases, the presentations demonstrated a more complex presentation of multimedia, as in the interactive "An Ancient City Still Growing" in Figure 3. In this presentation, points on maps are expanded to view photos.

Figure 3. An Ancient City Still Growing



The most significant presentations of data in 2008 are shown below in Figures 4-6. Each includes a variety of methods of interaction and the ability to view complex data on charts, graphs, and maps.

Figure 4. A History of World Records

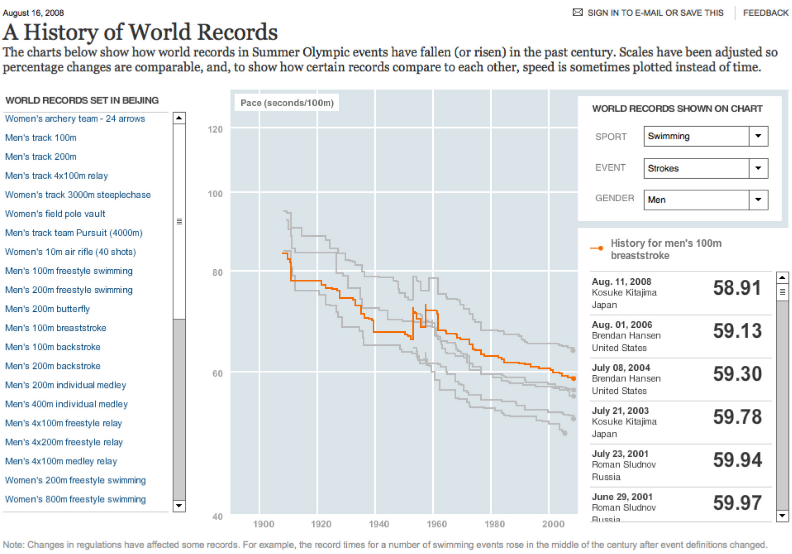


Figure 5. Gold Medals Through the Years

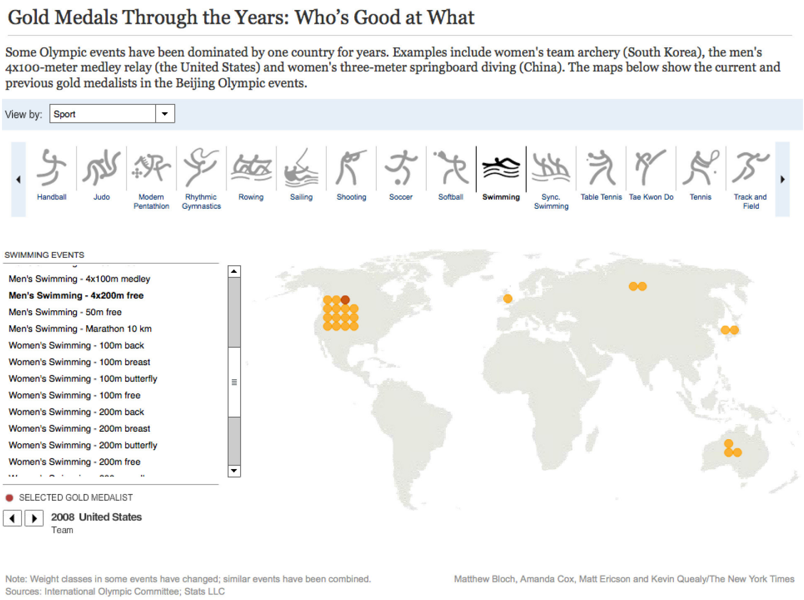
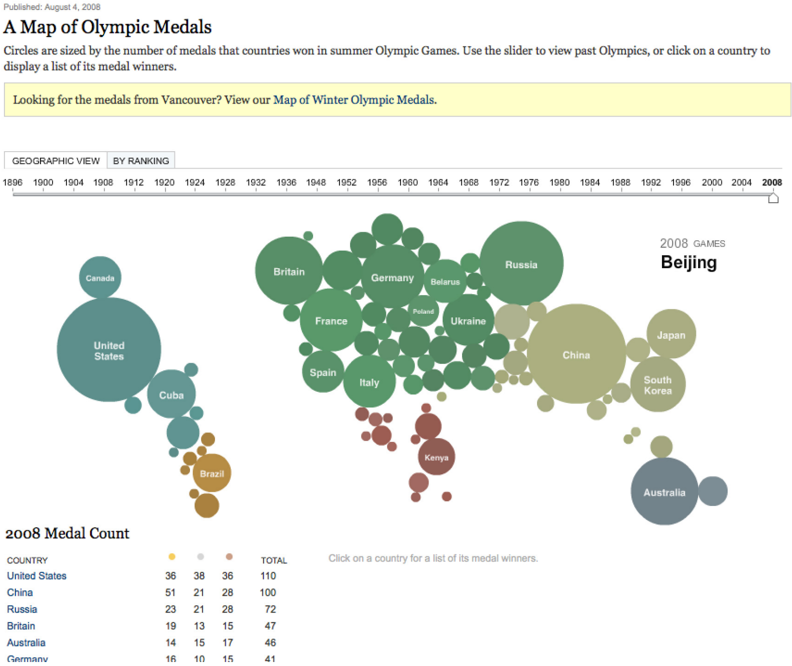


Figure 6. A Map of Olympic Medals



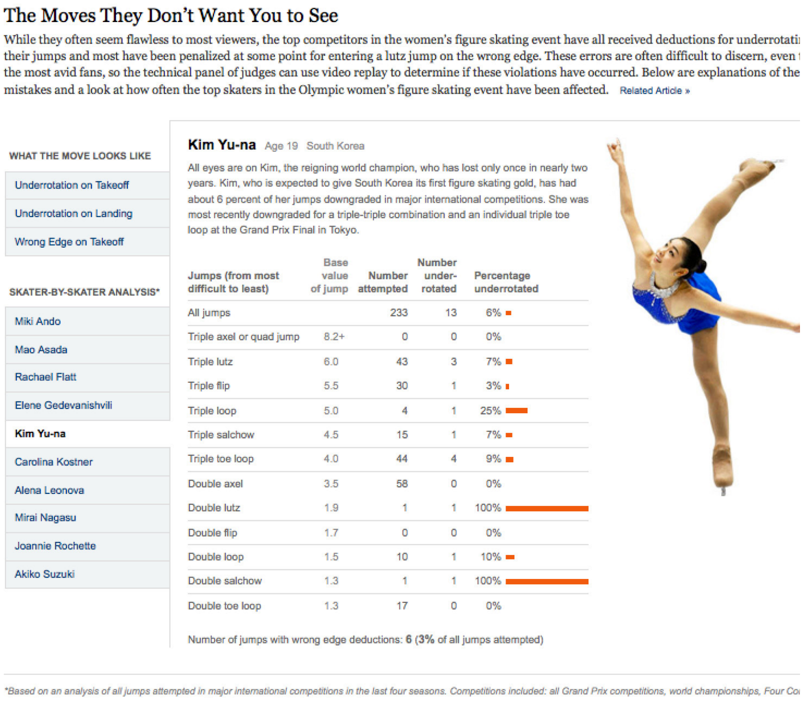

## 2010 Vancouver

### Animations to Explain and Demonstrate Techniques

Many of the projects in 2010 used animation to explain or demonstrate techniques. In many cases, these were photo/audio slideshows with a simple play button but often used animations. In 2010, there were fewer of these presentations that were simple photo slideshows without audio (34%) that dominated the coverage in 2008.

A few presentations had multiple sections, but did not offer much interaction with data within each section, as in The Moves They Don't Want You to See in Figure 7.

Figure 7. In Men's Figure Skating: The Moves They Don't Want You to See



## The Moves They Don't Want You to See

While they often seem flawless to most viewers, the top competitors in the women's figure skating event have all received deductions for underrotati
their jumps and most have been penalized at some point for entering a lutz jump on the wrong edge. These errors are often difficult to discern, even
the most avid fans, so the technical panel of judges can use video replay to determine if these violations have occurred. Below are explanations of the
mistakes and a look at how often the top skaters in the Olympic women's figure skating event have been affected. Related Article »

WHAT THE MOVE LOOKS LIKE

- Underrotation on Takeoff
- Underrotation on Landing
- Wrong Edge on Takeoff

SKATER-BY-SKATER ANALYSIS*

- Miki Ando
- Mao Asada
- Rachael Flatt
- Elene Gedevanishvili
- **Kim Yu-na**
- Carolina Kostner
- Alena Leonova
- Mirai Nagasu
- Joannie Rochette
- Akiko Suzuki

**Kim Yu-na** Age 19 South Korea

All eyes are on Kim, the reigning world champion, who has lost only once in nearly two years. Kim, who is expected to give South Korea its first figure skating gold, has had about 6 percent of her jumps downgraded in major international competitions. She was most recently downgraded for a triple-triple combination and an individual triple toe loop at the Grand Prix Final in Tokyo.

| Jumps (from most difficult to least) | Base value of jump | Number attempted | Number under-rotated | Percentage underrotated |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All jumps | | 233 | 13 | 6% |
| Triple axel or quad jump | 8.2+ | 0 | 0 | 0% |
| Triple lutz | 6.0 | 43 | 3 | 7% |
| Triple flip | 5.5 | 30 | 1 | 3% |
| Triple loop | 5.0 | 4 | 1 | 25% |
| Triple salchow | 4.5 | 15 | 1 | 7% |
| Triple toe loop | 4.0 | 44 | 4 | 9% |
| Double axel | 3.5 | 58 | 0 | 0% |
| Double lutz | 1.9 | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| Double flip | 1.7 | 0 | 0 | 0% |
| Double loop | 1.5 | 10 | 1 | 10% |
| Double salchow | 1.3 | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| Double toe loop | 1.3 | 17 | 0 | 0% |

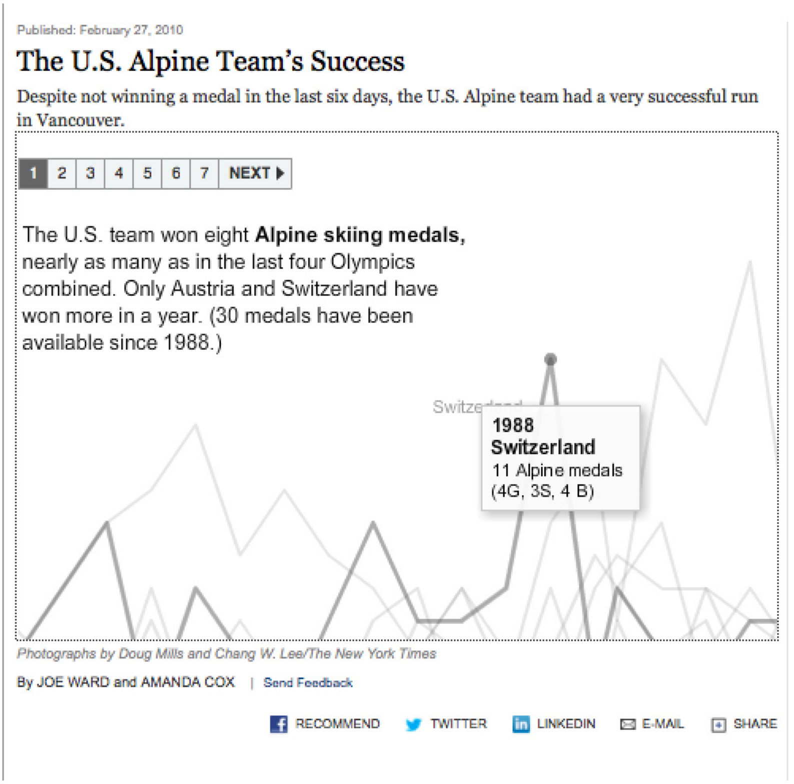
Number of jumps with wrong edge deductions: **6** (**3%** of all jumps attempted)

*Based on an analysis of all jumps attempted in major international competitions in the last four seasons. Competitions included: all Grand Prix competitions, world championships, Four Co

Significant data examples in 2010:

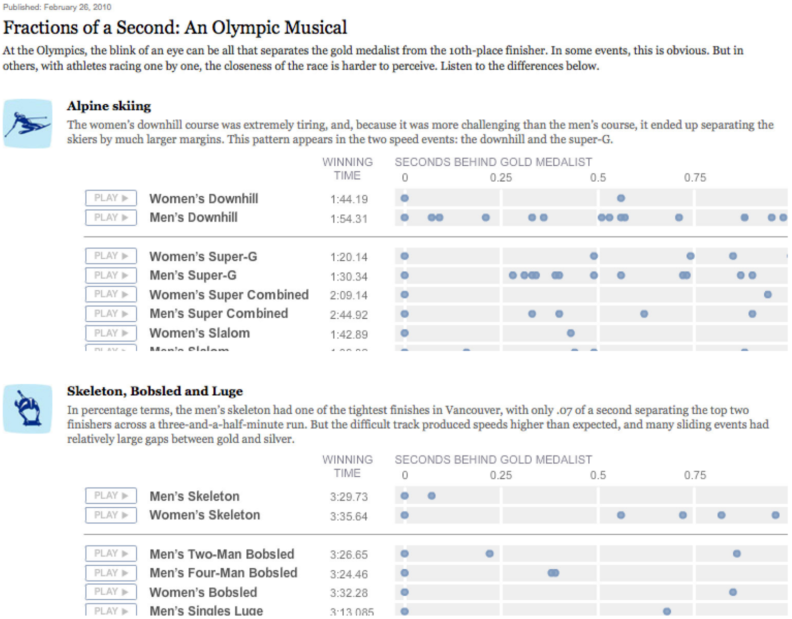
The US Alpine Team's Success operated like a photo slideshow, but allows some interactivity with the chart.

Figure 8. The U.S. Alpine Team's Success




Fractions of a Second: An Olympic Musical – while interactivity was limited to pushing a play button, this is one of the most creative presentations of data. The interactive presents the difference in times for Winter Olympic events audibly, thus demonstrating the tight nature of the competition in a unique, but meaningful, way.

Figure 9. Fractions of a Second




As in 2008, the main data presentations had to do with overall results by country and event.

Figure 10. Gold Medals in the Winter Olympics

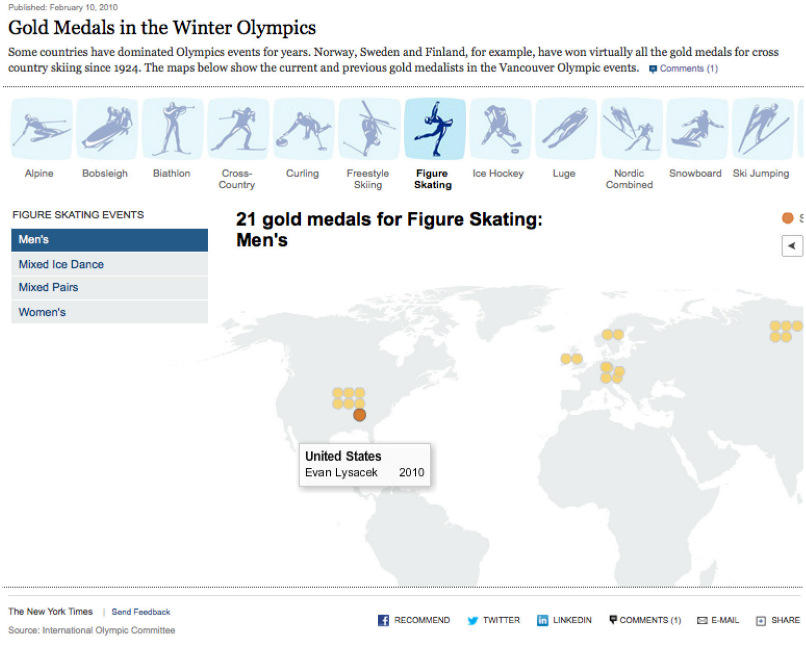
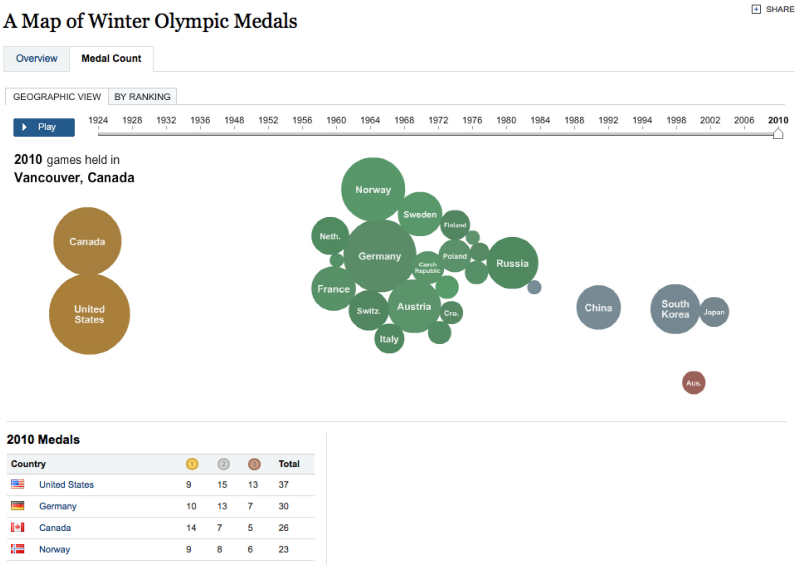


Figure 11. A Map of Winter Olympic Medals




## User contribution, user generated content

While presentations offered the ability to leave comments or feedback, or to use social sharing buttons to post to Twitter or Facebook (these are part of The Times current content management system for all articles on the site), very few projects offered the ability for users to contribute to the content. There were two exceptions, and both occurred in the coverage of the 2010 Games:

2010 Snowboard Halfpipe Library – allowed users to submit their own tricks via video.

2010 Picturing the Olympics – allowed users to contribute their own photos from the Vancouver games.

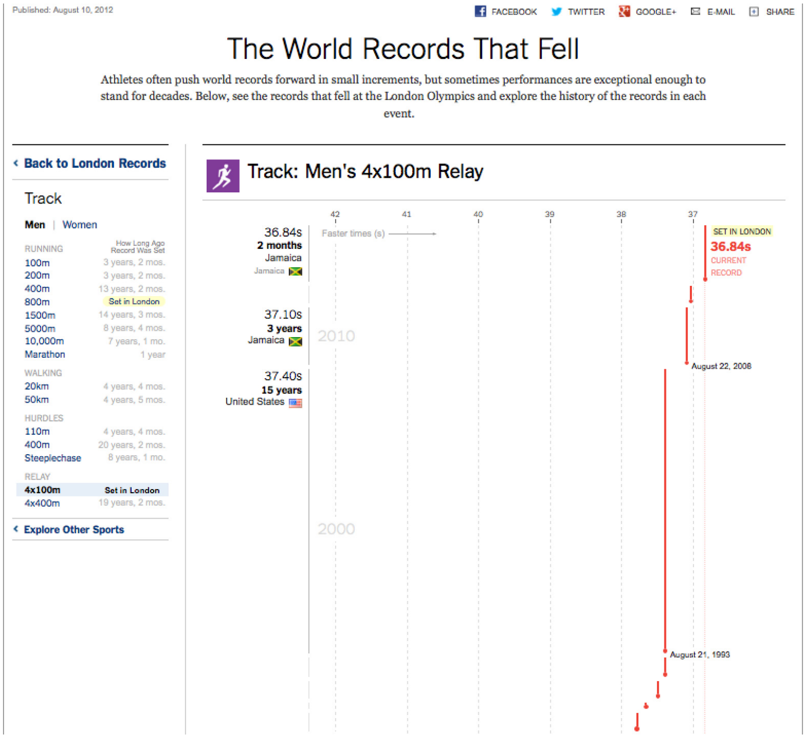
## 2012 London interactivity, data, and integration with multimedia and animation; abandoning flash for data presentations

In 2012, almost half the projects met the criteria for level 3 or 4 of interactivity (compared with 23% in 2008 and 27% in 2010).

## Significant data presentations

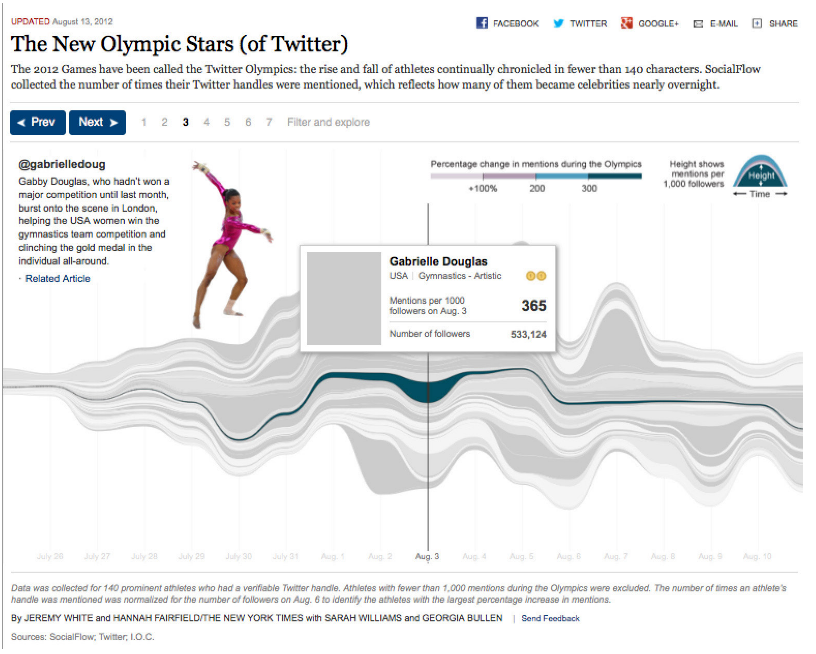
The Records That Fell in Figure 13 allows the ability to look at data across multiple events.

Figure 12. The Records That Fell



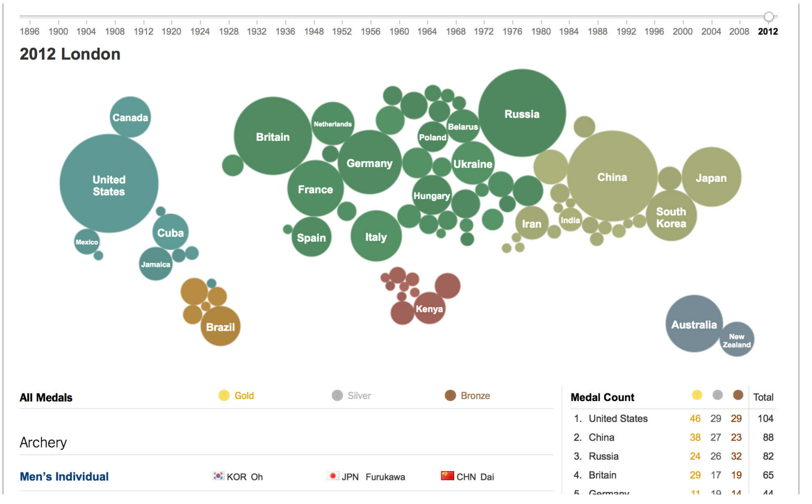

The New Olympic Stars of Twitter has a slideshow format, but presents complex data.

Figure 13. The New Olympic Stars of Twitter



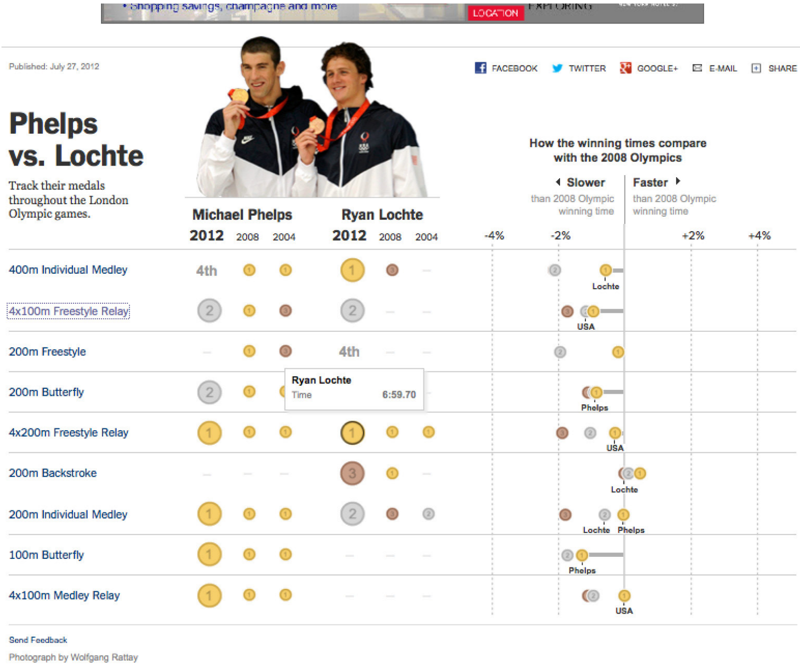

Bubble charts continued to be used to display medals in 2012, but now the presentation no longer is done in Flash, as in the Map of 2012 Olympic Medals.

Figure 14. Map of 2012 Olympic Medals




In Figure 15, Phelps vs. Lochte, this presentation offered a comprehensive approach to the heated competition of two popular U.S. swimmers, allowing the user to review data across multiple events and years.

Figure 15. Phelps vs. Lochte




As in past years, demonstrations of techniques continued to be prominent.

One Race, Every Medalist (Figure 16) used video explanation with accompanying data.

Figure 16. One Race, Every Medalist


While data presentations were more common, the 2012 Olympics also saw some very basic presentations of photos, or those in which the only interactivity was a light box display of photos. This demonstrates *The New York Times* range of delivery of multimedia elements, retaining some of the more basic features, while experimenting with more complex presentations.

## Conclusion

Understanding how data-driven interactives contribute to storytelling and challenge many aspects of mass communication research, including content analysis, application of theory, and ways in which data is applied in a meaningful setting. This is the beginning of researching the role of interfaces, programming, and data as storytelling methods. New methods may need to be put in place to fully comprehend the role these presentations may play in the future.

The importance or usefulness of these data presentations has yet to be proven. It is still unclear how revenue may be generated from this type of work. One way that *The New York Times* is experimenting with new revenue models is in syndicating certain types of data presentations (Myers, 2012). This is the beginning of understanding how data and programming may play a role in the future of news.

Other organizations used data-driven interactives for Olympic coverage in 2012 (The Guardian and Wall Street Journal – see McAthy http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/16-examples-of-how-news-outlets-are-using-interactives-to-cover-olympics/s2/a549961/). Comparisons of these efforts may indicate trends that could spread across the industry.

***Interactive presentations have the potential to attract users with data that is unique and customizable. Interactivity can aid in learning and provide an entertaining use of media, and metrics that identify time and engagement may influence future ad rates. Future studies should focus on these aspects of news interactives.***

In addition, comparison of other types of interactives - election, political, entertainment-oriented or other sports presentations – will be necessary to further comprehend the evolution of this area. Understanding which types of stories work well in interactive presentations will be critical.

As competition for users' time and attention intensifies, news organizations will need to continue to experiment with various presentations. Interactive presentations have the potential to attract users with data that is unique and customizable. Interactivity can aid in learning and provide an entertaining use of media, and metrics that identify time and engagement may influence future ad rates. Future studies should focus on these aspects of news interactives.

Few academic programs have been able to integrate these techniques into their curriculum, but a high demand for people with these skills exists as more organizations seek recruits who are programmer/journalist hybrids. The University of Texas is one organization that has experimented with a Massively Open Online Course taught on data visualization by visual design professor Alberto Cairo (see open.journalismcourses.org). Royal (2012), on the Nieman Journalism Lab website, made the argument that teaching programming skills in journalism and mass communication programs could contribute to the social for the gender divide in technology. News delivery via digital methods is the future, and all participants must become familiar with, if not skilled at, concepts that include programming and data. What this analysis shows is the progression of one news organization over the past four years. Expect continued change and progression in the future.

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## Appendix A - Codebook

### 2008

Each of these interactives can be found linked at:

http://www.nytimes.com/ref/sports/olympics/2008_OLYMPICS_INTERACTIVES.html

| | | interactivity | data |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Gold Medal Moves | 1 | 0 |
| 2 | Capturing History at Water Cube | 1 | 0 |
| 3 | Men’s Cycling Results | 1 | 0 |
| 4 | View of the Opening Ceremonies | 1 | 0 |
| 5 | Steep, Fast and Out of Control | 2 | 0 |
| 6 | Taking the Lead on the Beam | 2 | 0 |
| 7 | Slovakia’s Pairs Slalom Canoeing Team | 2 | 0 |
| 8 | China Dominates Synchronized Diving | 2 | 0 |
| 9 | Triathlon Course and Tactics | 3 | 0 |
| 10 | Soaring Over the Bar | 3 | 0 |
| 11 | An Ancient City, Still Growing | 4 | 0 |
| 12 | Phelps’s Eight Gold-Medal Week | 1 | 1 |
| 13 | An Exquisite Technique | 1 | 1 |
| 14 | Record Breakers in Beijing | 1 | 1 |
| 15 | How Lezak Won Gold in 4x100-Meter Relay | 1 | 1 |
| 16 | How Michael Phelps Won His First 2008 Gold | 1 | 1 |
| 17 | Hoops Resurgence | 2 | 1 |
| 18 | Bolt’s Feat | 2 | 1 |
| 19 | An Argentine Advance | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | A Russian High Flyer | 2 | 1 |
| 21 | Reducing Pollutants in Beijing | 2 | 1 |
| 22 | Bolt’s Record in the 100 Meters | 2 | 1 |
| 23 | How Spitz and Phelps Compare | 2 | 1 |
| 24 | She Shoots, She Scores | 2 | 1 |
| 25 | Path to Victory: Women’s Gymnastics Team Competition | 2 | 1 |
| 26 | Assessing the Air in Beijing | 2 | 1 |
| 27 | A History of World Records | 4 | 2 |
| 28 | Gold Medals Through the Years: Who’s Good at What | 4 | 2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 29 | A Map of Olympic Medals | 4 | 2 |
| 30 | Passing the Torch: An Evolution of Form | 3 | 0 |

## 2010

Each of these interactives can be found linked at:

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/02/22/sports/olympics/olympics-interactives-index.html

| | | interactivity | data |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Vonn's Ragged, Aggressive Run | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | Cutting the Winning Line | 1 | 1 |
| 3 | Alpine Skiing, From Technical Turns to Tucks and Speed | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | Olympic Pictograms Through the Ages | 1 | 0 |
| 5 | On Assignment: Up for the Downhill | 1 | 0 |
| 6 | How Shaun White Won 2nd Gold | 1 | 0 |
| 7 | Slalom: A Turn Every Second | 1 | 0 |
| 8 | Snowboard Halfpipe | 1 | 0 |
| 9 | Aerial Skiing | 1 | 0 |
| 10 | Luge | 1 | 0 |
| 11 | Alpine Skiing | 1 | 0 |
| 12 | Figure Skating | 1 | 0 |
| 13 | Men's Downhill | 1 | 0 |
| 14 | A Nation Awaits: gold in figure skating | 1 | 0 |
| 15 | Skating Downhill with Lindsay Vonn | 1 | 0 |
| 16 | Taking the Corners | 2 | 0 |
| 17 | Luge Crash at the Olympics | 2 | 0 |
| 18 | Challenges at the Luge Course | 2 | 0 |
| 19 | Vancouver Panoramas | 2 | 0 |
| 20 | Picturing the Olympics | 2 | 0 |
| 21 | Snowboard Halfpipe Library | 3 | 0 |
| 22 | Olympic Voices: Riding the Pipe | 3 | 0 |
| 23 | Vancouver's Olympic Venues | 3 | 0 |
| 24 | In Men's Figure Skating, Quad Not Needed to Win | 2 | 2 |
| 25 | Fractions of a Second: An Olympic Musical | 3 | 2 |
| 26 | The Moves They Don't Want You to See | 3 | 2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | The U.S. Alpine Team's Success | 4 | 2 |
| 28 | A Map of Winter Olympic Medals | 4 | 2 |
| 29 | Gold Medals in the Winter Olympics | 4 | 2 |

## 2012

Each of these interactives are linked at:

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/08/06/sports/olympics/olympic-graphics-collection.html

| | | interactivity | data |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A Simple Bicycle Race | 1 | 0 |
| 2 | Bob Beamon's Long Shadow Olympics | 3 | 2 |
| 3 | Gabby Douglas's Balance Beam Dismount | 2 | 0 |
| 4 | In the Pole Vault, Consistency Through Tough Conditions | 2 | 0 |
| 5 | Leap 3 Stories, Impress Judges | 1 | 0 |
| 6 | Lifting 545 Pounds Over His Head for Olympic Gold | 2 | 0 |
| 7 | Lolo Jones, Cleared for Takeoff | 1 | 0 |
| 8 | One Race, Every Medalist Ever | 3 | 2 |
| 9 | One With the Water | 1 | 0 |
| 10 | Olympic Results | 4 | 2 |
| 11 | Passing Patterns of the U.S.'s Top Playmakers | 4 | 1 |
| 12 | Phelps vs. Lochte | 4 | 2 |
| 13 | Precision From the Chinese Synchronized Divers | 2 | 0 |
| 14 | Racing Against History | 3 | 2 |
| 15 | The Best and Worst Countries in the Medal Count | 4 | 2 |
| 16 | The Bumpy Road to an Olympic BMX Gold Medal | 1 | 0 |
| 17 | The Fastest Baton to the Finish Line | 3 | 0 |
| 18 | The First Goal Women's Olympic Soccer Final | 1 | 0 |
| 19 | The New Olympic Stars (of Twitter) | 4 | 2 |
| 20 | The Toughest Vault | 1 | 0 |
| 21 | The World Records That Fell | 4 | 2 |
| 22 | Wieber's Tight Tumbling in U.S. Gymnastics Win | 2 | 0 |

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Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 140-159

# The "Status" of News: Implementation of Networked Technologies in Television News Organizations

*Tamar Ashuri and Atara Frenkel-Faran*

*This article introduces a set of theoretical propositions relating to the implementation of networked technologies in television news organizations. We use the technological frames analytic lens to identify journalists' assumptions and expectations about technology use and to explain the outcomes of technological and professional change in the journalistic environment. Through interviews with journalists working for television news desks in Israel, we show that the interviewees' perceptions of the technologies, the role of their organization and the essence of their profession provide a meaningful explanation of the actual implementation of networked technologies. The elaborated model that we introduce resolves the contradiction between potential contribution of the emerging technologies and their limited use in journalistic organizations.*

Digital devices and platforms that allow for live, one/many-to-one/many communication among journalists and their audience could arguably alter the established top-down, one-to-many print and broadcast journalism environment (e.g. Atton 2004; Curran, 2003; Gordon 2007; Herbert, 2000; Klein, 1999). As many have demonstrated, however, social transformations depend on the nature and characteristics of the interaction among shared interpretations, social actions and technological artifacts within organizational and professional contexts (e.g. Boczkowski, 2004; Jones et al., 2008; Paulussen & Ugille 2008; Robinson, 2011; Wardle & Williams 2010). Observing this three-sided interplay in the televised news arena through the *technological frames* (TF) analytical lens, we attempt to diagnose and explain developments and changes in the journalistic environment, leading to the introduction of a set of theoretical propositions relating to the social process that occurs during adaptation of media technologies in established media organizations.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical lens

Our analytical lens draws on social cognitive research suggesting that people act in accordance with how they make sense of the world. Such interpretive influence is said to be reflected in various community contexts, including organizations. Studies indicate that social agents’ interpretations (or *cognitive frames*) influence the meaning people ascribe to their organization and the action they take within it. Gioia and Sims (1986, p.5) call such frames a set of “definitions of organizational reality that serve as a vehicle for understanding and actions.” The cognitive frames concept was adopted by sociology of technology theorists. In this context, it refers to people’s interpretive schemes and practices that lead to the attribution of meaning to technology (Bijker, 1995). Interpretive frames (or *technological frames*) were understood as assumptions, knowledge and expectations about technology. From the perspective of the sociology of technology, Bijker (1995), for example, argues that on the one hand, frames enable “thinking and action.” On the other hand, by defining what constitutes a socio-technical problem and an acceptable solution to it, they act as a constraint.

Although the analytical framework of technological frames was developed in social studies of technology, especially through the social construction of technology (SCOT) approach, it has also been deployed in mainstream organization studies of technological change. In a pioneering work, Orlikowski and Gash (1994, p.199) defined technological frames as “the core set of assumptions, expectations, and knowledge of technology collectively held by a group or community.” Interpretive schemes about technology (or *technological frames*) include assumptions and expectations about what the technology is, why it has been adopted and how it could and should be used.

According to the authors, it is important to identify such technological frames because interpretative schemes of a technology (Giddens, 1984; Yoshioka et al., 2002), that typically operate in the background, influence its implementation:

> To interact with technology, people have to make sense of it; and in this sense-making process, they develop particular assumptions, expectations, and knowledge of the technology, which then serve to shape subsequent actions toward it (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994, p. 175).

The critics suggest – and others using the technological frames concept have shown (e.g. Davidson, 2002, 2006) – that because technologies are interpretively flexible, in that meaning is attributed to them rather than perceived as existing within them, members of different groups can indeed construct distinct frames that guide their interpretations of technology’s functionality and uses.

As indicated earlier, the study of networked technology implementation by television news desks is predicated on the analytical framework of technological frames. We will return to this approach below.

**Technological innovation in the journalistic environment**

The large body of research concerning transformation occurring in the traditional journalistic arena may be divided roughly into four research tracks: One group explores the ways in which new technologies are used by journalists to obtain information; another focuses on the emergence of online dissemination of news, examining in particular the formation of online news desks in established organizations; a third considers the changing role of journalists in a new journalistic environment, concentrating on the emergence of citizen/participatory journalism, and the fourth explores consumption patterns and audience preferences of online news material disseminated by professional and non-professional sources using cross-media devices and platforms. Below, we review the four groups briefly and schematically.

As noted above, scholarly interest in journalists' use of technologies has increased over the last thirty years, during which reporters have found themselves surrounded by new communication technologies after a century of relying almost exclusively on the landline telephone as a medium for obtaining information. This revolution in the technological environment – from one to six technologies (landline telephone, pager, facsimile machine, mobile telephone, Web and e-mail) – occurred at different times in different places but is now reflected in most modern news cultures.

The nature and characteristics of such technological upheavals and their impact on news work has been addressed by two core schools, dubbed *reformist* and *traditionalist* (see discussion in Reich, 2005). The reformists claim that technologies transformed the work of journalists (e.g. Pavlik, 2000; Kawamoto, 2003), while the traditionalists have identified long-range trends in news production methods that may limit the effects of the new technologies significantly (e.g. Boczkowski, 2004; Reich, 2008, 2011).

In parallel to the above discourse, a growing body of research is concerned with the creation of online news desks in established news organizations. Here as well, some scholars (e.g.; Jones et al., 2008; Pavlik, 2000; Peer & Ksiazek, 2011; Schrøder & Larsen, 2010) claimed that new digital publishing ventures transformed the journalistic arena, while others identified enduring trends in news dissemination and consumption methods that limit the effects of digital technologies on the journalistic landscape (e.g. Boczkowski, 2004; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Reich, 2008).

While the above groups focus their attention on the manner in which technologies were used by professional journalists in their quest for information and audience attention, another growing group of researchers points to the changing role of professional journalists vis-à-vis the development of new technologies. They suggest that the unique role journalists play in the construction of "mediated publicness" (Thompson, 1995) is now being challenged by audience members, using various media, who penetrate the journalistic arena and thus change the nature of deliberation and action in the public sphere (e.g. Ashuri and Wiesslit 2011; Jarvis, 2007; Thurman, 2008).

This scholarly discourse, that highlights the emergence of civil/participatory journalism, may also be divided into two discernible trends: Scholars in one such group espouse the view that technological developments generate editorial effects and hence transform the nature and characteristics of news contents (e.g. Jarvis, 2007; Pavlik, 2000). These scholars' observations were scrutinized by a second group of critics, who underscored the structural aspects of news production (e.g. Becket & Mansell, 2008; Fortunati et al., 2009; Hermida & Thurman, 2008; Örnebring, 2007; Paulusser & Ugille, 2008; Singer et al., 2011). Proponents of this view pointed to structural forms such as norms, habits, economic constraints and the like, that hinder adoption of new technologies and – by implication – new, “audience material” (Wardle & Williams, 2010) news content.

## Research Methodology

Our study aims at challenging the scholarly divide that tends to prioritize either structure or agency, by investigating the two perspectives that dominate the four scholarly discourses reviewed above. Instead of inquiring whether and how new technologies (used by professional and non-professional agents) facilitate various transformations in the journalistic environment, we examine how journalists perceive the technologies at hand and how they envision the organizational and professional transformations that emerge as a result of technological innovations. We believe that this integrative approach can better explain emergence and change in media technologies and their use in the journalistic environment.

As discussed above, we applied the Technological Frame model, focusing on works by Orlikowski and Gash (1994) and Yoshioka et al., (2002), who argued that by examining key actors’ notions of technology that are ordinarily taken for granted, one may gain considerable insights into how technologies are developed in organizations and how people interact with changes in their work arenas. The authors identified three frame domains: 1) The nature of technology, referring to people’s images of the technology and their understanding of its capabilities and functionality; 2) technology strategy, consisting of people’s views of why their organization acquired and implemented a particular technology and 3) technology in use, addressing people’s understanding of how the technology will be used on a day-to-day basis and the likely or actual conditions and consequences associated with such use.

Building on this typology, we address three chief research questions:

**RQ1: How do informants understand the technologies they use and their functionality?**

**RQ2: How do they perceive their journalistic profession (its nature and role) and the contribution of the emerging new technologies to their work (news data gathering, organization, presentation and distribution)?**

**RQ3: How do they explain their organizations’ acquisition of a specific networked technology and how do they understand the use of this technology on a day-to-day basis and the likely or actual conditions and consequences associated with such use?**

The study is grounded on analysis of networked technology implementation at two television news desks in Israel – Channel 2 and Channel 10. These networks were chosen first because they provide the most frequently watched news bulletins in the country and also because we were promised full access to all personnel. During the summer and fall of 2011, both researchers conducted approximately one hour semi-structured interviews with nine elite interviewees (two women and seven men). Out of nine respondents, four work at the news desks of Channel 2 and five at Channel 10. Interviews were made with the "new media directors" of both channels, with each channels' chief editor of the evening (main) news bulletin, with the editors/ producers of channel two's main news bulletins (the morning, and the afternoon bulletins), and with channel ten's editors/producers of the main news bulletins (the night, the late night and the Friday night news bulletin). The editor/producer of channel two's Friday night bulletin refused to be interviewed. Reporters were omitted from the study since it focuses on decision-making processes. We hence interviewed those who make decisions regarding the implementations of digital devices and contents. Significantly all interviewees were trained journalists who worked as reporters in the early stages of their journalistic careers. All participants were promised anonymity and therefore names and gender were omitted from the text.

## Results

### From screen to screen: Conceptions of the essence of technology

As indicated, Orlikowski and Gash (1994) showed that by assessing the conceptions of current technology expressed by key actors in a given organization, one may identify and explain how technologies develop and how they are used. Participants in the current study were asked how they perceive the technologies available to them and how they understand their operation and function.

First, the participants presented their technological frame regarding *television*, the medium for which they work. From their point of view, the news content they produce is intended first and foremost for broadcasting via this medium. They consider television a medium that enables journalists to disseminate audio/visual content in real time to a perceived passive mass audience, most of whom are watching from home, as expressed by a morning news editor: "They [the audience] get up in the morning and the television is on opposite them. Television stays with them all the time as they go about their business." An afternoon news editor reinforced these views, indicating that the afternoon news bulletins he produces are intended primarily for retired persons, housewives, and women coming home from work at that time.

Editors and producers of later news shows (evening and late night news) perceive a more varied target audience, including men and young adults in their 20s and 30s, although they agreed with their colleagues' definitions of television's key characteristics.

Participants also expressed consensus regarding the characteristics of the *networked platforms* available to them, indicating that networked technologies resemble television because they too serve the masses and enable distribution of news to numerous people in real time.

Participants also noted the differences between television and networked media. First, they claimed that the Internet, unlike television, enables continuous news distribution/consumption. Second, they emphasized that the Internet allows for consumption of news anywhere (including at work), unlike television, whose broadcast programs are consumed at home (usually in one’s spare time). This fact is especially significant, as the director of new media points out, because “events happen during work time and these are peak hours in terms of ratings.”

Finally, participants noted that networked platforms provide various sources of audience feedback regarding television or online news content. For the informers, who work in television, this is a substantive component because until these platforms began to enjoy mass use, audience preferences could only be derived from the ratings charts. A new media department director claimed that ratings data mislead those involved in creating television news because they provide no demographic information concerning viewers (gender, age, socioeconomic status, and the like). He also explained that unlike the ratings charts, that only supply data about a given program long after it has been broadcasted, online applications provide viewer preference information as soon as a program is broadcast or very shortly thereafter.

In their responses regarding perception of networked technologies and their characteristics, participants emphasized that their position as journalists employed by journalistic organizations has a profound influence on the way they understand the operation and function of the media available to them, including both the traditional medium (television) and the newer media (Internet platforms).

The above observations led us to expand Orlikowski and Gash’s model. Hence, we introduce an additional dimension that we term *nature of profession*, relating to the manner in which participants active at the news desks of Channels 2 and 10 perceive the essence and function of their profession. We suggest that to understand the implementation of technologies in an organization, the key actors’ notions of technology must be identified in these two different social/cultural contexts: The organization (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994) in which they operate and their profession.

**The profession and the technology: Conceptions of the technology’s contribution to the journalism profession**

Although the participants perform various functions at the organizations studied (editors, producers, new media department directors), all perceive themselves as journalists. In interviews, all participants emphasized that they began their careers in the printed or broadcast press. Their conception of the essence of the journalism profession and its role, frames their understanding of the possible uses of networked technologies.

As journalists, the participants stressed that their key function is to disseminate essential information to the masses, noting that they will use all technologies – traditional and new – to achieve this objective. Thus, for example, a weekend news roundup editor informed us:

> I come from the press and as far as I'm concerned, the Internet and television are only instruments of transmission.

This view was shared by others, who noted the advantages of networked technologies in promoting achievement of their journalistic objective: Disseminating vital information to the masses. A late night news editor expressed it well:

> I'm happy that more people are being exposed to information. It's certainly much better, much more correct from a democratic point of view.

Participants also emphasized that networked platforms contribute to their work as journalists by enabling distribution of information on events as they occur. A weekend news editor provided an example:

> [Following the tsunami] and the massive radiation in Japan, a reporter sat with his iPad and received reports at the studio. He reported about things as they happened.

While recognizing the essentiality of networked platforms in journalism, participants stressed the supremacy of television as a means of news distribution. A late night news editor, for example, claimed that the digital era of information distribution accords television journalists a significant function as gatekeepers:

> The chief problem with the Internet in general is the lack of hierarchy, that I perceive as a substantial obstacle to total, meaningful transition from traditional to online media. […] People don't really want to follow events all the time and are very pleased to have someone inform them and give them a broader and rounder picture of the situation, along with some kind of story of the entire day.

Later in the interview, he explained that the television medium, unlike the Internet, plays an additional substantive social role. He claimed that because television news is broadcast at fixed times daily, it constitutes an important element in maintaining order and a sense of confidence in the living room and in society as a whole: "No disaster is big enough to keep us from being here tomorrow."

This conception suits findings of previous studies that emphasized the function of television in general and television news in particular as a creator of ontological security (Giddens, 1984). According to Silverstone (1994, 1999), television – and especially its news broadcasts – is a resource that enables people to maintain their routines. Television and its news programs have a substantive role in framing daily activity, thereby generating a sense of continuity and enabling necessary distancing from forces that threaten such continuity.

Despite the special role of television as a means of news distribution and its supremacy over networked platforms, all participants emphasized that adoption of networked platforms by their news desks that employ them is worthwhile and essential, as discussed below.

**Caught in the net: Conceptions of the function of technology in the organization**

Orlikowski and Gash (1994) and Yoshioka et al., (2002) claimed that the manner in which an organization’s key personnel perceive available technologies and their function – that they called *interpretive schemes* – will affect their understanding of the way these technologies contribute to the organization and their consequent use therein. Hence participants were asked how they perceive the contribution of networked technologies to the television news desks.

The research population views the Internet as an efficient means of locating newsworthy information, usually free of charge, at any time. A late night news editor summed it up: “In general, the heart of the matter is to obtain online sources quickly, to know where there are good stories, where stories that interest the public are hiding.”

Although participants considered the Internet to be an efficient tool for locating essential newsworthy information, they noted that only a few sites serve them as a source of information on a daily basis – usually the news sites of competing networks or sites maintained by the Hebrew printed press. As an afternoon news editor: “Don’t tell anyone, but all journalists primarily use *ynet* (the leading news site and content portal in Israel, part of the *Yedioth Ahronoth* Group) as an information-gathering tool.” He claimed that familiar news sites are more accessible and more reliable, as backed up by one of his editor colleagues:

> From my point of view, our competitors are the Channel 10 news desk and *ynet*. So what interests me is what’s featured on their site.

The models proposed by Orlikowski and Gash (1994) and Yoshioka et al., (2002) regarding the interpretive schemes of key organizational personnel explain the limited use of networked technologies for journalistic information gathering. The interviews reveal that the research population is suspicious of information published on the Internet. An evening news editor presented his reservations regarding Internet material: “Online information should be treated with caution”.

These conceptions also arose in previous studies conducted by various news organizations in different countries. Researchers claimed that professional journalists’ suspicious view of audience material is a significant factor in the limited use that news organizations make of such material (e.g. Boczkowski, 2004; Wardle & Williams, 2010).

Participants in the present study offer additional explanations of the limited use of Internet technologies, particularly the lack of any threat embodied in their conception of this means. This view was well expressed by the editor of a morning news show:

> Your competitors are those who are up against you on the air [...]. Perhaps I have no vision, but at this stage, I do not perceive Internet platforms as competitors.

Furthermore, this participant believes, information with journalistic potential publicized online will be identified quickly by mainstream media. Hence the importance of its being identified online by the television organization for which he works is marginal. He expressed this conception as follows: “It is believed that the best stories will be viewed [on television] and will not remain [hidden] in some blog.”

Their reservations notwithstanding, all participants emphasized the contribution of networked platforms to the work of their news organizations. Below, we discuss two major observations expressed in interviews: 1) Networked technologies enable members of the organization to obtain audience feedback (using these platforms, viewers can send the news desk newsworthy material and information about their viewing preferences; and 2) networked platforms help market the television organization.

As indicated, the participants explained that through networked platforms, viewers can supply newsworthy information essential to their organizations. As one evening news editor said: “Everyone’s got cameras and everyone films. That’s the added value of television, the images.” A late night news editor backs him up: “People are always sending me material. Nearly every night we show a scene that someone filmed in one context or another.”

The participant made sure to emphasize that the advantage of networked platforms is not only that they enable the audience to submit much material (mostly images) to the news desk, but also that they enable rapid transmission of vital information. He claims that networked platforms available to numerous users enable rapid distribution of newsworthy material from the field to the news desk within a few minutes:

> If, say, a crime took place in Bat Yam and we ask people in the vicinity to send pictures, then Bam! We’ll have material in seconds flat. They’ll even correct us: ‘Not Rashi Street, Rambam Street!’”

Participants’ conceptions of the audience’s contribution to organization work are not limited to submittal of photographed material from the field. As far as they are concerned, the audience serves as a potential fact checker. A late night news editor explains: “We’re always asking viewers questions, like how much does a gram of cocaine cost.”

According to participants, the “audience” also contributes to journalistic work by supplying actual news items. A weekend news editor provides an example:

> Yael Grinspan [sister of a 12-year-old-girl who was run over on a traffic island by a drunk driver, who aroused a public scandal after her reaction to the plea bargain] posted a status about her sister who was run over and a friend of a friend on Facebook was someone

> from *Maariv* [a major Israeli daily newspaper]. Then, the whole country was talking about it. The source was a Facebook status that became a huge story.

Other participants told similar stories in which the role of networked platforms was described as tools with which journalists receive newsworthy items from audiences. At the same time, the participants clarified that the contribution of audience materials to the television broadcast news program is limited. An evening news editor explained:

> They contact us on Facebook, but I don’t know how well that works. I don’t think I’ve received any big stories from there yet.

A weekend news editor expressed similar thoughts:

> When we presented a report about the show dog scene, people sent in tons of material about their dogs on Facebook. We made a clip, but it wasn’t significant.

***Despite participants’ reservations concerning the quality of news material submitted by audiences, the news desks studied do use networked platforms for efficient and rapid distribution of audience material (chiefly images), recognizing the clear advantages of these platforms – mass accessibility and the option of receiving news material in real time from people on the scene.***

These conceptions and the reservations they reflect conform with the findings of previous studies in which researchers showed, primarily by content analysis of the products of news organizations, that professional journalists in traditional news organizations make quantitatively and qualitatively sparse use of audience materials. Moreover, audience material publicized by professional news organizations usually concerns esoteric topics and is presented as entertainment and gossip (Örnebring, 2007; Paulusser & Ugille, 2008).

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**Online/On screen: Use of technology at the news desk**

Both news desks set up active websites: The Channel 10 news desk is featured on the Channel 10 website, called *nana10*, while the Channel 2 news desk operates through the Keshet network franchisee's site, called *mako*. Viewers may watch full or partial news programs at these sites. The Channel 2 news desk also produces special online programs around the clock. The two organizations provide links at their websites for what they call *redmail* – an application enabling visitors to send printed, audio, and visual materials to the news desk.

The two news desks also maintain Facebook accounts: a central account for the news desk and accounts for specific programs and editions. At the Channel 2 news desk, a team of four journalists was assembled, most of them in their twenties, who spend the day gathering information posted to the Facebook accounts and creating content for distribution via this social network (see below for particulars).

Furthermore, with the development of smartphones, the two organizations developed applications for all types of mobile phones through which smartphone users can watch news reports at any time, wherever they may be. The smartphone apps (like *redmail*) enable viewers to transmit audio, print, and visual materials to the news desk. A new media department director explained that these apps were designed "to encourage reports from the field."

Besides developing apps, news organizations also use existing apps for rapid receipt of visual audience material from the field. A new media department director supplied an example:

> A month ago, there was a wildcat strike at Ben-Gurion Airport. We used *foursquare* to find someone there.

An evening news editor adds:

> We get information from them [the audience] and they link to us. Once a person is linked up and knows that he has done something active, that he is reporting, he feels connected. From then on, that person is our partner.

Participants use a variety of methods to encourage the news audience to supply news material using networked platforms and to act as "partners." One outstanding means consists of crediting the people who provide information.

> If a story comes in by *redmail*, I mention it and that spurs more people to do the same… We have a tool to encourage activity from the field. From our point of view, giving credit is payback too.

The decision to encourage audience participation by mentioning the names of people submitting information is related to the conception of television as a key medium in Israeli society, a medium that shines much more brightly than the gray world of "ordinary people" (Couldry, 2000; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). This perception provides a possible explanation for the development of the incentive noted by the new media department director and his colleagues.

As the research population considers the Internet (and not just television) to be a means of communication in use by the masses, participants also mentioned use of Internet applications as a means of encouraging the public to send in journalistic materials to the news desk. A new media department director explained:

> We set up a game with a remarkable number of players. It’s a kind of application: You send us news and the more valuable it is, the more points you’ll get. What do you need to do? Send in a scoop, on video or otherwise. Then, according to the number of points you have, you’ll receive prizes.

As indicated, all participants noted that networked technologies contribute to their organizations by constituting an effective tool for viewers to dispatch essential news content to the news desk. In interviews, however, they emphasized that these platforms are most valuable for increasing the audience of the medium for which their principal output is intended – television.

Participants claim that two-way communication with their audiences, enabled via networked platforms, contributes to the organization by helping journalists increase their (television) audiences through adapting output to their tastes. A weekend news editor notes:

> I look at the number of hits for items on the [organization’s] website. I actually do check that. It was already Friday evening and I was surprised to see that the item about [Dov] Lautman [an Israeli industrialist and business person, winner of the Israel Prize for his contribution to society in education, who was stricken with ALS] was among the three leading ones. You’d think that someone who’s disabled and static and preaches Zionism would gain no ratings at all, but I saw it was among the top three most viewed and that astounded me. It’s not that I’m going to write an article about the disabled now, but it does give me a quick picture of what’s happening.

Despite the attention to feedback received from their audiences and the importance they ascribe to it, the participants noted that as far as they were concerned, the chief function of networked platforms – especially the organization’s website and Facebook page – is to publicize news information to audiences other than television news viewers. They are referring primarily to young people in their twenties who spend many hours a day surfing the web. An evening news editor explained for example that maintenance of networked platforms (primarily an active website and Facebook page) helps increase the network’s audience of young consumers because such platforms, unlike television, enjoy the image of innovation: “I really want that little [Facebook] ‘f’ to appear on our screen, because it transmits something young.”

The new media department director at the rival network, who manages several Facebook accounts, made similar remarks and explained that Israeli young people spend many long hours surfing social networks. Consequently, he claimed, “you have to exert all efforts in that arena”. To appeal to a young audience, he set up a social network team that distributes content to the target group via such platforms.

> We published the answers to high school matriculation examinations (conducted by the Israel Ministry of Education; [the examinations] are considered the chief indicator of a person’s education and a prerequisite for certain jobs and higher education) as soon as the test was over. All matriculation examination [writers] rushed to see our solution. Two thousand people not only visited the site but also wanted to participate… We realize that we are dealing with a younger audience that is interested in different content worlds.

A new media department director emphasizes that appeal to a younger audience through social networks is accomplished not only by adapting content but also by “converting” official television language “to a more friendly, sociable language, more casual…”

Appeal to a young audience through networked platforms – primarily the organization’s Facebook page – is perceived by editors as essential not only because it enables news desks to reach younger people who would not usually watch television news programs but also because it accustoms them to watching the network’s television news shows in the future. An evening news editor explained:

> We promote items taken from the television news online. This exposes the young audience to our content, to our people, to our names, to our items. Someone will come and see it at the site. If he likes it, he’ll watch it on television. In another five years, when he goes to watch television, he’ll have consumed five years on our website, so he already knows things, recognizes the people, the pictures, everything. He didn’t watch television news over those five years but he did see *mako* (the organization’s website) and he recognizes [Channel 2’s evening news presenters] Yonit [Levi] and Danny [Kushmaro]. They’re not strangers to him, even though he never saw the news on television.

Besides identifying the young adult audience as a potential target audience that can be pinpointed and conquered via networked platforms, participants noted that such platforms may also be used to reach other niche audiences that are usually not included in the primary audience of commercial television network news viewers. A new media department director supplies a tangible example – appeal to religious audiences that often avoid watching television because it is operated primarily by non-religious persons and aims its products primarily at that sector:

> Every Friday afternoon we publish [Sabbath] candle-lighting times. Responses have been most cordial: “Wow! All of a sudden Channel 2 is sending me Sabbath greetings!”. A network that bears news of disasters is thus linked to something good.

Participants also noted that networked platforms help consolidate the organization’s status – its television brand name – among television news viewers. People watch news programs that are broadcast at specific times of day – early morning and evening – when they are usually at home. Networked platforms consumed by the masses (including television viewers) allow for around-the-clock news consumption from anywhere. Above all, this all-encompassing 360° presence ensures audience loyalty. One evening news editor considers networked platforms to be “a kind of Video On Demand through which viewers can consume news at times convenient for them and not only when it is broadcast.”

All-encompassing presence in a variety of networked platforms also enables promotion of news content that is usually televised during evening hours only, as noted by an evening news editor: “… We use such platforms not [only] to supply information but as teasers.” His colleague at the rival network provided examples:

> We’ll show a clip at the website of a special interview with Israel’s ambassador to the United States that was shown on the television news. The same with [a series of reports on the activities of] children on vacation… [This] series of articles was “pumped up” on the Internet. An item [on that topic] was sent to 100,000 subscribers on the Internet. If I promote something, I’ll promote it there [on the Internet]… As far as we’re concerned, it promotes our content, showing what we’ll be broadcasting today.

A new media department director maintained that the presence of news organization material on networked platforms is a condition for the organization’s survival as the country’s dominant news network:

> It is understood that as a leading content body, if you don’t play the game to the end, you are liable to lose your relevance, your leadership, the relevance of your brand name. You don’t want to wind up dead in the water. If I don’t make sure that web surfers/customers/viewers encounter us at every point, they’re liable to get used to something else at another point and display that on their screens [instead].

To render distribution of brand name content via networked platforms more efficient, the participants reported that over the past few months, they have been generating news content suitable for networked platforms, especially YouTube. An evening news editor, for example, explained that to promote content broadcast on television news programs, the news team he manages produces short films to attract viewer attention and encourage viral distribution. He hoped to achieve a dual objective: Generating network loyalty and ensuring that many people watch the program:

> Today we had a surprise for Miki Haimovich [an evening news presenter who retired in June 2011] on her show. For the past week, I've been working on how to post it to Facebook the second it's over, because I have a feeling that it'll be a kind of Internet hit that I hope everyone will want to see.

The new media department director at the rival network also emphasizes the importance of networked platforms for marketing his news brand name, indicating that they help his organization, whose news desk has the highest ratings in Israel, maintain its status as the country's leading television network:

> Some of the material that I distribute – like Home Front Command warnings – yields nothing of marketing value, but I want it to become routine that [Channel] 2 News is always first. That's how we became engraved in people's minds as the leading body in Israel […]. On Facebook, you see exactly when we're promoting something…
> We also have a BlackBerry app because we don't want to miss the smallest group, even if it's only a negligible number of users.

This position is common among the research population. Participants working for both leading television networks in Israel consider the various networked applications to be essential technologies for the development of their respective news organizations and for maintaining their status. Nevertheless, they do not believe that the new technologies are effective in changing the face and objectives of the organization or the nature and function of the journalistic work that is taking place within them. From their point of view, new technologies contribute primarily to consolidating the news organization's status as a leader and innovator. This is also the principal reason for their adoption, as a new media department director said: "We'll do whatever can help us [the television organization] be the first and most innovative."

## Discussion/Conclusions

The research findings provide a picture of the journalists' conception, according to which their principal function as employees of television news organizations is to produce and broadcast the evening news program for family viewing at the end of the day. While the findings reveal a variety of uses of networked technologies and platforms, their influence on television content, news desk structure, and journalistic work methods is highly limited.

Networked technologies and platforms are used primarily for marketing purposes, including increasing the number of television viewers and reinforcing the news desk brand name. They are applied in production of viral clips, news program promos for

Internet distribution, and targeted content for niche audiences (with emphasis on young people), as well as distribution of both television and targeted content over a variety of platforms for 360° viewing, anytime, anywhere. Besides marketing, journalists apply networked technologies and platforms in actual journalistic work, using the Internet as a source of information and a tool for obtaining real-time field testimony from people at the scene of an unfolding event.

The Technological Frames Model enables resolution of the contradiction between mass use of networked technologies and platforms by the public and limited use by the news organizations studied. According to participants, even in the online era, television is the preferred medium for news consumption by the masses constituting the organizations' target audience. Hence the journalists' primary goal is creation and distribution of the television news program, with the Internet serving as a kind of promotional means. In other words, while the expanding array of screens does have its uses, news desk journalists concentrate chiefly on applications that can increase the number of home television viewers.

In accordance with the theoretical expansion proposed in this study, the journalists' conception of the journalism profession affects their limited use of networked technologies and platforms. The study shows that in an age of amateurism, journalists perceive themselves as exclusive agents charged with gathering, organizing and distributing news information. They consider the Internet, with all its tools and services, to be a platform distributing information of doubtful reliability in near-deluge quantities.

Journalists' conceptions of the organizations for which they work also help explain the partial use of networked technologies and platforms. The news desks examined have not instituted the mandatory organizational changes for efficient adoption of online technologies, that requires an increase in personnel, earmarked resource allocations, and hierarchical changes in the news organization (Robinson, 2011) and so on. Furthermore, participants claim, there is no reason to change or expand the (advertising-based) news desk business model that presently views the television news program as its source of income. As direct leveraging of the investment in networked technologies and platforms is not feasible, they are developed and applied to improve the ratings of the television news show, the organization's financial *raison d'être*. This means that so long as no economic potential is derived from the new screen array, the focus of journalistic work will remain the "small screen" alone.

**Networked technologies frames**

In brief, despite recognition of the importance and centrality of networked technologies and platforms, their specific and limited use by news desk journalists constitutes a derivative of the latter's interpretive schemes in three respects.

Professionally, the journalists perceive their social function as exclusive responsibility for gathering newsworthy and reliable information, organizing it and distributing it in a manner that structures the public and political agendas. This conception limits their use of the Internet, that they consider a decentralized and anarchistic technology, flooded with unreliable content distributed to an audience of undetermined size at undetermined times.

Internet use is influenced not only by the journalists' conception of their profession and its implications, but also by their view of the function of new and traditional technologies in their organization. From a social point of view, the journalists perceive their growing audience as people who require information that originated in a variety of screen types, who require the order and ontological confidence supplied exclusively by television news. In accordance with their conceptions regarding the centrality of television news programs, optimal use of the Internet is perceived primarily as promotion of such programs.

The study shows that in the organizational sphere, journalists' conceptions regarding the economic aspect of networked technologies and platforms provide a meaningful explanation of the limited uses thereof. Journalists believe that as long as their organization is unable to derive profit from the new technologies, it will not invest significant resources in them.

***Adherence to traditional conceptions of broadcast journalism regarding the role of the professional television journalist, the news organization's economic structure, and the nature of broadcasted news consumption habits is what impedes full use of the frequently mentioned potential to challenge the journalistic environment and to enable change.***

As our study shows, theoretical models emphasizing the effect of technological frames on conceptions and uses of technology in organizations help resolve the contradiction between perception of the vast potential of the new technologies and their limited use.

Adherence to traditional conceptions of broadcast journalism regarding the role of the professional television journalist, the news organization's economic structure, and the nature of broadcasted news consumption habits is what impedes full use of the frequently mentioned potential to challenge the journalistic environment and to enable change. Such change, arguably enabled by networked technologies, is likely to include expansion of the journalist's function, improvement of tools available to journalists, increasing the number of topics covered and the perspectives of coverage, challenging existing business models and empowering news consumers-producers.

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*This research was supported by a grant from the Second Authority for Television and Radio, Israel.*

Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 160-181

# The Scion of Public Journalism: Case Study Evidence of a Link between Public and Social Journalism and the Potential for an Atomized Public Sphere

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*A social journalism content management system (CMS) created in a Midwestern town offers hope for those who wish to see the public journalism movement reinvigorated. Strong connections exist between the movement's ideals and the website's goals and capabilities. This paper discusses in some depth the connections between the legacy of the public journalism movement and this platform for social journalism. It also uses case study data to examine how this platform has employed social media tools and open-access publishing features to create a tiny but functioning model of an online public sphere.*

The public journalism movement popularized the idea that citizen engagement could be a way to increase readership, reinforce community connections, and rebrand newspapers as community-oriented. Newspapers were not the only media organizations experimenting with public journalism, but the nexus of the movement was a small group of daily newspaper editors and scholars (Black, 1997). Conducted in news organizations around the United States in various forms through the 1980s and 90s, public journalism (sometimes called "civic journalism") projects were designed to educate citizens about how newspapers worked and to invite them to educate journalists about their most pressing issues (Lambeth, Meyer, & Thorson, 1998; Merritt, 1998; Rosenberry & St John, 2009). Many of the projects also invited community members to contribute by writing their own stories for special sections published in the newspaper or on newspapers' nascent websites (Rosenberry & St John, 2009). Bardoel and Deuze (2001) note that the public journalism movement was a response to the perception that journalism institutions in the United States serve business interests above all else. Merritt (1998) and others (Charity, 1995; Rosen, 1999) supported a brand of journalism that focused on public outreach. One stated goal of many in the movement was to take the agenda-setting function of the press and turn it on its head so that the public news agenda could more directly influence newspapers' agendas. McCombs (1997) called it "proactive agenda-setting" (p. 439), and he noted that public journalism was a bottom-up approach as opposed to the journalist-centric top-down approach.

Some scholars praised the public journalism movement as a worthy experiment, while others criticized the way it emerged in practice. For some, public journalism was primarily a rash of crass marketing ploys (Black, 1997, p. 67, 97). This criticism was largely a reaction to the half-hearted implementation of public journalism practices by some news organizations rather than a response to the movement's ideals; however, a vocal group of journalists and scholars argued that communitarian ideals are a threat to journalistic liberty in any case (Barney, 1997; Merrill, Gade, & Blevens, 2001). McCombs' (1997) verdict was simple: "Both work" (p. 439), but the combination of institutional opposition, feeble, trend-following implementation, and a lack of immediate significant gains in readership helped hasten the demise of the movement (Rosenberry & St John, 2009).

Rosenberry and St. John (2009) go on to argue, however, that public journalism should not be taken as a failed experiment but as the green shoots, perhaps, of a movement toward citizen engagement that may continue to grow with the fusion of social media capabilities and journalistic practices. What is more is the possibility that this type of collaboration could improve the potential for increased citizen engagement *and* deliberation, foundational functions of the news media ideals associated with public journalism, according to Nip (2006), who explicitly hopes that a second iteration of public journalism might enable the formation of an online public sphere.

The public sphere is defined by Habermas (1989) as a space for members of the public to engage in rational-critical debate with one another and with institutional power structures such that citizens may influence power, which is the stated intent of democratic forms of government (Habermas, Crossley, & Roberts, 2004). According to Johnson (2006), the public sphere affords "[o]ur ability to build solidarities with strangers and to agree on the general significance of needs and problems" (p. 1). Thus, news organizations interested in serving democracy are presumably interested in creating a functioning public sphere.

There are two related questions guiding this part of the essay: First, could an amalgamation of social media and online journalism be used by those who wish to carry the mantle of bottom-up journalism left at the dawn of the twenty-first century by supporters of public journalism? Second, would this new form of public journalism succeed in creating a fully functioning public sphere, a discursive space that is both necessary and lacking in modern democratic society?

This paper seeks to offer preliminary answers to these questions as a matter of possibility, not a matter of fact. The data referenced herein are from a case study examining the development of a content management system (CMS) for social journalism, defined as a model of news production that weds social media capabilities and online journalism under the auspices of a centenarian newspaper institution. Thus, the results are not meant to be generalized, although they may be helpful at furthering the discussion of what is possible in online, participatory journalism (J. Y. M. Nip, 2009).

The question of whether social journalism could be said to carry on the work of public journalism is addressed first in a brief essay. Then, the issue of the potential for a social journalism platform to house a functioning online public sphere is brought up in the form of a single research question. After the research method and data analysis practices are briefly described, a section explicating findings is presented alongside a bit of discussion including suggestions for future research and an explanation of this study's limitations.

**The social journalism CMS as the scion of the public journalism movement**

The CMS discussed here is a health news website focused on a small Midwestern city. The site has social media capabilities built in. Users are required to use their real names. The site allows users to "follow" one another and to create a news feed, much like Twitter does. This feed is accessible from a personal dashboard, while the site's landing page is managed by the news organization and looks similar to Pinterest. It has a white background and a matrix of news, feature news, personal stories, and promoted content with each square including a photo and a blurb. The social media functionality lies under the surface. Users have the ability to form groups centered on health topics, healthcare providers, non-profit agencies, or other shared interests. By following groups and individual contributors, a user can tailor her or his personal news feed. Additionally, the site requires users and journalists within the news organization to publish to the same space using the same user interface. Editors in the news organization have reserved the right to delete offensive comments or users who do not follow posted guidelines; however, users, including advertisers, are encouraged to contribute multimedia news and promotional information to the site as they please. They can re-post stories from one group to another, thereby bringing those stories into the news feeds of their followers, and users can communicate with the news organization's professional journalists in the comments section under each article in order to persuade the journalist to cover certain issues and events in greater depth, to follow up, in other words, at the readers' request.

Additionally, members of the public, i.e. site users, were involved in the design of the CMS from the outset of the project. They were invited to a series of group discussions where they were asked what they wanted the site to do and how they wanted it to function (newsmgmt2, news1). (See the Appendix for a list of research participants and their descriptions.) The site's nature as a health news and information portal limited to covering one Midwestern college town is important. This limits the types of stories and promotional pieces expected, and it limits the willingness of participants to share, at times (newsmgmt2). The site has been mostly funded by a sponsorship from the local hospital (newsmgmt2). At the time this study was conducted, sponsorship accounted for 60-70% of the site's revenue, and display advertising made up about 20%, with paid sponsorship of online groups covering the rest (ad_marketing1). Sponsorship is a form of underwriting that enables the hospital to incorporate its brand into the site in banners and other ads. Display ads not taken up by the sponsor are marketed to local advertisers, and the paid sponsorship of groups of users enabled by the site's social networking functionality rounds out the major revenue opportunities.

> We do charge businesses a monthly fee to have a sponsored group, and that allows them whole run of the site, sort of as advocates for their business' position in the conversations. Individuals from businesses of course can contribute as private citizens, but we're pretty careful to keep their advocacy for their business down. We've had real good luck with just reaching out to people and saying you really can't promote your business unless you're a paid business member on the site. (ad_marketing1)

The social networking capabilities combined with the collaborative approach to CMS design make the subject of this study quite innovative when compared to most systems currently deployed in the online news industry. What follows is a more in-depth discussion of the public journalism movement and an explanation of how combining social media functionality and journalistic practice can be seen as evidence of the movement's reinvigoration.

### Bridging public journalism and social journalism

Public journalism has no simple theoretical or practical definition. There is some disagreement as to whether or not the movement is dead. Nip (2008) has done some of the most rigorous analysis in this area and argues that public journalism practices from the 1980s and 90s have influenced some newsroom routines and special projects work, but as a form of collective action in the industry, public journalism is dead. Certainly Jay Rosen through his teaching at CUNY and "mindcasting" via Twitter continues to push for many of the ideals of public journalism, but most scholars in this branch of journalism studies agree that the movement is over (Rosenberry & St. John, 2009). Rosen (1999) defines public journalism in four parts as "an approach to the daily business of the craft that calls on journalists to address people as citizens…help the political community act…improve the climate of public discussion…and help make public life go well" (p. 22). The public journalism movement for some was about changing the role of journalism in society and making it actively work for social change through community partnerships (Merritt, 1998). For others, public journalism focused more narrowly on involving the audience in producing news content and setting agendas (Black, 1997). For those who wanted to reshape journalism in order to reshape society, public journalism was often called "a theory in search of a practice" (Rosenberry & St. John, 2009, p. 21). Those who wanted to use public journalism as a marketing gimmick followed the content-influencing trend only as long as they thought it might pay off. Practiced in that manner, public journalism did not inspire broad social change, and the mutual perceptions of the public and journalists were not improved.

If journalists had less luck than hoped with the public journalism movement, scholars did not fare much better. Denton and Thorson in Lambeth, Meyer, and Thorson (1998) argue that scholars too often conflated public journalism with other concepts. "For at least fifty years, throughout the social-responsibility era of the press, journalists have seen prosocial initiatives as part of their role, and it has been a quarter century since McCombs and Shaw explicated public agenda-setting as an important function of the press. What is arguably new about public journalism is the active *involvement* of the public" (p. 146, original emphasis). Denton and Thorson describe a conflict among scholars between those focusing on the way public journalism was altering relationships between journalists and audiences and those focused on the way the movement shaped content. Scholars focused on content, it was argued, sometimes assumed that changing content would change social behavior, a concept refuted by the limited effects paradigm (Bandura, 1994; Lang, 2007; McQuail, 1979). Changes to the relationship between journalists and publics were considered to be relatively innovative and worthwhile for study, while changes in content could always simply be associated with agenda setting theory. A theory that public journalism should focus on changes to the journalist-public relationship, the reasoning goes; otherwise, it is merely another concept competing with relatively established theory.

The public journalism movement sought, in part, to restore existing institutional ideals in an industry known for having detached, aloof and/or elitist practitioners. It was about transparency. "We settled on 'public journalism' because the thrust of the idea was to make a positive impact on public life and because its practitioners would be public—that is, open and unselfconscious — about what they were doing and why" (Merritt, 2009, p. 25). Transparency may be a step in the direction of collaboration, but it is not a substitute for it. Glasser (1999) expresses his frustration with the inability to define what public journalism was about:

> [T]oo much of the literature on public journalism glosses over inconsistencies and even contradictions in its premises and principles…few agree on what 'democracy' means, where 'public life' exists, or should exist, what constitutes 'participation'—and what role the press should play in making it all work. (p.7)

Even when the terms of public journalism were agreed upon, the meaning and the usage of those terms could still be inconsistent. Suffice it to say there were many ideas about what public journalism was and what it should have been. The commonalities across definitions include a focus on bringing citizens and journalists together, a focus on transparency in the industry, and the possibility of bringing about social change by covering the news in a different, less hierarchical way, although the most compelling arguments pointed out that merely changing content was not likely to reshape society and that it was the attempted revolution in the journalist-publics relationship that carried the most interest if not promise.

Public journalism faced fierce opposition from the libertarian wing of journalism scholars. Barney (1997) writes of the threat of the communitarian nature of public journalism. "The need to perpetuate the organization reorders priorities to require that Loyalty to the organization transcends commitment to Truth" (p. 79). His worry is that communitarianism will quash dissent and render journalism toothless. He tends to ignore the possibility that the corporate control of "objective" news media can render journalism just as weak. Merrill (1997) puts his opposition in colorful terms: "Let us not give serious consideration to the communitarians' *non-negotiable principles* in journalism—those that supposedly define it as a profession and guide its practices (original emphasis). Let us seriously question the idea that morality makes universal and categorical claims on us…it is a rather ominous suggestion that a communitarian morality will rise like a gray and stupefying giant to erase cultural values and relegate ethical pluralism to nothingness" (p. 64). Altschull offers a counterpoint: "I would like to agree with [Merrill], for I admire his cheerful optimism and his belief that somehow America's journalists will yet arrive at the sunny uplands that he sees as still within their reach. I used to believe that myself, before I had come to recognize that individual tilters at windmills are simply unable to challenge Money" (1997, p. 145). The debate over public journalism strikes at deeper debates about social philosophy as it relates to journalism. Historically, public journalism's detractors viewed the champions of public journalism not as reinforcements fighting journalism's good fight to speak truth to power but as "evangelists" of a communitarian future in danger of ignoring inconvenient truths (Corrigan, 1999).

The social journalism CMS described here aligns with three key aspects of the public journalism movement: First, it changes the relationship between journalists and site users when it comes to setting the news agenda and designing the site as well. Second, through cooperative efforts, the news organization seeks to help citizens to take action in their communities, specifically by furthering public health initiatives. Third, the site has rules for citizen contributors designed to improve public discourse and encourage the deliberation of health issues.

The social journalism CMS changes the relationship between journalists and publics in that it is designed to be more conversational than other forms of journalism, and one of the most influential groups determining the site's design and function is a community advisory board, which interestingly began as a list of contacts in a beat reporter's files.

> [News1] was already our health reporter. She already had a lot of contacts, so she was the one who said this is pretty representational of the people who are interested in health…and that included everybody from the local hospital to citizens who were concerned about insurance, and so we thought it was a great group, so we brought them in and we met with them I would say it was at least once a month. (newsmgmt2)

The CMS was developed with their input in an iterative fashion. At first the group wanted very tight control over the commenting structure, but they relented when they recognized that the site could not function with tight controls. Instead, they decided on instituting a "real names policy" where all members had to use their real names in order to post, join groups or to comment more than a few times. This is intended to foster productive discourse, which will be discussed in more detail in the second half of this paper, but first it is important to lay out a few more details about how citizens and journalists interact on the HealthSite and what that has to do with public journalism. (HealthSite is the generic term used in this study in place of the organization's actual name in accordance with an IRB agreement.)

As has been stated, users may contribute directly to the site any health-related content they see fit, except for content that is obviously meant to advertise a business or service. Users may contribute news or commentary, and businesses that want to join the conversation are asked simply to pay to create a sponsored group, and then they may advertise through the site's open publishing platform.

As Groves (2012) learned in his research, a three-month-long content analysis of the HealthSite conducted between April and June of 2010, out of 704 stories posted, 59.5% (419) came from journalists affiliated with the news organization, while 40.5% (285) came from "nonjournalist" contributors. The sources cited by each are mostly "nonmedical" including 58% of journalists' sources and 42% of the sources of "nonjournalists". Journalists' second most common sources were medical sources (24%), while nonjournalists' second-favorite sources were personal accounts (29%). Journalists' personal accounts made up a small but noteworthy 8% of their own sources, again according to Groves (2012). Groves (2012) showed that a small number of journalists provided more than half of the site's content during the months examined; however, citizens came up with more than 40% of the site's stories, and the better part of the sourcing for the news stories on the HealthSite did not come from medical professionals, or authority sources, but from other citizens. Self-sourcing is important in a health news context. It means people are sharing their stories of cancer survival, weight loss and nutrition, and of fighting rare illnesses. This shows an openness to collaboration and suggests a more people-focused, rather than authority-centric news agenda. More research is needed on the content and users of this site if we are going to be able to draw deeper conclusions based on statistically significant data, but what can be said is that the structure of the site lends itself to collaboration, and it allows for a less-hierarchical approach to setting the health news agenda for the community.

> ***Because of the sensitive nature of the topic of health and the level of participation expected of local businesses and non-profit organizations, the group of community advisors and the news organization found that a strict policy for managing comments was essential.***

The site is also built to help citizens act. It features general updates on major issues. It covers local events such as fundraising walks before, during, and after they occur. It encourages the sharing of personal stories of triumph and loss (newsmgmt2), and site's designated reporter will track down information as requested by users (news1). At times, the journalist in charge of managing the site will act on behalf of community members. "Have you heard the story about the blood drive and how someone like last year posted, like, 'Well, it's full'? So, I called the blood bank, and they were like, 'Well, we'll open it up.' And it's a way the community kind of responded and they got more spots" (news1). Here, the journalist took direct action on the behalf of the online community. Although evidence is only anecdotal, the journalist assigned to manage the site's day-to-day work reported tracking down information requested in the comments of news stories on several occasions in the site's first few months of operation.

Because of the sensitive nature of the topic of health and the level of participation expected of local businesses and non-profit organizations, the group of community advisors and the news organization found that a strict policy for managing comments was essential. "In order to build any sort of traffic, there was no way that we could have done it without the real name commenting, and that's a really, really wonderful thing about the HealthSite in general, and it refers back to other forms of social media" (ad_marketing2). The organization follows a policy similar to Facebook's real name requirement in order to limit vitriol, which is common in the anonymous comments sections of the same organization's online newspaper. This is as clear a contrast as any between the news organization's general news homepage, which is based on a previous version of the same CMS, and the HealthSite, which is described as running the "experimental" social journalism CMS, which takes the same multimedia publishing tools available to journalists at the online newspaper, makes them available to users, and adds grouping, following, and news feed features (design1). The online newspaper has many more comments posted by many more users, and they are encouraged to participate because they drive traffic (ad_marketing2), but the relationship between journalists and site users in the HealthSite would likely cease to function if the usual band of trolls were allowed to run through the community posting with impunity. The community advisory group demanded the use of real names.

> The health community is so scared to get involved in social media. There are so many privacy issues, all these potential HIPPA issues. You can lose your job or your license. Health professionals are just petrified to get involved on social media, and I think it's essential the guidance and the facility of having the ability to say we are monitoring this. (news1)

Thus, the journalist is re-cast as a community leader, and this role resulted from requests made by users and the broader community advisory board. "Our first sort of go through on that was we weren't going to make the reporters to be so prominent, but our community wanted that. They rely on [news1], who they already had as kind of a touchstone" (newsmgmt2). In this case, the beat reporter was re-trained to work as a community conversation leader. The reporter files stories, manages a calendar, monitors and responds to comments. There is no shortage of community news to cover, and the journalist's description of duties gives credence to the old saw that "It's not a job. It's a calling."

That the work of the site's dedicated journalist is so transparent to the users is further indication that the site is designed to be open and collaborative. It is another sign that the ideals of public journalism are being employed in this "experimental" case. Users can see exactly what and how often the journalist posts. If users follow that reporter and view the site through the news feed on their own dashboards, the stories from the site's main reporter (and anyone else they follow) appear like a list of headlines. It is similar to the way headlines appear in RSS readers, although other users' activities are also posted, i.e. if a user follows someone else and that second user joins a group, that action will appear in the news feed. Behind each link in the news feed is often a story of several paragraphs or more. Users have the option of watching their own news feed or surfing the site's content pages, which are publicly available. Articles can live longer than the journalist intended, which is perhaps a by-product of transparency. Site users feel they can always ask the reporter for more information. What results is a nascent version of "news as conversation." The public journalism movement encouraged these kinds of relationships. To some scholars, this was what made public journalism most interesting. It is not the content so much as the relationships built around the content that matters.

The major downside is that the journalist may feel a chilling effect when it comes to reporting negative news about the site's sponsor. The journalist claims that pressure will not pre-empt negative news coverage, even when it concerns the local hospital: "I think a bad story is going to be a bad story, but they'll be there to comment, and what I've learned from the hospital is just that they want to be able to comment because that would anger them more if there's a bad story and we don't give them the opportunity" (news1).

The social journalism platform redefines the way the journalist works with the community. It conceives of news as an ongoing, collaborative effort. The homepage is still managed by the news organization. Overarching meta-groups are still delimited, named and defined by company as well, but the interface presents many opportunities to interact. Each user has a small, limited number of times he or she can comment anonymously before site registration is required. The use of real names is required to participate meaningfully. Groves (2012) found that the site had more than 1,100 users. It gets 12 million monthly page views (newsmgmt2). The niche is small. It is bound both geographically and topically, but what lives in this little digital commons is the online offspring of a once stagnant journalism movement.

### The Habermassian ideal and social journalism

This paper has argued that the website discussed here takes many of the ideals of the public journalism movement and puts them into practice in an online setting, but is this site, or one like it, capable of creating what some scholars consider to be the Holy Grail of public discourse, the Habermassian public sphere? The rest of this article discusses why that question is important and attempts to answer it using case study data gathered via in-depth interviews.

### No Habermas que pedir

Habermas' (1989) public sphere is defined as a space between the realm of private citizens and "the sphere of public authority" that contains the political realm (p. 18), also know as the "world of letters" (p. 51), which includes the news media and the market of "culture products" (p. 36). In the ideal public sphere, private citizens can come together in public to debate issues of culture and politics. "Rational-critical" debate (p. 28) carries with it a power to subject other forms of political power because it is the exercise of public reason. Public reason is not self-evidently powerful; rather, the value of public reason is bound up with the definition and interpretation of social self-rule, i.e. democracy. Those who hold power in a democracy claim to do so as a matter of "public service" after popular or electoral college votes. Thus, the claim to power in a democracy relies on a social contract wherein rational, critical, and public debate and consensus making are supposed to be sovereign. In the ideal discursive space between the sphere of private citizens and the sphere of public authority (p. 18), a specific type of rhetoric is supposed to rule: that which is guided by the competing ideals and interests of reasonable people communicating reasonably. The quality of the discourse legitimates whatever agreements, laws, or policies are reached.

Habermas saw the public sphere as having been invaded and taken over by "manufactured publicity" (p. 211), which subsumed rational critical debate. "[E]ven the political realm is social-psychologically integrated into the realm of consumption" (p. 216). This results in a "refeudalization of the public sphere" because the legitimate power of citizen sovereignty arrived at through rational-critical debate has now been usurped by the power of media companies who proffer tawdry consumerism in place of critical discourse.

For Habermas, the commercialization of the public sphere robs it of its ability to derive power from the public through reasoned debate. Commercialization makes for a broken democracy that can only be fixed by creating new spaces where rational-critical debate can take place in a manner that may affect social and political change. For-profit news organizations dominate the democratic political landscape, and thus potentially successful for-profit models ought to be examined. What this study ultimately asks is if the social journalism CMS analyzed here creates a space where rational critical debate can dominate commercial interests while still attracting commercial participation.

### Zizi Papacharissi and the search for the Holy Grail

Several mass communication scholars have examined the possibility that digital communication technologies might be used to create virtual spaces for Habermassian, rational-critical debate (Curran, 1991; Dahlberg, 2001a; Dahlgren, 2005; Papacharissi, 2002). Papacharissi (2002) notes the dichotomous nature of new digital technologies, e.g. the capacity for information storage and retrieval is immense, but access is unequal. Technology connects people around the world, but it can accelerate fragmentation into political camps. Political power often serves to mold technology to its forms rather than technology creating "new public space for politically oriented conversation" (Papacharissi, 2002, p. 9). Thus, journalism studies scholars often find it necessary to point out that they are not espousing utopian or deterministic views of the potential for online media to beget digital democracy. They want to distance their hope for the construction of a functioning public sphere from the assumptions made when the Internet was first being widely adopted. Clift (1998) summarizes the zeitgeist: "The Internet will save democracy. Or so the early 1990s technohype led many to believe. With each new communication medium comes a wide-eyed view about its potential. I'd like to suggest that just as the television saved democracy, so will the Internet" (n.p.). Scholars have noted that utopian hopes were expressed about every emerging media technology since at least the introduction of the telegraph (Carey, 2009, p. 146; Nye, 1997). Often scholars of online journalism express quite passionately how much they would like to see the development of a functioning online public sphere, but they take care to point out that it will take more than the adoption of technological capabilities for this to happen.

Rheingold (2000), one of the first out of the gate with high hopes for the public Internet, does not promote a purely utopian point of view, but he champions the "virtual community" and the "social web," two concepts underlying the social journalism CMS. Rheingold first published his book describing online communities of like-minded idealists in 1993, when access to online discussion boards was novel, exciting, and billed by the hour (2000). In it, Rheingold (2000) glorifies the discussions generated in the early days of digital bulletin boards: "About two dozen social scientists, working for several years, might produce conclusions that would help inform these debates and furnish a basis of validated observation for all the theories flying around" (p. 54-55). Habermas might point out that Rheingold's intellectually rich online cadre was made up of others in the bourgeoisie or better, but what remains from that experience is the promise of meaningful online collaboration.

Rheingold popularized the term "virtual community" with the first (1993) edition of his book by the same name, but another of his phrases seems even more applicable to this study: "The social web, a notion journalists and investors found radical and futuristic in 1996, has emerged from both the grassroots and the big players in today's highly commercialized web enterprises" (Rheingold, 2000, p. 340). Rheingold (2000) added, "You used to need both money and expertise to set up a webconference, chatroom, or listserv. Now online communication tools are public goods… A huge social experiment is taking place, as people and enterprises take up these tools, are changed by them, and change the way others live, work, and play" (pp. 340-341). Rheingold is clearly excited about the possibility that online social networks could contribute to the formulation of a digital public sphere.

Other scholars extended the metaphor into McLuhan-esque territory. Bowman & Willis in *We Media* (2003) identify what they believe to be a cycle of discourse emerging between mainstream media outlets and citizen journalists:

> What is emerging is a new media ecosystem…where online communities discuss and extend the stories created by mainstream media. These communities also produce participatory journalism, grassroots reporting, innovative reporting, commentary and fact-checking, which the mainstream media feed upon, developing them as a pool of tips, sources and story ideas. (n.p.)

A social journalism CMS would have the potential to spread these practices to the general public. Perhaps tribalism in the global village could be put in check by independent thinkers with social media tools in their hands.

Against the backdrop of this hopeful view, Terranova (2004) suggests that society may not be capable of building a public sphere no matter how fertile the media ecosystem may be. “The problem is that this entity, this public which is deemed to exist somewhere at the end of the communication process…often do[es] not seem to embody the qualities of the ‘enlightened citizen’ at all” (p. 133). “What use is the social web,” she seems to ask, “if society is not prepared to use it?” Todd Gitlin in Liebes (1998) points out that a universal public sphere does not appear to be the true goal of many scholars or media professionals. Realistically what is being produced, he argues is a two-tiered media system with various “sphericules” (p. 170). If Gitlin is right, then it is more correct to say that this study is examining the development of a bourgeois public “sphericule.” If Terranova is right, the only way for a social information platform to successfully contribute to rational critical debate would be for it to influence something beyond communication structures and types of interactions. It would have to influence culture. It would have to make it cool or popular or attractive to be rational and critical in order to successfully create both the space *and conditions* necessary for the formation of a functioning public sphere.

This is a tall order for a social CMS built by a news organization. As Habermas (1989) himself argues, it may not be possible for a for-profit news entity, no matter how idealistic and discursively egalitarian it may be, to foster a functioning discursive space for rational-critical debate. The explosion of online political groups and online activism certainly reflects the potentially powerful political uses of networked technologies, including social networks (Bowen, 1996; Browning, 1996). This would suggest that cultural change can come about in ways and in places where it was not likely previously with the aid of social media tools. Of course the Arab Spring, the Syrian fight for independence and other pockets of informed, coordinated resistance come to mind; however, Dahlberg (2001b) argues, much like Terranova, that the rational-critical chicken must come before the public sphere egg: “The public sphere will not be extended merely through the diffusion of a new technological artifact. People must be drawn into rational-critical discourse before new technologies can be successfully employed to extend the public sphere” (p. 630). Most of these scholars are concerned with the potential for broad, sweeping social change. What if a fully functioning public sphere were built in cyberspace but tied to real space, a real community? It is argued here that this might indeed be a small sphere in a rich town, but that it could still represent a microcosm of all that is possible if structures were built with collaborative, critical discourse in mind. The sole research question in this study attempts to address issues of possibility, likelihood.

**Research Question: In what ways, if any, does the social journalism CMS match the Habermassian ideal of the public sphere?**

The answer to this question would portend the possibility of public sphere production via concerted CMS development and community outreach. Throughout the analysis that follows, it is understood that the community in question is atypical. It is a place with relatively highly educated people built around an institution dedicated to knowledge and intelligence. If found, a functioning online public sphere that makes use of social media tools and modified journalistic practices would stand only as an example of what is possible. The much broader debate of whether a universal public sphere can be created that extends beyond the bourgeoisie is one to answer after developers, managers, and scholars have found a model or models for online public spaces that work. In other words, it is argued that it must be built first and scaled second, if possible.

## Method

This research project employs the case study approach. This study examines the interplay between technological and social forces in a holistic manner enabling the inclusion of multiple factors viewed from multiple perspectives. The broad nature of this research question demands a method that enables all-inclusive analysis. Deep description including the ability to get at the *how* and *why* of a research subject are most important here. The case study method will often develop more research questions than it answers (Yin, 2008). It is argued here that at this stage of relative crisis and innovation in journalism, exploratory research is not only justifiable, it is necessary. The term “case study” signifies: “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1989, p. 23 quoted in Platt, 1992, p. 45). This suits the current study well in that technological change is both context and variable.

Flyvbjerg (2006) identifies four different types of case study: extreme/deviant cases, maximum variation cases, critical cases, and paradigmatic cases (p. 230). The case studied here is an extreme case. A deviant or extreme case can offer a fresh approach to cutting edge problems. Whether it blazes a trail of success or goes down in flames, it is of interest to others examining similar phenomena.

### Construct validity

Yin (2008) argues that case studies should connect data to theory through the development of a descriptive framework, which may be case-specific (Kindle loc. 2714, Ch. 5). Around this framework, evidence from the case is added in order to make meaningful, well-documented statements about the theory. This ensures a connection between data and theory. The framework employed here is simply the set of expectations about the public sphere detailed by Habermas (1989). The evidence includes descriptions of the intentions and functions of the social journalism CMS from the point of view of managers and workers in the news organization.

### Data collection

This case study employed an in-depth, semi-structured interview method of data collection. Weiss (1995) notes that this method “is good for developing detailed descriptions…helps at integrating multiple perspectives…and enables the researcher to describe processes” (1995, pp. 9-11). These attributes apply directly to this study, designed to provide detailed descriptions of complex news making processes from multiple points of view, allowing for interpretation and synthesis of viewpoints as well as the identification of areas of interest and key variables for future research.

### Case selection and data collection

This study is based on 21 in-depth interviews conducted over the course of several weeks in early 2011 at a Midwestern news organization in existence for more than 100 years. Interviews were conducted in one-on-one settings, either on the premises or at coffee shops and restaurants near the company's main building. Questions related to the social journalism CMS were asked of every participant, and follow-up questions delved into their particular areas of expertise. Information from each interview informed follow-up questions asked in subsequent interviews.

### Data analysis

Transcribing the interviews for this study produced about 500 pages of text. Most participants were contacted via email to clarify statements. Comments for this paper come directly from those transcripts. Reflexive analysis of each transcript was conducted utilizing TAMS Analyzer, a free, Mac-based software for qualitative data analysis. Each interview was coded multiple times. Codes were revised each time in order to tease out similar themes and subthemes. Codes relating to the public sphere were separated, and the content of interviews contained therein was analyzed for this study.

## Findings, Discussion, Conclusion and Future Research

In response to the research question, if a socially-networked CMS were going to show potential for enabling a digital public sphere, per literature cited above, it would have the following qualities: It would create space for discourse. Discussions would be rational and critical in nature. Finally, there would be evidence that institutional power structures could be influenced by consensus found in the space, and that commercial interests would take a back seat to community discussion.

Any indication that the discussions on the site might encourage the popularization of critical thought is noted; however, this paper is based on a study of a news organization, neither on a content analysis, nor on a set of interviews with public users, which is a key limitation. As has been said before, the most that can come of this study is an in-depth examination of potential.

Perhaps it is tragic that such a small, singular effort should be so interesting in a democratic society. As circumstances would have it, though, this is a novel news enterprise.

The discussion is separated into three parts: The first answers whether there appears to be proper space for discourse. The second section answers whether that discourse is rational and critical. The third seeks to answer whether there is evidence of the site being used to wield users' discursive power over institutions of authority. The setup is simple: Key quotes are briefly introduced and some summaries and syntheses are offered. This is a results "in their own words" section.

### Space and encouragement for discourse

Perhaps the most promising aspect of the social journalism CMS described here is that it is designed to encourage open discourse. The site promotes a sense of community.

> The HealthSite is basically designed to be that conversation starter. I don't think we've done much to really innovate comments. Those have been around forever, but the focus is definitely on comments and on encouraging anyone to post on the site. That's different than our other sites. You have our traditional newspaper site. We've had user interaction on the site with comments and stuff but user generated blog type stuff has been secluded to the reader blogs area. (design2)

Further encouraging discussion is the real names policy. This addresses the problem of trolling found in the news organization's other online properties:

> The other sites had really, really snarky commenters, and the way that it was designed that you had to verify that you were a real person and you had to present as yourself with a name was very very very important in the site taking off at all. I had the feeling that had the HealthSite been launched without the real name commenting, it might have just crashed and burned with how some participants on [the newspaper's website] use the site. (ad_marketing2)

The HealthSite's open design, the ability of anyone to sign up and start publishing articles, and the following and grouping functions aid in generating pro-social discourse. The community advisory board at first asked that the ability to post and comment be strictly limited to approved members of groups. Once the community noticed how much that slowed down traffic, within a matter of months, the group changed its approach:

> We got to the point later where the same advisory group that was all worried about nobody's getting in unless they're approved and everyone in their real names actually asking for more, easier ways for people to interact, which is a pretty awesome step for them mentally to come from where they were when we started. (design1)

The most promising aspect of the social journalism CMS is that it is designed to be a productive space where people can discuss the topic of health in a broad way comfortably.

The downside to the public, open, and non-anonymous site focusing on health is that professionals are deterred from using it:

> I have a dietician right when it launched I encouraged her to post, and I thought she'd be really interested in it, and she said, 'I have HIPPA to answer to.' I would be afraid that I would talk about a patient in a way that would get me in trouble or I would give advice that might put my life in jeopardy, so she wasn't keen on sharing. (news3)

> We had in the beginning been thinking that we would have a lot of doctors on the site and having spent some time in the pharmaceutical industry I was a bit gun shy on that too, knowing about the time constraints on doctors…so we gave up a little while ago on trying to get physicians directly involved. (ad_marketing4)

Additionally, advertisers are wary of sharing private information:

> Socially-enabled community discussions around anything are a little 'coasty' I think for the Midwest. So I think there's push back from the advertisers because they don't really understand that those conversations are happening about their businesses, whether or not they're involved in it. (ad_marketing1)

Additionally, there is concern that having the local hospital as the major sponsor might limit what the site's main reporter covers or encourages:

> About the hospital being a sponsor, they're a huge advertiser. They *were* a huge advertiser before. From my standpoint, there's not much we can do about that. That's great. I'm glad they're supporting of it, but in my view you have to separate being supportive of the concept. They're not paying a dollar for every time their name is mentioned in a good way. You know, if they do something idiotic, we're not going to *not* report about it. (newsmgmt3)

Since people might be less forthcoming with their personal health issues, and since health disproportionately concerns elderly readers, who are less likely to make use of the company's web offerings (newsmgmt3), there is something of a high degree of difficulty with this particular case. It is always described as an inviting space. The reporter in charge is community-focused and serves to encourage discussion by following up on questions and by engaging with readers in comments whenever possible (newsmgmt2, news1). The use of real names is both a limitation and a benefit, but the policy was initiated at the behest of the community in order to try to keep things civil and to allow people to feel safe. The fact that the advisory board, made up of nonprofit and for-profit health interests, has backed away from those concerns bodes well.

**Rational-critical discussion**

While it is easy to say that the site fosters open discussion, since it was designed to do so, it is less clear that critical debates have arisen. Critical debates are not necessarily frowned upon. They are simply not encouraged. “I think the topic [health] is something that really lends to being a trusted place. If you look at the digital news community, the worst comments generally relate to politics” (newsmgmt4). Thus at a time when the national debate on health care raged, the site tended to focus on local concerns. Issues about insurance coverage were brought up but were not made the focus of the site (news1). The reporter is less a muckraker and more a community organizer, and while a functioning public sphere would not require an investigative journalist it does, by definition require that issues of social import be addressed. Perhaps the problem is not with the community but that the critical debate and argument are synonymous. Ultimately, it is a good sign that the site was not overrun with discussions of the Affordable Care Act.

***The reporter is less a muckraker and more a community organizer, and while a functioning public sphere would not require an investigative journalist it does, by definition require that issues of social import be addressed. Perhaps the problem is not with the community but that the critical debate and argument are synonymous.***

At a time when obesity and diabetes affect society at alarming rates, discussing one’s health problems can be considered critical discourse.

> It’s encouraging they feel comfortable sharing their stories – where I don’t think you would on the newspaper’s website. Sometimes I don’t feel comfortable sharing people’s stories that I write on [the online newspaper] just because of the horrible comments people leave. (news9)

Perhaps it should be recognized that taking action to be healthier is, in a sense, an act of social criticism.

Another example of critical discussion is what happens when someone criticizes advertisers on the HealthSite. One key example from the interview data suggests that the open structure of the site can be beneficial to a community business/advertiser under fire:

> These conversations, they’re happening, and we’re letting you know, and we’re trying to train you how to respond to them, so you can go in and have a discussion as part of a community because it’s the content providers, the audience, and then the businesses. They’re all

> part of the community, and that's a very natural sort of conversation to have. Once again, prior to the industrial age, nobody thought twice about the fact that most of their businesses were their neighbors, and we kind of struggle with that because we've gotten into these artificial silos. (ad_marketing1)

The advertising director for the company suggests not only that advertisers should participate in the discussion, but also that it is in their best interests to do so. This discussion is couched in the context of community, which makes this case interesting but which could be a limit to a certain type of scaling. If this open space for critical thought were to expand, it would make more sense for many more community sites to be developed rather than to extend this site beyond its community.

**People power**

If the social journalism CMS could bring about institutional change in its own geographically limited context, it would be much easier to argue that it is a functioning example approximating the ideal public sphere. The first step accomplished by the site is to empower community health leaders in for-profit and non-profit enterprises:

> The [key] experiment with the HealthSite was getting the advisory board together and taking these different people from the community that work in the same health industry to sort of work together on this project, and there's the potential for lots of interesting things to happen there as far as getting news out in your community. I've read lots of things that I didn't realize just by looking at the site, and it doesn't just come from [news1], so I think that that's probably a slow process, I would say, but yeah I think things like that have changed. (design2)

The managing editor of the newspaper sees room for advocacy in this environment:

> The old way of doing that was you had a health reporter who would follow the trends and mostly follow national issues. Now, with the HealthSite, you could spend more time, dissect the issues and trends locally, and get the community involved too…to reach out to the reporter on it to get her to respond to their needs. She spends a lot of time in the community talking to people and not only covering it but being a champion of the issue…It's not your traditional journalism you may have learned about in the J-school five or 10, 20 years ago. Now you might be getting a little bit more involved in the news and becoming a bit more of a champion of an issue. (newsmgmt1)

It is significant that the managing editor is on board with this level of advocacy. It is encouraging that the site provides space for debate, encourages critical thought, discourse and action. It is not clear yet whether the site will have an impact on local politics, but its existence has created a set of expectations in the local health community that they are to collaborate as much as possible. While the journalist in charge of the site will advocate for change, the organization makes it explicit that the issues need to arise from the discourse.

> We don't want to be the ones targeting goals for the community, but we do want to help them achieve those goals. I think what makes the HealthSite different is a little higher mindedness. We want to help make this a better place to live, work and whatnot. (newsmgmt4)

It bears repeating that the news organization in question organizes content on the HealthSite in sections of its own design. Apparently it is quite difficult for news professionals to refrain from doing that with content; however, for its weaknesses and narrow focus, the site offers promise for those interested in developing an online public sphere. Perhaps it will be a sphere of "sphericules." It is arguable that that would be better than many alternatives facing the industry. Future research should continue to focus on the site's content. The figure of 12 million page views per month for the HealthSite is still current (newsmgmt2); however, a partner site devoted to environmentalism and the "green economy" has opened and shut down since these interviews were conducted (newsmgmt2). One can think of other types of niche sites that might be tested using this CMS. The organization in question has a history of marketing its content management tools for publishing and advertising. Next steps might include participant observation as a publisher employing this platform, as a journalist at its nexus working 80-hour weeks, or as a member tracking the use of the site longitudinally. Comparisons between this and other models would also be quite valuable.

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## Appendix—Interview Participants

| **Participant Label** | **Description** |
|---|---|
| ad_marketing1 | Director of Sales and Marketing. His responsibilities include development of digital products. |
| ad_marketing2 | Manager of social media for the advertising side of the parent company of the HealthSite. She maintains the company's presence on Facebook and Twitter across several products and platforms and participates in marketing events. |
| ad_marketing3 | Marketing manager for the newspaper. She was originally hired to supervise the graphic arts department. |
| ad_marketing4 | Digital Sales Manager for online news products. She leads all digital sales representatives and directs print sales representatives as well. |
| design1 | Manager of all projects and people in the internal development team, which built the HealthSite and which manages several other online properties. He works as a liaison between the company and all stakeholders in digital product development. |
| design2 | Interactive designer for digital products in the news organization. He is responsible for feature changes, reorganization of the HealthSite and user interaction features on all sites. |

| | |
|---|---|
| news1 | HealthSite reporter and manager; health beat reporter for the newspaper. She is often referred to as the social journalism site manager. |
| news2 | Reporter covering schools. He writes a beat blog and was formerly a convergence reporter. |
| news3 | Features reporter with a focus on food and other issues. |
| news4 | Reporter and manager of a community news site owned by the parent company but located outside of the city represented by the social journalism site. |
| news5 | General assignment reporter and graduate student. |
| news6 | Higher education reporter who maintains a beat blog. |
| news7 | Runs the niche entertainment site and is responsible for arts and entertainment coverage in the newspaper |
| news8 | Online editor. She directs the flow of stories for the legacy online newspaper. |
| news9 | Sustainability beat reporter now in charge of the second social journalism site. |
| news10 | Online editor for the sports niche site. |
| news11 | Distribution Desk Chief. She supervises the copy desk. |
| newsmgmt1 | Managing editor at the newspaper. He is responsible for news content across platforms. |
| newsmgmt2 | Director of Media Strategies for the news company and conceptual designer of the HealthSite. She is often referred to as the social journalism project director. |
| newsmgmt3 | Community Editor. She supervises news assignments. |
| newsmgmt4 | Assistant Director of Media Strategies. He evaluates new niche markets where products may be introduced. |

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#ISOJ
Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 182-203

# Website Features of the Top 100 Circulation U.S. Newspapers

***Heather Heater, Anita Ford, Jeremy Lyons, Brad Beckwith, Kris Miller and Robert Bergland***

*Replicating a study conducted in 2006 by the Bivings Group, this team of researchers analyzed the websites of the top 100 circulation newspapers in the United States. Using a two-pass review system and a 35-item matrix, the group found that the use of multimedia by the newspapers increased significantly, with video jumping from 61% to 95%. Interactive features also increased, with the most dramatic changes coming in the growth in comments sections after articles, from 19% to 96%.*

As we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the World Wide Web in 2012, the journalism field has looked back over the last two decades with mixed emotions: horror over the decline in advertising revenue since 2005 and decreasing print circulation and newsroom staff numbers, joy over the ways new technologies have allowed journalists to tell and distribute stories, and bewilderment over the dramatic ways the Internet has transformed the relationship with readers and blurred the distinction between journalists and citizens.

These changes over the past 20 years have had a huge impact not only on what happens in newsrooms, but also naturally what happens on the newspapers' websites. Even prior to the early 1993 launch of the Mosaic GUI web browser, newspapers were already offering text-based content online through services such as Prodigy and America Online in the United States, Minitel in France, and Ibertex and Teleservei in Spain. Within a few years, some newspapers had their own web sites and servers and were creating and distributing original video. In the ensuing decade, many of the biggest newspapers added even more interactive and multimedia features, growth that prompted one research group to conduct a study of the websites of the top 100 circulation newspapers in the United States. While other research groups and academic researchers had conducted limited studies of newspaper websites, the Bivings Group study in 2006 provided the first comprehensive snapshot of what was taking place on the websites of the biggest newspapers in America, looking at 14 features, ranging from video to RSS feeds.

Using similar but more refined methods, our study aimed to take a snapshot six years later, looking again at the multimedia and interactivity offered on the top 100 daily circulation newspaper sites in 2012. Our goal was to document what changes had taken place in the previous six years in many of those 14 categories, in addition to expanding the number of features, taking into account several new technologies/features added by newspapers in those half-dozen years. And, just as the Bivings study has served as a valuable baseline for examination of the progression of newspaper websites, we hope our study can serve as yet another historical marker, a measuring point for similar studies five, 10 or 20 years hence in documenting the continued evolution of newspapers on the World Wide Web.

## Literature Review

Before and after the Bivings Group study, there have been numerous research projects that have examined newspaper websites. They have varied greatly not only in what they have studied, but also the methodologies employed. One of the earliest studies was done by Kamerer and Bressers (1998), who used a content analysis method to study the inclusion of national vs. local news on newspaper websites. They looked at 74 news sites in early 1997, then expanded their study to 166 in a second pass six months later. Another 1997 study, conducted by Peng, Tham, & Xioming (1999), concerned the design of the websites. Surveying 247 newspaper editors, the group compared small versus large newspaper front-page designs, along with archive, forum and chat features. Yet another 1997 online newspaper study was done by Schultz (1999). Like our study, Schultz selected 100 newspapers, but instead of taking the top 100 circulation newspapers, had a stratified sample of papers in the categories of under 25,000, 25-50,000, 50,001-100,000, 100,001-250,000, and over 250,000. Using a content analysis method similar to ours, Shultz looked at the inclusion of polls, photographs, multimedia, reporter email addresses, forums, chat rooms, and letters to the editor.

Some other earlier explorations of converging media included studies by Martin (1998) and Singer (1997). As Martin stated during her research, "… the news industry is beginning to recognize that online news, digitally-delivered, is not simply an electronic version of the newspaper, but rather is a new outlet with a function and format all its own" (p. 71). While many of the studies look at newspaper websites in just one moment in time, one of the most cited newspaper website studies used a longitudinal approach. In a 1997-2003 study, Greer and Mensing (2004) examined 83 newspapers over a course of several years looking at the multimedia, interactivity, existence of news, and the impending revenue that came from the generating content on news sites.

In contrast to these studies using survey and content analysis methods, numerous researchers have tried to answer the "how" and "why" questions through an ethnographic approach. Dibean and Garrison (2001), for example, looked at six newspapers and how they were able to incorporate new web skills on each of the sites that they researched. Their study noted that newsrooms are not taking the full advantage of the new media such as multimedia and interactivity. They concluded that newsrooms need to change their methods on how to gather and distribute news in the converging world of media, and it was time that they move away from the “old” way of getting news to their viewers. It is time that newspapers start distributing news more than every 24 hours, they wrote.

Several key ethnographies have been written about the Tampa Tribune/WFLI merger. For example, Huang, Rademakers, Fayemiwo, and Dunlap (2004) focused the impact of the merger on quality issues, finding that the merger did not have a significant negative impact on the quality of reporting at the merged organization.

Another ethnography was conducted by Boczkowski in 2004, looking at how newspapers embraced multimedia and interactivity on their sites. Boczkowski examined three online newspapers and looked at how each were organized, what their work ethics were, and how the workers were able to adjust to the new technology of the Web, searching to “.... close this gap between newsroom phenomena and our accounts of them by looking at the process of adopting multimedia and interactive technologies in online newsrooms” (p. 198). Of the more recent ethnographies, some of the strongest studies have come from the two collections of ethnographies edited by Domingo and Patterson. Both their 2008 and 2011 *Making Online News* compilations have an international focus, examining newsrooms from not only the U.S. (Brannon, 2008; Robinson, 2011), but from Europe (Cawley, 2008; Quandt, 2008) and other countries around the world, such as Malaysia (Firdaus, 2011) and Zimbabwe (Mabweazara, 2011).

While these studies have dealt primarily with newspaper websites and newsrooms, there have been many other related studies that have looked at broadcast news websites. Some of these early studies include ones done by Kiernan and Levy (1999) and Lind and Medoff (1999), as well as a similar follow-up study done by Pitts and Harms in 2003. Some studies, such as one done by Lin and Jeffres (2001) have compared broadcast websites to their print counterparts. Their study found that the newspaper websites provided more news and more different types of news than TV news websites, and far more news than radio station websites, which provided almost no news. Later studies have also found that TV stations do not supply as much news content as newspapers (Chan-Ohlmsted & Park, 2000) and even frequently do not have audio and video on their websites, even though they naturally produce such content for their on-air broadcasts (Pitts & Harms, 2003). Several other studies such as those done by Kraeplin and Criado (2009) and DeMars (2009) have investigated the relationships between newspaper and broadcast stations, journalists, and websites. As noted by Dailey, Demo, and Spillman (2009), more and more newspapers are producing their own video content and are thus ending their partnerships with TV stations and websites. Another study done by Harper (2003) addressees not only newspapers going digital but how other sources of media have to battle with each other to find their own niche. He also pointed out that “… many online publications depend on major brand names as the primary sources of information. Therefore, the broadcast outlets and newspapers that operate the Web sites still maintain control of the setting of the journalistic agendas and the public debate” (p. 278). Harper also discussed how online journalism really changes the responsibility of a conventional reporter. Online journalism basically allows the reader to have more authority and virtually become the gatekeeper of the news and information.

Besides the Bivings Group study, one of the most seminal comprehensive newspaper website studies in recent years was conducted by Russial (2009), who looked at 210 U.S newspapers with a circulation size of more than 30,000. Using information from the *Editor and Publisher Yearbook*, he surveyed newspaper copy editors and online editors to gauge the amount of multimedia and interactivity on their websites. His main finding: in spite of all of the lip service given to convergence, many of these newspapers had not fully taken advantage of the capabilities of the technologies, in part because of a lack of qualified/trained reporters. This need for reporters with more convergence skills has spilled down to university journalism programs, many of which "… are restructuring curricula with an eye to providing multiple-platform training" (p. 59). His study also pointed out that professionals are to the point that they are only looking for journalists who have some sort of multimedia background because if they don't express those qualities that have grown to be so important they, "… will be out of luck and out of a job unless he or she can tell stories using these different media forms" (p. 59).

One other comprehensive newspaper website study of note was presented at an earlier International Online Journalism Symposium. Bergland, Hon, Crawford, & Noe (2012) conducted content analyses of newspaper websites in the U.S., United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand between 2007 and 2010. The 2007 U.S. portion of their study involved a random sampling of 361 of the 1,437 daily newspapers in the country, finding that about 65% of the newspapers had self-produced video, 53% had audio, 70% had photo galleries and 55% had comments sections after articles. U.K papers had about the same level of audio, but significantly higher numbers in all three of the other categories.

Last in this literature review, but certainly not least, of course, is the Bivings Group's 2006 study, which provided the impetus for our study re-examining the biggest newspapers. In the introduction, The Bivings Group (2006) discussed how the Internet is rapidly growing and it has become the most vital source for news and information. They said it best when discussing how the internet is one of the main reasons to the decrease in newspaper circulation, "Because an increasing number of Americans have the ability to access the Internet on a regular basis, the Web now rivals more traditional media sources, such as print media and television, as a source for daily news" (p. 7). The Bivings Group's methodology and findings will be discussed in subsequent sections of this article.

## Methodology

When it comes to research methodology for looking at websites, there are two main approaches: surveys and content analysis. The survey method, employed by Peng et al. (1999) and more recently Russial (2009), involve sending surveys to editors or publishers. Russial's study, "Growth of Multimedia Not Extensive at Newspapers," surveyed 210 newspapers from three distribution size categories and surveyed copy editors and online editors about multimedia used, as well as who was responsible for different categories of multimedia content. The advantage of the survey method is the ability to find out more information (such as who was creating the video), while the disadvantages include self-reporting errors and response rate (Russial's response rate was 43% of respondents, although the responses represented 73% of the newspapers being studied, due to sending surveys to both online and copy editors).

The other main method, content analysis, involves actually looking at the website, analyzing the site for the presence or absence of multimedia and interactive features. This method was used by Sparks, Young, and Darnell (2006). In "Convergence, Corporate Restructuring, and Canadian Online News," they looked at a sample of over 100 newspapers using a single-pass, single-coder method of data collection. Three years later, they revisited 10 representative sites to note changes. The single-pass content analysis method was also used by others, such as Bergland, Hon, Crawford, & Noe (2012) and the Bivings Group (2006). The advantage of this method is that it ensures 100% of the publications are being studied, while the main disadvantage is that it provides only a snapshot of the newspaper site on the day it is studied. For example, a newspaper may not have a video on its site on the day it is studied (and thus not be counted as having video), even though it has video on most days. However, multimedia is often archived and placed in prominent places on the website and not just buried within a story (Shultz, 1999).

For this study, we chose to use a content analysis method, for several different reasons. For one, the problems of survey response rate were very important; in a study of the top 100 circulation newspapers, it was important to have all 100 represented. The other main reason was to replicate both the selection process and the research methodology used by the Bivings Group in their study of the top 100 newspapers. We wanted to be able to compare our numbers with theirs.

We did, however, make one very significant change in using a two-pass, rather than a one-pass analysis. The goal was to increase reliability. The addition of a second, different rater and examining the same site a second time had two distinct advantages: it helped find multimedia/interactive elements that may not have been present when the first pass was conducted, and it helped reduce/correct errors of omission in any first ratings. A two-pass system, while rare, had been used before. In "Australian Online Newspapers: A website content analysis approach to measure interactivity," Hashim, Hasan, and Sinnapan (2005) opted to look at each newspaper website at two different times. That method is more work intensive. But we felt the increased accuracy and reliability were worth the effort. A more detailed description of the two-pass method is included in a later subsection of this paper.

### Selection

The Bivings Group concentrated strictly on the top 100 circulation U.S. newspapers and evaluated them based on the features included. We followed this approach in our own methodology because we felt those with the highest circulation would be most likely to include the most multimedia to capture their readers. They would also be most likely to be able to afford to fund multimedia on their sites.

For our study, we also used the list of the top 100 newspapers (although some had changed since 2006) based on circulation numbers provided to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, a non-profit media-auditing organization, with the circulation based on a six-month period ending March 31, 2012. The list is most efficiently compiled by Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_newspapers_in_the_United_States_by_circulation. (See Appendix 1 for the list of newspapers, the circulation for each, and the newspaper's location, as of October 2012.) Each site in the list is a companion to a published physical newspaper.

**Categories**

In the 2006 study *The Use of the Internet by America's Newspapers* produced by The Bivings Group, 14 features were searched for in America's top 100 newspapers. Their list of features included the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| RSS Feed | Reporter Blogs |
| RSS Feed for Different Sections | Reporter Blog Comments |
| RSS Feed Includes Ads | Blogroll |
| Most Popular | Comments on Article |
| Video | Registration Required |
| Podcast | Bookmarking |
| Chats | Message Boards |

By 2012, some of these features were already gone from newspaper sites. For instance, message boards and chat rooms had already been largely replaced by Facebook feeds, and bookmarking is no longer worthy of inclusion since pages are constantly moving and disappearing during archiving, often being switched to a paid archive area no longer accessible without a subscription. With the explosion of multimedia available in the 2012 versions of newspaper sites, this study saw the addition of many new feature categories. Table 2 lists the features looked for in this study.

Table 1. Feature Categories

| **Multimedia** | **Interactivity** | **Distribution** |
|---|---|---|
| Video | Interactive Graphics/ Database | Registration |
| YouTube | Reader Polls | Email digest |
| Associated Press Video | Comments | Mobile device alerts |
| Local TV station video | Share | Mobile device app |
| Photo Gallery | Email Reporter | Tablet app |
| Audio Slideshow | Link to email a letter to the editor | Optimization for mobile or tablet devices |
| Audio (separate from slideshow) | Most viewed, emailed, or recommended | RSS feed |
| Podcast | Facebook commenting | Free searchable archives |
| | Reader blogs | Paid archives |
| | Related stories | PDF of the front page |
| | | Free PDF or JPG of the entire newspaper |
| | | PDF or JPG with subscription |
| | | Paywall |
| | | Newspaper blogs |
| | | Facebook feed |
| | | Twitter feed |
| | | Twitter account |
| | | Facebook account |
| | | Pinterest account |

**Data collection and the two-pass method**

Because websites are in a constant state of change, it is not unusual to find information there one week, only to have it disappear the next – or vice versa. Knowing this study is like hitting a moving target, we opted for a two-pass, two-rater system to increase reliability, and to reduce the likelihood of items being missed because of either rater error or the fact that the items were not present on the day of the first rating. We chose not to use a blind study during the second pass through the sites. Since the two-pass system could not be used to dispute the first-pass results (there would be no way to prove that a feature marked the first time had not been there) but rather to double-check what may have been missed, we felt it was unnecessary to do two blind searches. Rather, the second pass would check for only what the first pass may not have found. During the second round, each researcher worked from the list of the last researcher, looking only for those features not found during the first pass.

A team of five researchers split the list of 100 into groups of 20 sites for a first viewing in a two-pass system. The researchers were familiar with the convergent media literature and coding methods, and were supplied with coding sheets explaining all of the categories. Prior to the research, all team members had a pilot norming/training session to learn and clarify coding categories of web site features to reduce inter-rater reliability concerns.

During the first week, each researcher analyzed 20 sites, looking for the list of features listed in Table 2, with sites taking anywhere from 20 minutes to two hours each to review, depending on the depth of content. Next, each researcher was assigned a different set of 20 websites to review using the second-pass method described above. A total of 212 additions were made during the second pass, a total addition of 5.9% (36 categories x 100 newspapers divided by 212).

Once all the sites had undergone the two passes, final results were again compiled into one spreadsheet. It is important to emphasize that this study looked at websites during a very narrow time frame, and it only reports findings that apply to two weeks in October 2012. It is not intended to act as a definitive finding of what media newspapers provide on a daily basis.

## Results

While the study entailed an examination of 36 categories, the goal of this article is to focus on multimedia and interactivity, not social media and distribution, which will be the subject of a later article. For one, the 36 categories are simply too many to discuss in any depth within one article. In addition, the focus of this article is to document the change in the top circulation newspapers since the 2006 Bivings Report, and their study focused almost solely on multimedia and interactivity.

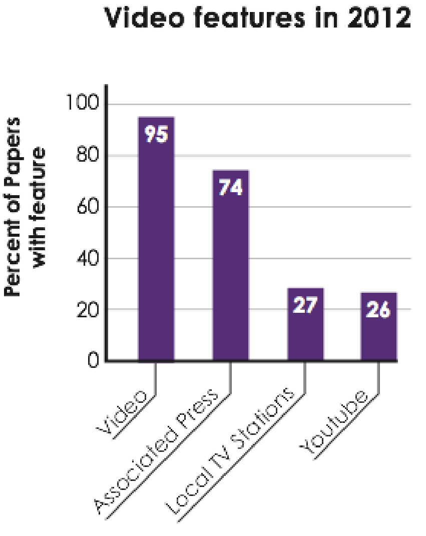
For the purposes of this article, the results will consist of eight charts in two phases. The first phase will be the data we have collected from our study in 2012 that we have grouped accordingly into four major categories. The second phase will be our data from 2012 compared to data collected in 2006 and published in The Bivings Group study. Our reason for doing this is simple: to show how many of these features have changed in popularity in regards to the top 100 circulating newspapers in the United States over the last six years. We have combined our data and features into four major categories as explained below.

### Video

Our category for Video consists of three separate features: video produced by the newspaper, the inclusion of Associated Press video, and the inclusion of video from a local TV station. We also noted when any of the self-produced video was provided via a

YouTube channel. As one of the highest percentages in our study at 95%, video seems to dominate the multimedia domain. What was interesting to us was the lack of YouTube use from the Top 100. We credited this to the fact that the largest newspapers in the country are more apt to have and utilize their own dedicated server space as opposed to the smaller newspapers and college newspapers.

Figure 1. Video features

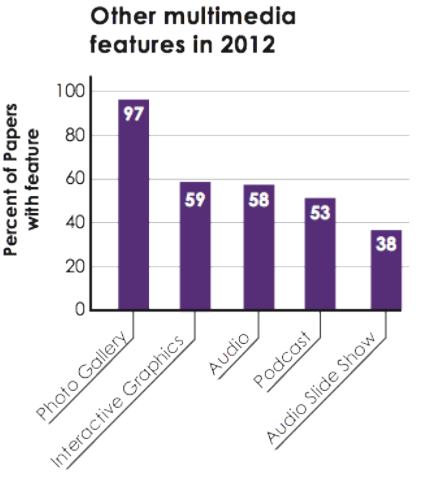



**Other multimedia features**

We also looked at five other multimedia features: Photo Galleries (some type of slideshow and/or clickable thumbnails allowing the user to peruse through many images); Interactive Graphics (any type of interface or image that can be manipulated by the user to some degree such as interactive timeline or clickable map); Audio (standalone, separate from an audio slideshow or video); Podcasts (counted under audio as well, but also a separate category); and Audio Slideshow (a photo slideshow with either music, ambient sounds, interviews, or a narrative).

What is not surprising at all is that 97% of the top 100 newspapers are taking advantage of the use of photo galleries. Less common are interactive graphics, which often require a much greater amount of time and expertise with Flash or other programs; 59% of the newspapers are using interactive graphics, slightly more than audio (which could consist of a podcast or a standalone audio clip), podcasts, and audio slideshows.

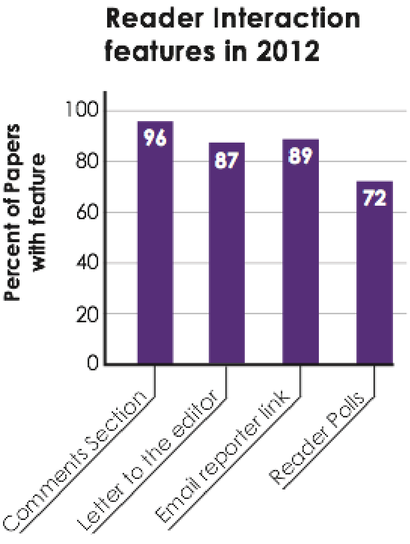
Figure 2. Other multimedia features




**Interactivity**

Our first interactivity comparison included four features related to interaction with readers: Comments Section, which allows the user to add comments after an the article; Letters to the Editor (a link or a text email address for direct letters to the editor); Email Reporter Link (an email address or link at the beginning or end of the article); and Reader Polls. All of these were scored very high, with 96% of newspapers using comments sections, 87% with addresses and/or links for letters to the editor, 89% with addresses and/or links to reporters, and 72% utilizing reader polls. None of these seemed surprising to us considering the allure for users to connect and create content on a public platform.

Figure 3. Reader interaction features

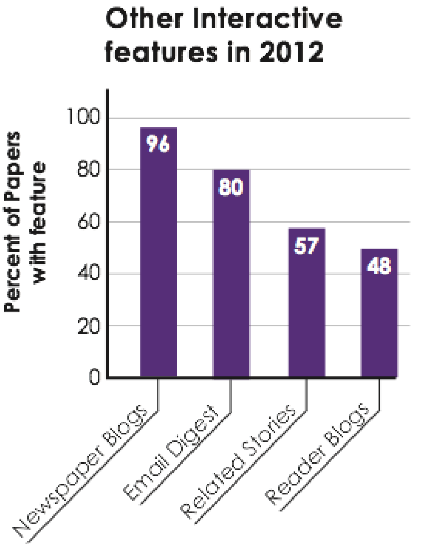



**Other interactive features**

Our second set also consisted of four features: Newspaper Blogs, which are blogs put together by editors or reporters from the newspaper (separate from regular columns); Reader Blogs, Email Digests (daily and/or weekly updates of top news stories sent to email of the user that has subscribed to them), and Related Stories (either lists or links to related articles at the end of the article).

While only about half of newspapers hosted reader blogs, almost all of them had newspaper-written blogs on their sites, at 96%. They are so popular many newspapers have entire pages of them. In contrast, reader blogs were not as popular at 48%.

Figure 4. Other interactive features

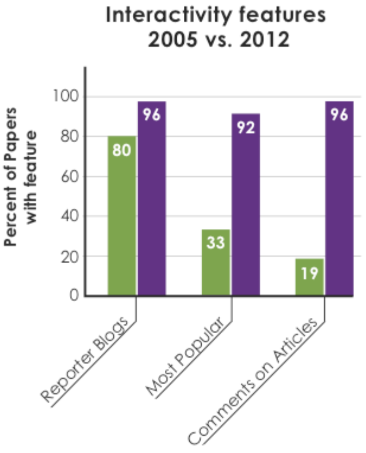



**Multimedia features 2006 vs. 2012**

As the graphs below clearly show, in the last six years newspapers have undergone a tremendous change in popularity and utilization of specific multimedia features. The Bivings Group study in 2006 is essential in providing a baseline for our study in showing this evolution in online news content. For these comparisons we move out of our collected categories from above and instead compare some of the specific features we coded with those of The Bivings Group.

Every feature we compared from 2006 to 2012 has risen. Clearly the top 100 are continually adding more multimedia features to their arsenal than ever before in the history of online news. The most dramatic change was the jump in newspapers offering comment capabilities on articles, increasing from 19% to 96%.

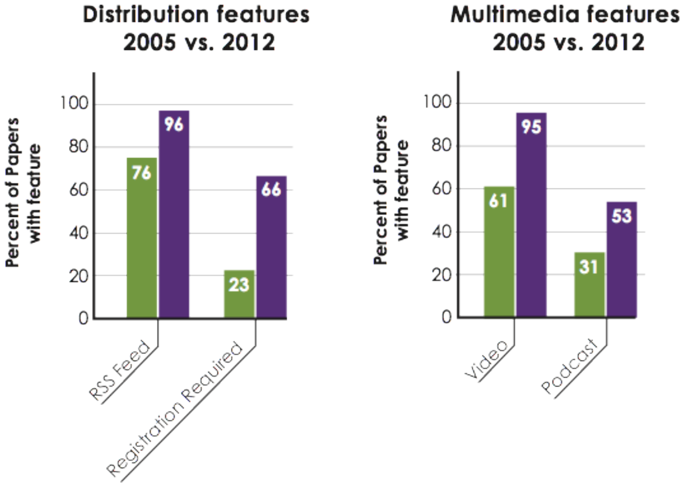
Figure 5. 2005 vs 2012 interactive features




Closely associated is the jump in registration, which almost tripled — in part, perhaps as a means to help with civil discourse in those comments sections. Other features also increased significantly, especially the “Most Popular/Viewed/Commented” category. Reporter blogs were up the lowest at 16%, but were already extremely popular in 2006 with not much growth to attain.

Perhaps the most important rise was in the all-important video category, which jumped from three in five newspapers in 2006 to almost complete saturation six years later. Podcasts, although low in use compared to some other features, still rose from 31 to 53%. While it seems podcasts are lessening in popularity regarding news, they seem to be trending in entertainment and sports.

Figure 6. 2005 vs. 2012 distribution and multimedia features

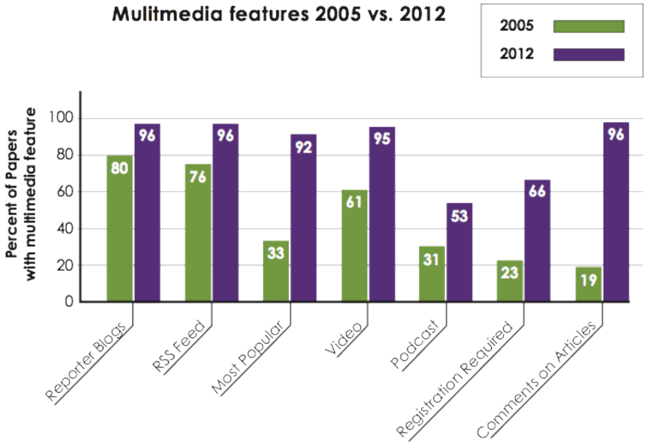



## Conclusions

As the final graph below illustrates, across the board, we can clearly see from the study by The Bivings Group in 2005 compared to our own study in 2012, online newspapers have drastically increased their web features significantly in order to stay current, with some of the categories reaching near 100%. Virtually all the top newspapers now have features such as reporters/newspaper blogs, photo galleries, RSS feeds, comments, and even video.

***Virtually all the top newspapers now have features such as reporters/newspaper blogs, photo galleries, RSS feeds, comments, and even video.***

Figure 7. 2005 vs. 2012 multimedia features




Some of the growth in these features is likely a byproduct of having more expanded content management systems. For example, the "Most Popular/Commented/Recommended" was not a built-in feature of many content management systems in the mid-2000s, but as some of the leading online newspapers started using the feature (most notably *USA Today*), more and more newspapers added it to their CMS. This "keeping up with the Joneses" approach was likely also true of RSS; as more newspapers added the feature, even more newspapers (and especially those in the top 100 circulation) felt the need to add it to their pages to not seem behind the times. Especially in the case of RSS, it was not the growth in the people using the technology driving the increase; RSS usage has actually been declining since its peak in about 2005/2006 as users are turning more to Facebook and Twitter for reading news feeds (Reinsel, 2011).

The growth in multimedia is, however, likely a byproduct in technological advances, both for the reader and the newspaper. On the user side, the growth in broadband in the past seven years has no doubt fueled the capability and expectation of viewing video on the newspaper website. On the newspaper side, as audio/video and hardware and software have gotten cheaper and better — and more journalists are being retrained and graduating from convergent media programs — it's not surprising that virtually all newspapers have video and many more now have audio/podcasts. The decline in newspaper partnerships with TV stations (Batsell & Kraeplin, 2011) has also both caused and been the result of the growth in newspapers producing their own video.

As for the increased use of registration and comments, their parallel growth is likely not coincidental. Naturally, the increase in sites requiring registration is partly the result of newspapers wanting to develop marketing and advertising potential and to also pave the way for paywalls. But, the increase is also tied to the need to have comments sections after articles and to use registration to help ensure civil discourse in those sections. The Bivings Report authors did not expect the leading newspapers in 2005 to have only 19% using comments: "This function would be a useful tool for creative productive discussions around topical issues…Despite the value of this feature, the large majority of the national's newspapers have failed to make this service available to their readers" (p 17). They attribute the small number to the problem of either having obscenities on the website or expending resources to moderate the comments sections: "For many papers, it is understandable that they do not want to run the risk of having obscene or offensive material appear on their website, or have the inconvenience of monitoring thousands of reader comments for such unacceptable language and unproductive and offensive discussion. Losing control of paper content and the material appearing on a newspaper's website is a factor discouraging papers from allowing full interactivity" (p. 18). Clearly, since that time newspapers have recognized that involving the readers in the newspapers via those comments sections is of great importance, with the resulting jump (from 19% to 96%) representing the highest growth of all the categories of multimedia and interactivity.

As with the comments sections, most all of the multimedia and interactivity features among the top circulation newspapers have reached the full saturation point, with four of them at 95% or higher. It will be interesting to see if those features remain that high in 5-10 years, if there is more growth in the other categories, what features may decline (or like bookmarking, largely disappear) and what new features will be offered in the future.

## Limitations

There were several limitations in the study. First, the scope for this project was to analyze the top 100 daily U.S. newspapers in circulation. Accordingly, these results cannot be generalized to the state of U.S. newspapers as a whole. The approximately 1,300 smaller dailies, and especially the thousands of weekly newspapers, face significantly greater challenges in financial, technological, and personnel resources. No doubt, many of the percentages of multimedia and interactive features will be lower for such newspapers.

Another limitation was the array of features that were to be analyzed. In choosing to examine 36 categories, our study omitted many other features. For example, we could have coded for advertisement content and its pop-up frequency and how often advertisements show up in the interface. From a usability perspective, aesthetics and commands for navigating the online newspapers could have been examined. Some brief artifact analyses might have been conducted. Other devices also could have been counted other features such as a stock market or weather feed. Elements of live video on the front page and other pages could have been examined. Another feature that could have been taken into consideration is message boards. The Bivings Group study states that *The Star Ledger* from New Jersey hosted a large network of forums, as did *The Syracuse Post-Standard,* which also hosted a large network. Looking at message boards to see how they have changed might have added another dimension to the study of how readers exchange comments with each other as well as sharing stories with each other.

One other limitation was the examination period, using only a two-week window. The second time analyzing results revealed some features that were either missed from the first analysis or were added. More time analyzing the results may help researchers understand how dynamic some online newspapers change over time, as some newspapers are more dynamic and progressive in technology than other newspapers featured. Analyzing the results on a larger time frame might also have yielded more results about how some newspapers respond to technological change more than other newspapers featured on the list.

## Future Research

Our study, while generating much useful data, pointed toward the need to study more newspapers and to continue to study newspapers as time progresses. The need to expand to newspapers outside of the top 100 is clear, as our study only was able to analyze about 7% of daily newspapers and less than 2% of the total number of U.S. daily and weekly newspapers. While the top 100 newspapers account for a greater percentage of the total circulation and do set the tone for the other newspapers, these smaller newspapers also warrant study. Second, future studies also need to be done to continue to track the evolution of commercial newspapers. The addition of new features like Facebook and Twitter in the last several years — and no doubt the addition of even more features in future years — is yet further proof of the need for future study.

Finally, follow-up surveys and interviews would also be useful to help enrich the data already presented.  While this study provides a detailed snapshot of the current state of multimedia and interactivity on the top 100 U.S. daily websites, it is not able to explain the “how” and the “why” of what is happening on those websites, nor who is responsible for that multimedia/interactivity and what changes are in the works for the future.

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## Appendix 1: Top 100 Newspapers by Circulation as of March 31, 2012

| | Newspaper name | Daily Circulation | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The Wall Street Journal | 2,118,315 | New York, NY |
| 2 | USA Today | 1,817,446 | McLean, VA |
| 3 | The New York Times | 1,586,757 | New York, NY |
| 4 | Los Angeles Times | 605,243 | Los Angeles, CA |
| 5 | San Jose Mercury News | 575,786 | San Jose, CA |
| 6 | The Washington Post | 507,615 | Washington, D.C. |
| 7 | Daily News | 530,924 | New York, NY |
| 8 | New York Post | 555,327 | New York, NY |
| 9 | Chicago Tribune | 414,590 | Chicago, IL |
| 10 | Chicago Sun-Times | 422,335 | Chicago, IL |
| 11 | The Dallas Morning News | 405,349 | Dallas, TX |
| 12 | Houston Chronicle | 384,007 | Houston, TX |
| 13 | Philadelphia Inquirer | 325,291 | Philadelphia, PA |
| 14 | The Arizona Republic | 321,600 | Phoenix, AZ |
| 15 | The Denver Post | 401.120 | Denver, CO |
| 16 | Newsday | 298,759 | Long Island, NY |
| 17 | Star Tribune | 296,605 | Minneapolis, MN |
| 18 | Tampa Bay Times | 292,441 | St. Petersburg, FL |
| 19 | The Oregonian | 260,248 | Portland, OR |
| 20 | The Plain Dealer | 254,372 | Cleveland, OH |
| 21 | The Seattle Times | 253,742 | Seattle, WA |
| 22 | Detroit Free Press | 246,169 | Detroit, MI |
| 23 | San Francisco Chronicle | 235,350 | San Francisco, CA |
| 24 | The Star-Ledger | 229,255 | Newark, NJ |
| 25 | The Boston Globe | 219,214 | Boston, MA |
| 26 | The San Diego Union-Tribune | 218,614 | San Diego, CA |
| 27 | The Sacramento Bee | 210,925 | Sacramento, CA |
| 28 | The Kansas City Star | 209,258 | Kansas City, MO |
| 29 | St. Louis Post-Dispatch | 196,232 | St. Louis, MO |
| 30 | The Sun | 195,561 | Baltimore, MD |
| 31 | Milwaukee Journal Sentinel | 194,436 | Milwaukee, WI |
| 32 | St. Paul Pioneer Press | 193,549 | St. Paul, MN |
| 33 | Pittsburgh Tribune-Review | 190,625 | Greensburg, PA |
| 34 | Orlando Sentinel | 187,841 | Orlando, FL |
| 35 | Pittsburgh Post-Gazette | 187,237 | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 36 | The Atlanta Journal-Constitution | 183,415 | Dunwoody, GA |
| 37 | The Orange County Register | 182,964 | Santa Ana, CA |
| 38 | Arkansas Democrat-Gazette | 182,463 | Little Rock, AR |
| 39 | The Indianapolis Star | 176,232 | Indianapolis, IN |
| 40 | South Florida Sun-Sentinel | 174,641 | Fort Lauderdale, FL |
| 41 | The Miami Herald | 173,555 | Miami, FL |
| 42 | Las Vegas Review-Journal | 166,182 | Las Vegas, NV |
| 43 | The Tampa Tribune | 164,568 | Tampa, FL |
| 44 | The Cincinnati Enquirer | 161,858 | Cincinnati, OH |
| 45 | The Record | 156,425 | Hackensack, NJ |
| 46 | The Charlotte Observer | 155,497 | Charlotte, NC |
| 47 | The Buffalo News | 154,748 | Buffalo, NY |
| 48 | The Virginian-Pilot | 152.198 | Norfolk, VA |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 49 | The Courier-Journal | 151,918 | Louisville, KY |
| 50 | Fort Worth Star-Telegram | 151,753 | Fort Worth, TX |
| 51 | The Oklahoman | 143,803 | Oklahoma City, OK |
| 52 | The Columbus Dispatch | 142,786 | Columbus, OH |
| 53 | Omaha World-Herald | 142,283 | Omaha, NE |
| 54 | The Detroit News | 141,668 | Detroit, MI |
| 55 | The Times-Picayune | 141,092 | New Orleans, LA |
| 56 | Austin American-Statesman | 137,681 | Austin, TX |
| 57 | The Hartford Courant | 135,283 | Hartford, CT |
| 58 | The Commercial Appeal | 134,562 | Memphis, TN |
| 59 | The News & Observer | 134,470 | Raleigh, NC |
| 60 | San Antonio Express-News | 133,480 | San Antonio, TX |
| 61 | The Tennessean | 128,400 | Nashville, TN |
| 62 | Investor’s Business Daily | 127,545 | Los Angeles, CA |
| 63 | Boston Herald | 123,811 | Boston, MA |
| 64 | The Press-Enterprise | 121,825 | Riverside, CA |
| 65 | Democrat and Chronicle | 120,037 | Rochester, NY |
| 66 | The Blade | 119,204 | Toledo, Oh |
| 67 | Honolulu Star-Advertiser | 119,186 | Honolulu, HI |
| 68 | The Palm Beach Post | 117,149 | West Palm Beach, FL |
| 69 | Richmond Times-Dispatch | 115,431 | Richmond, VA |
| 70 | Fresno Bee | 115,242 | Fresno, CA |
| 71 | The Salt Lake Tribune | 113,032 | Salt Lake City, UT |
| 72 | The Birmingham News | 112,211 | Birmingham, AL |
| 73 | The Des Moines Register | 108,247 | Des Moines, IA |
| 74 | The Florida Times-Union | 107,921 | Jacksonville, FL |
| 75 | Asbury Park Press | 107,443 | Neptune City, NJ |
| 76 | Arizona Daily Star | 106,057 | Tucson, AZ |
| 77 | The Morning Call | 106,021 | Allentown, PA |
| 78 | Daily Herald | 104,053 | Arlington Heights, IL |
| 79 | La Opinión | 100,336 | Los Angeles, CA |
| 80 | Knoxville News Sentinel | 98,381 | Knoxville, TN |
| 81 | Lexington Herald-Leader | 96,171 | Lexington, KY |
| 82 | Akron Beacon Journal | 94,811 | Akron, OH |
| 83 | Grand Rapids Press | 94,746 | Grand Rapids, MI |
| 84 | Dayton Daily News | 94,709 | Dayton, OH |
| 85 | Los Angeles Daily News | 94,192 | Los Angeles, CA |
| 86 | The Providence Journal | 91,804 | Providence, RI |
| 87 | Tulsa World | 90,499 | Tulsa, OK |
| 88 | Albuquerque Journal | 90,471 | Albuquerque, NM |
| 89 | The Post and Courier | 89,224 | Charleston, SC |
| 90 | The News Journal | 88,083 | Wilmington, DE |
| 91 | Wisconsin State Journal | 87,629 | Madison, WI |
| 92 | Press-Register | 103,300 | Mobile, AL |
| 93 | The Times of Northwest Indiana | 85,405 | Munster, IN |
| 94 | The Post-Standard | 84,479 | Syracuse, NY |
| 95 | The Roanoke Times | 83,447 | Roanoke, VA |
| 96 | The News Tribune | 83,199 | Tacoma, WA |
| 97 | Sarasota Herald-Tribune | 83,085 | Sarasota, FL |
| 98 | Telegram & Gazette | 82,761 | Worcester, MA |
| 99 | The Advocate | 82,695 | Baton Rouge, LA |
| 100 | Press-Telegram | 80,947 | Long Beach, CA |

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Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 204-223

# ‘Sharing’ the News on Facebook: Exploring the Differences Between News-Sharers and Non-Sharers on the Social Media Site

***Amber Hinsley and Samantha Johnson***

*This study examines news consumers’ motivations for posting news links on their Facebook profiles. It provides a comparison of news-sharers and non-sharers, enabling media managers to develop better connection strategies for both groups. Findings are based on an online survey and indicate people who share news links via Facebook are more interested in news of all types and are more engaged with the news organizations they follow. Factor analysis revealed two news-sharing motivations: People who share news links on Facebook do so because they believe it enables them 1) to maintain relationships and 2) to help others and themselves.*

News organizations know how many followers they have on social media and which stories those followers are sharing with others. They know that social networking sites such as Facebook are efficient tools in distributing news — social media’s “speed and brevity … [are] ideal for pushing out scoops and breaking news” (Farhi, 2009, p. 28). What media managers don’t know is why some news consumers choose to share news materials through their social media accounts while others do not, as well as how people’s news-sharing decisions are tied to their desire to feel connected with others. By developing a deeper understanding of what motivates their Facebook followers to re-post news material, media organizations can capitalize on social media tools to more effectively disseminate news and build relationships with their audience. The value of this exploratory study reaches beyond media managers—through greater knowledge of what motivates individuals to share news material, we can learn why some information spreads at a rapid pace and how people use that information to forge stronger connections with others, which can lead to a more informed electorate and a stronger public sphere.

This research applies the uses and gratifications perspective to explore why Facebook followers of several types of news organizations choose to share news links through social media, as well as the differences that exist between news sharers and non-sharers. The findings offer guidance for newsrooms and researchers as they explore ways in which audiences engage with the news through social media platforms and how they rely on that content to maintain their online and offline relationships.

**Sharing information and links on Facebook**

For much of the population, using social networks has become a routine part of their lives. Two-thirds of internet-using adults have at least one social media account (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). They use social networking sites for various reasons, the most prevalent of which is as a tool for staying in touch with friends and family members (Smith, 2011). Facebook is the largest and most predominant of these sites with more than one billion active users (Facebook, 2012), and it serves as a massive means of communication across the globe. Not only do users depend on the site to keep up with friends and family, it provides them an opportunity to learn about events and news (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Facebook, in essence, has changed the way in which we interact with, share, and consume both personal information and media (Manjoo, 2011).

Facebook also has changed the ways we engage with companies, nonprofits, and other groups. In some cases, these organizations use social media as a deliberate means of increasing interaction with their audience. Sashi (2009) noted the dialogic possibilities of social media as a means of connecting with audiences and becoming an everyday part of an internet user’s life. Consumers, for example, interact with companies to feel included in the process of creation, adding value to their social media experiences. It is an “affective commitment” through which making bonds nurtures engagement (p. 260). News outlets, for instance, attempt to engage their audiences, often through the use of online links. In addition to the online presence of major media companies, individual journalists also link news headlines back to their website in the hopes of creating brand loyalty (Hermida et al., 2012). According to an American Journalism Review piece, social media is one of the leading ways to spread news and to remain a relevant journalistic voice (Emmett, 2009).

Facebook is one of the primary ways that news organizations rely on their followers to spread news to a wider audience. According to Facebook’s latest statistics, an average of 552 million users log onto the site every single day (Facebook, 2012). These users have an average of 229 friends to interact with and share their interests (Goo, 2012). One way that more than 250 million Facebook users interact is through using the “like,” “share” and “recommend” buttons to share a variety of information from the web, including news articles and blog posts (Ortutay, 2011).

Sharing news links via Facebook is one of many ways that people get their news today. Despite declining revenues and audiences across traditional media, Americans are “spending more time with news than ever before,” according to the Pew Center’s State of the News Media report (2011). The difference is that nearly all Americans are getting their news in multiple ways, and online shows the greatest gains in audience. More than half of social media users who also are online news consumers get daily news items from the people they follow, and about one-quarter follow news organizations or journalists on social networking sites (Purcell et al., 2010).

Sharing content such as links is one of the major applications of Facebook, but users' motivations to share links vary (Baek et al., 2011). Previous studies suggest women and young adults are the most likely to use social networking sites (Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Hargittai, 2008; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). However, when gender, age, and education were controlled for, researchers found the motivation to share information was the primary driver behind a user's frequency of sharing links, suggesting that Facebook users who share links may be different from those who don't. Such a difference is expected, considering that the act of sharing links is a deliberate, goal-oriented process that requires one to be actively engaged in their social network (Baek et al., 2011).

One study of social networking site users found that nearly half (49%) of the participants had shared links of any type on their profiles (Baresch et al., 2011). Some of the most popular subjects of those shared links included: general interest and news, followed by products, commentary, satire/comedy, and features. Links to content featuring photographs were popular, but written word was the dominant form of the linked material.

A fair amount of previous research examines general Facebook use and the types of links being shared, but what is missing in the literature is a focus on motivations for the sharing of news links and insight on the habits of those who do not share links. This study takes an exploratory look at users who share news links versus those who don't. Considering that Facebook users who do share links are characterized as being purposeful and active in their social media use, the question remains as to what motivates these people to engage in this activity.

**Uses and gratifications applied to social media research**

One way of examining motivations in Facebook use is through a uses and gratifications approach. This framework acknowledges media consumers as deliberate in their selection of content, with the aim to fulfill personal goals or needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). Uses and gratifications has been applied to internet research because it allows researchers to understand the different and varied goals a diverse pool of users may have, and thus provides insight into the habits and behaviors of these individuals (Smock et al., 2011).

The generally established uses and gratifications motivations include using the media as 1) an escape or diversion from everyday life, 2) a means to develop or maintain personal relationships, 3) a way to reinforce personal values or identity, and 4) a tool of surveillance (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). These motivations for media use are reflected in a survey conducted by researchers at the Pew Internet & American Life Project (Purcell et al., 2010). The study found that 72% of news consumers read the news because they wanted to talk about it with their friends, family, and coworkers. Furthermore, 69% felt that it was a social or civic obligation to follow the news, and another 44% did it because news provides them with a diversion or entertainment.

Further study into the uses and gratifications approach relating specifically to internet technologies has opened up a wider array of potential applications for users. Early internet use studies include Kaye’s (1998) research, which developed six motivations for internet use; the top factors were entertainment, social interaction, and passing time. In addition to the factor analysis, Kaye’s open-ended questions revealed that participants also used the web to engage in self-enhancement. Compared to other forms of media use at that time, self-enhancement was unique to internet use, suggesting the interactive format of the internet was a doorway to new motivations that were previously unknown to researchers. In a later Kaye (2010) study of blogs, motivation factors morphed to include not only more traditional information-seeking factors, but also as a means to express one’s self and feel involved.

As uses and gratifications research progressed, attention turned to motivations for social media use. Papcharissi and Mendelson (2011) constructed an outline of nine possible motives for Facebook use. The most prominent of these included expressive information seeking (combining information-sharing and self-expression), companionship, and social interaction. These findings craft a picture of Facebook users as being motivated by a desire to share information of both general and personal nature, as well as a need for companionship and relationship building. The structure of the social networking site itself supports the continued connectivity that sustains users in their quest to create these relationships (Papcharissi & Mendelson, 2011).

Related research helps enlighten us further on motivations for general Facebook use. An Ellison et al. (2007) study examined the perceived benefits of interaction on social networking sites, which ultimately are broken down into two basic forms: benefits that come from loose relationships and those that come from more closely knit connections. The infrastructure of Facebook encourages loose relationships because undirected messages of one’s “status” — such as posting links to news materials—are usually not intended for specific users and therefore are not ideal for fostering intimate relationships. Instead they work to engage casual friends and in some cases, even friends of friends. Facebook’s broadly directed News Feed, viewable by a semi-public group of people, becomes a virtual watercooler in which conversation moves among users who may have only the faintest real-world attachment to each other. It might be akin to more superficial small talk than anything else, but the interaction is valuable and beneficial to the people involved (Burke et al., 2011).

Although information on Facebook use in relation to news sharing is lacking, there are some clues about the types of people who engage in this activity and their motivations for doing so. Looking at users of all types of social media, one study found that two in five participants shared news using a social networking site (Hermida et al., 2011). The more they used one of these sites, the more likely users were to share the news. In addition, the study suggested that as users became comfortable and immersed in the social media site, it became a part of how they experience their news consumption. For example, three-quarters (76%) of users said they seek out news on social media to find out about social and community events. Likewise, 71% of people in that study view social media as a place to keep up with news and views. Ultimately, 59% of users believe they are being exposed to a more diverse array of information by social media than traditional sources (Hermida et al., 2011). This further supports the claim that sharing links—and news links in particular—fulfills people's desire to be well informed.

Additional research by Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar (2012) found that when news links were shared through "tagging" (a method of notifying a recipient of a message) the receiver felt greater interest and involvement in the story. They also felt better informed by the story, and received a sense of community and influence from it. Additionally, if a user posted a story, on either their own profile or on another user's wall and that story received positive comments, then these participants also felt more informed and involved, moreso than if they were sent the link through a private channel (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar, 2012). Much like other links, the news link research suggests that people share news links with one another not only to fulfill a need to seek and find new information on subjects, but as a way in which to connect with others and receive the benefits that a large pool of friends may provide for them.

Overall, however, there is little other information about the motivations that prompt social media users to share links to news material on their Facebook profiles. Applying the uses and gratifications perspective, it may be possible to identify the different types of desires news consumers seek to fulfill when they share news links. Additionally, we may surmise valuable information about the people who do not share news links—a group of people that previous research has left as relatively unrepresented. Putting together these pieces, we may construct a fuller picture of the news-sharing experience.

Thus, for this exploratory study into Facebook news-sharers and non-sharers, the following research questions were posed:

**RQ1: What news preference-related differences exist between people who share news links via Facebook and those who do not?**

**RQ2: What demographic-type differences exist between people who share links stories via Facebook and those who do not?**

**RQ3: What motivates people to share news links via Facebook?**

## Method

This study used an online survey of U.S. adults to examine the research questions. The sample was drawn from a national panel administered by the online survey firm Qualtrics, with a contract for 250 completed surveys. Qualtrics recruited participants who had a Facebook account and followed at least one news organization on the social media platform. Because this research project was exploratory in nature, no further parameters were set on the recruitment of participants. The data was collected in July and August 2012. It was determined that two of the surveys were completed by people who did not fit the recruitment criteria and those responses were not included in the analysis, leading to a final N of 248.

Similar to findings in recent Pew Center surveys (Brenner, 2012), this study had more women than men who were Facebook users (57.3% female) and had participants who were relatively well-educated. More than three-quarters (78.6%) had at least some college education. Their ages ranged from 18 to 74, but like social media users in the Pew data, they tended to be younger with a mean age of 34.8 years old. More than 70% (72.2%) identified themselves as being white or Caucasian. In general, this sample’s demographics were reflective of U.S. adults who use social networking sites.

To assess the news preference-related differences between Facebook news-sharers and non-sharers, several questions were developed based on previous focus groups that one of the authors had conducted for two news organizations. For example, the list of most-valued news organizations represents the range of responses offered in the focus groups, as does the question about news consumers’ decisions to start following their most-valued news organization on Facebook. Participants in the focus group sessions indicated they engage with different news organizations in different ways on Facebook, so the decision was made in the survey to help participants focus their responses on their most-valued news organization.

Other questions drawn from feedback in the focus groups, such as the types of news they prefer, the ways in which news consumers interact with their most-valued news organization, and the things they like that the organization does on Facebook, were measured on 7-point scales so that statistical analyses could compare news-sharers and non-sharers.

Questions about participants’ reliance on Facebook as a news source were modified from statements in a survey developed by the Community, Journalism & Communication Research group at the University of Texas-Austin. As with most of the other questions, these statements were measured on a 7-point scale.

The news-sharing motivation questions included in the factor analysis were drawn from a variety of studies that examine participants’ perceptions of using the internet and social networking sites to maintain relationships with others. Such research includes Baek et al. (2011), Konetes & McKeague (2011) and Williams (2006). Again, a 7-point scale was used to assess agreement with each statement.

## Results

The first research question explored the news preference differences between people who share news links on Facebook and those who do not. Of the 248 participants, 183 reported they had shared a news article or other material from a news organization on their personal Facebook page. Independent sample t-tests indicate statistically significant differences between Facebook news-sharers and non-sharers on a range of items, including the frequency with which they interact with their most-valued news organization, and the type of news they prefer that organization to post on Facebook. Tables 1 and 4-7 illustrate the differences discovered through t-tests. Frequencies were used to explore the types of news organizations that Facebook news-sharers and non-sharers value most, as well as the reason(s) why they chose to follow their most-valued news organization. Tables 2 & 3 illustrate those differences.

Table 1 establishes statistically significant differences in the participants' motivations in checking Facebook for news material and in their number of Facebook friends.

Table 1. General Facebook News Use

| | Sharers M | Non-Sharers M | Mean difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| How often do you sign in to Facebook specifically intending to find out what's happening in the news? | 4.88 | 3.62 | 1.26*** |
| Total number of Facebook friends | 319.05 | 183.2 | 135.85** |

Sharers n=183; Non-Sharers n=65 ***p<.001; **p<.01

Responses for first item based on 7-point scale in which 1 was never and 7 was extremely often.

A majority of news-sharers and non-sharers reported that their most-valued news organizations on Facebook are broadcast news organizations, with the local, national and cable television news options drawing almost 70% (69.9%) of news-sharers and 63% of news non-sharers. Table 2 illustrates the preferred news organizations of these two groups. Among those who do not share news links on Facebook, almost two-thirds (63%) have followed their most-valued news organization for less than a year, compared to only 23% of news-sharers.

Table 2. Most-Valued News Organization on Facebook

| | Sharers % | Non-Sharers % |
|---|---|---|
| Local television news station | 31.7 | 23.1 |
| National television network news | 18.0 | 16.9 |
| Cable television network news | 15.3 | 16.9 |
| Local news radio station | 6.6 | 6.2 |
| Local newspaper | 4.9 | 6.2 |
| National newspaper | 4.9 | 4.6 |
| “Fake” cable news program | 4.9 | 9.2 |
| Online-only news organization | 4.4 | 3.1 |
| Cable television news program | 2.7 | 1.5 |
| National television news program | 2.2 | 4.6 |
| National news radio station | 2.2 | 4.6 |
| National news magazine | 1.1 | 0 |
| Local news magazine | 1.1 | 3.1 |

Sharers n=183; Non-Sharers n=65

Table 3 shows the various reasons news-sharers and non-sharers began following their preferred news organization on Facebook. News-sharers seem overall to have been more purposive and based their decision on a variety of reasons, which includes the organization’s own promotion of its Facebook page as well as the participants’ friends’ engagement with the news organization or its material. In comparison, nearly 37% of non-sharers do not recall why they decided to follow their most-valued news organization.

Table 3. Decision to Start Following Most-Valued News Organization on Facebook

| | Sharers % | Non-Sharers % |
|---|---|---|
| Saw the organization promote its page on air | 34.4 | 29.2 |
| Saw a friend started following the organization | 31.1 | 7.7 |
| Saw the Facebook link on the organization's homepage | 24.0 | 15.4 |
| Saw a friend post a link to organization or its material | 21.9 | 12.3 |
| Saw the organization promote its page on its print pages | 16.4 | 10.8 |
| Don't remember | 14.8 | 36.9 |
| Know someone who works for the organization | 9.3 | 3.1 |
| Other | 2.2 | 4.6 |

Sharers n=183; Non-Sharers n=65

Percents equal more than 100 because participants could choose multiple reasons for why they decided to start following the news organization

After determining what type of news organizations the participants preferred, and why they chose to begin following their particular preferred organization, the survey focused on learning what participants like about what that organization does on Facebook. Table 4 suggests that non-sharers hold a slightly more indifferent view of many of their most-valued news organization's actions on Facebook—on a seven-point scale, several of the means were in the 4-range—and all but one of the item differences were statistically significant. Among the greatest differences was the preference of news-sharers for their preferred news organization to respond to questions and comments from the public on its Facebook page.

Table 4. Preferences for What Most-Valued News Organization Does on Facebook

| What do you like about what your most-valued news organization does on Facebook? | Sharers M | Non-Sharers M | Mean difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Post headlines throughout the day | 5.62 | 5.16 | .46* |
| Post links to specific types of news | 5.55 | 5.00 | .55** |
| Respond to comments/questions posted by the public | 5.34 | 4.33 | 1.01*** |
| Promote contests or discounts sponsored by the news organization | 5.21 | 4.38 | .83*** |
| Post behind-the-scenes information about the news organization | 5.11 | 4.49 | .62** |
| Post photos and other content from the public | 5.10 | 4.50 | .60** |
| Post non-news materials that show the news organization’s personality | 5.05 | 4.35 | .70** |
| Solicit comments to questions posed in posts | 5.04 | 4.32 | .72** |
| Promote news organization materials like its apps & blogs | 4.94 | 4.08 | .86*** |
| Solicit photos & other content from the public | 4.76 | 4.29 | .47 |
| Promote businesses through sponsored advertisements | 4.61 | 4.03 | .58* |

Sharers n=up to 183; Non-Sharers n=up to 65. Numbers vary based on respondents whose most-valued news organizations do each item.

Responses based on 7-point scale in which 1 was strongly dislike and 7 was strongly like

***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05

In addition to asking participants what they liked about what their preferred news organization does on Facebook, the people surveyed also were asked how often they interact with the organization on Facebook. As Table 5 shows, news-sharers more frequently engage by clicking on news links posted to the organization’s Facebook page, and they are more regular commenters (although not with what could be considered great frequency).

Table 5. Interaction With Most-Valued News Organization on Facebook

| How often do you interact with your most-valued news organization on Facebook by… | Sharers M | Non-Sharers M | Mean difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Read/watch/listen to news materials after clicking on link | 5.13 | 4.14 | .99*** |
| Read headlines from posts but don't click on link | 4.87 | 4.09 | .78** |
| Comment on other people's comments on the news organization's Facebook page | 4.11 | 2.60 | 1.51*** |
| Comment on news material posted by the organization | 4.01 | 2.62 | 1.40*** |
| Comment on questions posed by the news organization | 3.97 | 2.72 | 1.25*** |
| Post information, comments or questions on the news organization's Facebook page | 3.84 | 2.57 | 1.27*** |
| Post a video/photo on the news organization's Facebook page | 3.26 | 2.23 | 1.03*** |

Sharers n=183; Non-Sharers n=65

Responses based on 7-point scale in which 1 was never and 7 was extremely often

***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05

News-sharers and non-sharers also differed in their preferences for certain types of news that their most-valued news organizations post on Facebook. Although both groups gave fairly high ratings for all types of news included in the survey, news-sharers more strongly liked each item than did non-sharers and the differences were statistically significant in most cases. For example, as Table 6 shows, the greatest mean differences were on area education, crime and entertainment news.

Table 6. News Preferences for Most-Valued News Organization

| What type of news do you like for your most-valued news organization to post on Facebook? | Sharers M | Non-Sharers M | Mean difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Breaking news | 6.02 | 5.72 | .30 |
| Area political/civic affairs/government news | 5.31 | 4.73 | .58** |
| Area business & economy news | 5.21 | 4.84 | .37 |
| Area education-related news | 5.17 | 4.47 | .70** |
| Area sports-related news | 4.96 | 4.36 | .60* |
| Area science & technology news | 5.15 | 4.6 | .55* |
| Area crime-related news | 5.62 | 4.94 | .69** |
| Area entertainment news | 5.53 | 4.84 | .69** |
| National political news | 5.30 | 4.8 | .5* |
| National civic affairs/government news | 5.09 | 4.83 | .26 |
| National business & economy news | 5.09 | 4.9 | .2 |
| National education-related news | 5.02 | 4.61 | .41 |
| National sports-related news | 4.89 | 4.35 | .54* |
| National science & technology news | 5.18 | 5.02 | .16 |
| National crime-related news | 5.43 | 4.8 | .63** |
| National entertainment news | 5.33 | 4.69 | .64** |
| International news | 5.26 | 5.10 | .16 |
| Weather-related news | 5.76 | 5.56 | .2 |

Sharers n=up to 183; Non-Sharers n=up to 65. Numbers vary based on respondents whose most-valued news organizations offer each item.

Responses based on 7-point scale in which 1 was strongly dislike and 7 was strongly like

***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05

The final set of questions that addressed RQ1 explored the participants’ perceptions about their reliance on Facebook as a source to receive news. News-sharers more strongly agreed with the notion that they could be well-informed getting their news via Facebook and not through more traditional formats. Table 7 presents the differences between the two groups.

Table 7. Reliance on Facebook for News

| How much do you agree with these statements… | Sharers M | Non-Sharers M | Mean difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| I can be well-informed by following news organizations on Facebook even if I don't seek out news in more traditional formats (such as newspapers or television news shows) | 5.08 | 4.17 | .91*** |
| I can rely on my Facebook friends to tell me what's important when news happens | 4.85 | 4.11 | .75** |
| I don't worry about keeping up with the news in more traditional formats because I know news will find me on Facebook | 4.19 | 3.06 | 1.12*** |

Sharers n=183; Non-Sharers n=65

Responses based on 7-point scale in which 1 was strongly disagree and 7 was strongly agree

***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05

The second research question examined demographic differences between Facebook news-sharers and non-sharers. Age, race and political orientation appeared to play a role in defining the differences between these two groups. News-sharers were younger, with two-thirds (66.7%) being 34 or younger compared to 43.1% of non-sharers. News non-sharers consisted of a greater percentage of minorities, with more than one-third (35.4%) self-identifying as a minority compared to one-quarter (25.1%) of news-sharers.

Facebook news-sharers tended to be more liberal-leaning in their political beliefs, with 43.2% indicating they were very liberal, somewhat liberal or closer to liberal, whereas slightly more than one-quarter (26.1%) of non-sharers identified themselves in those terms. On the similarly worded conservative scale, one-quarter (25.7%) of news-sharers and almost 37% (36.9%) of non-sharers indicated their leaning that direction.

The two groups had fairly similar breakdowns according to gender and education. More than half of both groups were women—57.9% of news-sharers and 55.4% of non-sharers. Forty percent of non-sharers had at least a bachelor's degree, as did 41.5% of news-sharers.

Factor analysis revealed that for the final research question, news consumers have two distinct motivations for sharing news links on their Facebook pages. The first factor, Maintaining Relationships, included participant perceptions that sharing news stories via Facebook helps them maintain their real-world relationships and credibility with Facebook friends (Eigenvalue=13.15, explaining a total variance of $R^2$=62.62%). The second factor, Helping Others & Self, accounted for less variance but included several items that loaded as a single factor. These motivations included participant perceptions that the links they share on Facebook are helpful to their friends and could influence them (Eigenvalue=1.48, explaining a total variance of $R^2$=7.05%). Several of the statements loaded similarly for both factors, which is shown in Table 8. Such statistical cross-loadings do not constitute a separate third factor and are discussed in the next section.

Table 8. Factor Analysis of News-Sharing Motivations

| When I share news links, I feel I… | Maintaining Relationships | Helping Others & Self |
|---|---|---|
| Interact with people who I trust to help solve my problems | **.885** | .196 |
| Interact with people I trust to turn to in an emergency | **.875** | .213 |
| Interact with people who I can turn to for advice about making important decisions | **.788** | .335 |
| Interact with people who are usually nothing more than acquaintances (reversed) | **.782** | .213 |
| Connect with new people | **.767** | .337 |
| Maintain real-world relationships with my Facebook friends | **.735** | .483 |
| Maintain credibility with my Facebook friends | **.730** | .450 |
| Do not know people well enough to get them to do anything important (reversed) | **.717** | .227 |
| Helpful to my Facebook friends | .213 | **.828** |
| Reflect my own views | .109 | **.827** |
| Influence my Facebook friends | .356 | **.738** |
| News organizations I follow are held in high esteem by my community | .380 | **.737** |
| Maintain online relationships with my Facebook friends | .698 | .507 |
| Makes me interested in things happening in my community | .658 | .449 |
| Start conversations with friends in the real world | .632 | .474 |
| Find out what people not like me are thinking | .631 | .499 |
| Feel more connected to friend when re-post their news link | .630 | .567 |
| Diversion from everyday life | .626 | .564 |
| Share news on subjects that interest my Facebook friends | .547 | .506 |
| Makes me feel part of a larger community | .620 | .624 |
| Help my Facebook friends learn more about me | .518 | .609 |
| Eigenvalues | 13.15 | 1.48 |
| % Variance | 62.62% | 7.05% |

Extraction method: Principal axis factoring. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Primary loading of a variable on a factor is indicated by boldface type. N=183

Cronbach’s α=.93

## Discussion

The focus of this exploratory analysis had three specific goals: 1) to examine the news preference-related differences between people who share news links via Facebook and those who do not; 2) to determine demographic differences between Facebook news-sharers and non-sharers; and 3) to discover news consumers' motivations for sharing news links on Facebook.

Each group—news-sharers and non-sharers—had several distinct news preferences. News-sharers sign in to Facebook more frequently than non-sharers with the specific intent of seeking out news and also have more friends on the social networking site from whom they can receive news and with whom they can share news. News-sharers also were more confident in relying on Facebook as a news tool: By following news organizations on Facebook, news-sharers believed they could be relatively well-informed even if they didn't seek out news in traditional forms. In contrast, non-sharers were more pessimistic about the ability of news to find them on the social networking site, which might be related to the length of time they have followed their most-valued news organization. Many participants who do not share news links via Facebook have followed their preferred news organization for less than a year, and perhaps have not yet developed a reliance on the organizations to deliver news through the social media platform.

It also may be that non-sharers are not getting the types of news they desire by following news organizations on Facebook. Despite being offered 18 types of news, non-sharers consistently indicated lower ratings for their news preferences, which could be evidence that they are drawn to different types of news than were listed. News-sharers had a stronger preference than non-sharers for all types of news listed in this study (especially area and national crime and entertainment news). This finding likely signals that news-sharers feel a greater connection to news in general and feel it plays a more central role in their lives.

***News-sharers sign in to Facebook more frequently than non-sharers with the specific intent of seeking out news and also have more friends on the social networking site from whom they can receive news and with whom they can share news.***

News-sharers also reported a greater liking for a range of activities that their most-valued news organizations perform on Facebook. Most notable among the differences in activities preferred by news-sharers and non-sharers were news-sharers' appreciation of the organization's responsiveness to public comments and questions posted on it's Facebook page and the organization's promotion of contests or discounts that it sponsors. Of the activities listed, non-sharers preferred news organizations' more traditional Facebook endeavors of posting headlines and links to certain types of news.

One danger for media managers is that non-sharers may feel news organizations that do more than post news on their Facebook feeds are generating clutter.

In addition, news-sharers are more active in their engagement with their most-valued news organization on Facebook. They reported that, more often than non-sharers, they read, watch, or listen to news material posted by the news organization. Although they do not do it with great frequency, news-sharers are more likely than non-sharers to comment on news material or questions posed by the organization or to comment on other people’s comments on the organization’s Facebook page.

Demographic variables helped to further delineate differences between news-sharers and non-sharers. Previous research has determined that users of social networking sites tend to be younger (Lenhart et al., 2010), and this study helped to provide greater nuance to that finding because a majority of participants who shared news links via Facebook were younger than their non-news sharing counterparts. In addition to being older, non-sharers also tended to be more conservative and were more likely to be minorities than news-sharers.

Taken together, these initial findings could point to a digital divide between news-sharers and non-sharers in which these variables have led to non-sharers being less adept at using social media in general and not yet in tune with sharing links on Facebook. This exploratory analysis also suggests that non-sharers are overall less engaged with news and news organizations on Facebook. They seem to prefer news in traditional formats and favor news organizations that primarily use Facebook as a news dissemination platform. This desire may change over time as they become more accustomed to using Facebook as a news tool and see the usefulness of sharing news themselves. For media managers, these findings mean they must continue to serve those who are most likely to share links to the organization’s news materials by giving them a steady variety of the news they want and interacting with them in unobtrusive ways while at the same time not alienating their Facebook followers who have not yet shared links and who might not if they feel the organization is too aggressive in its attempts to engage them.

***Taken together, these initial findings could point to a digital divide between news-sharers and non-sharers in which these variables have led to non-sharers being less adept at using social media in general and not yet in tune with sharing links on Facebook.***

Factor analysis revealed that although previous uses and gratifications research such as Kaye (1998, 2010) and Papacharissi and Mendelson (2011) suggests multiple motivations for using the internet, reading blogs, and logging onto social networking sites, Facebook users have two primary reasons for sharing news links on the site. The first factor in this study, Maintaining Relationships, is analogous to the needs for social interaction and companionship identified in Papacharissi & Mendelson’s (2011) findings on general social media use. The Maintaining Relationships motivation highlights the perception among news consumers that sharing news links on Facebook helps them preserve real-world bonds and interact with people who are true friends—ones whom they can turn to in an emergency or for advice.

The motivations that encompass this factor also mirror the needs met in the uses and gratifications category of developing personal relationships through media consumption, as outlined by Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch (1974). Clearly, maintaining ties to others is a critical influence in the decision not only to use media but, more specifically, to share news links via Facebook. News non-sharers, then, may not feel as compelled to share news links on Facebook because they have fewer friends with whom they interact on the site and because they believe their experiences on Facebook do not help them foster stronger online and/or offline relationships.

The second factor identified in this research, Helping Self and Others, aligns with the Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch (1974) uses and gratifications motivation for media use of reinforcing personal values and identity. In this category, participants said they shared news links on Facebook as a way to reflect their own views and to influence their friends. The motivations that created this factor also are quite similar to the ones identified by Kaye (1998, 2010) that centered on using the internet and blogs to enhance and express one's self, and are comparable to the social media use motivation of self-expression that was detected by Papacharissi and Mendelson (2011).

Based on the identification of the Helping Self and Others factor in this research, we can speculate that news non-sharers may be more private than their news-sharing counterparts and feel less compelled to construct their Facebook identities in part by posting links to news material. They also may feel less confident in their desire or ability to influence others through the posting of Facebook news links, or may be concerned that others will judge them based on those posts.

Finally in the factor analysis, several statements loaded similarly across the two factors, which suggests that news-sharers' sentiments about why they share news links on Facebook are complex and interrelated in their minds. Participants see these statements as being tied to both factors (Maintaining Relationships and Helping Self & Others); the statements do not fit statistically into only one of the factors nor do they combine to create a third factor. This finding suggests that some of the reasons for sharing news via Facebook—such as to maintain online relationships with Facebook friends, to start conversations with friends in the real world, and to share news that will interest their friends—span both needs. Future research should more closely examine ways in which news consumers' motivations for sharing news links can be parsed apart and to possibly discover more nuanced reasons why people seek to connect with others through sharing news materials on Facebook.

Although this exploratory research establishes meaningful differences between news-sharers and non-sharers and points to ways in which news organizations can establish more robust connections to both groups, subsequent research should explore users' motivations for sharing news material across a variety of social media platforms (such as Twitter). Additional research with a larger sample would help affirm these initial findings, and it can fill gaps in our knowledge by focusing on followers of specific news organizations, the types of news materials they share, and the number of news organizations that they follow.

Limitations notwithstanding, this research offers media managers several avenues through which they can enhance users' experiences on news organizations' Facebook platforms, increasing the relationship between the user and the organization. In turn, this can expose users' "friends" to the news organization as they share news links, helping to spread brand awareness of the organization and reach greater engagement with the target audience. Moreover, greater insight into news consumers' motivations for sharing news material can lead to increased exchanges of information that can introduce new ideas and discussions into the public sphere.

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Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 224-244

# Accept NO Substitutes! Well, Maybe Some…: Online Political Information, Credibility and Media Substitution

***Thomas J. Johnson, Barbara K. Kaye, and Aimee Meader***

*This study investigates how perceived credibility of alternative media (political websites, political blogs, parody news shows, and talk radio) affects perceived credibility and time spent with traditional sources of political news (broadcast news and newspapers). Perceptions of high credibility of blogs are associated with low ratings of credibility and reduced time spent with broadcast television news and newspapers. On the other hand, high credibility of parody news programs predicts high credibility and increased time spent with the traditionally delivered media. Those who judge talk radio as credible also feel that broadcast television is credible and watch it for political news.*

The traditional media, already rocked by reports of a declining audience, received an additional dose of bad news in fall 2011 when credibility ratings for newspapers and broadcast television news hit a two-decade low. As credibility has slipped, so has the percentage of people who use traditional news media. By all indications, the drops in perceptions of credibility are due to fewer people using traditional sources for news than in past decades (Pew Research, 2011).

As use of traditional sources drops, use of the Internet for political news and information skyrockets (Pew Research, 2009). In particular, alternative news sources, such as *Huffington Post* and *MoveOn.org*, political blogs, talk radio and parody television news programs[1], such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report,* are enjoying huge boosts in their number of followers (Johnson & Kaye, 2007; Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Horrigan, Garrett, & Resnick, 2004).

Although time spent with alternative news sites, blogs, and parody news shows has increased, it is not known how this change influences perceptions of credibility of traditional sources. Media substitution theory asserts that if two media are functionally equivalent and serve the same purpose, consumers will select the one that best meets their needs (substitution). On the other hand, if individuals see two types of media as serving different functions, they will use both of them to gratify different needs (supplementation) (Lee & Leung, 2008; Lin, 2001). However, these media substitution findings are based on comparisons among traditional media or between traditional media and their online counterparts. Little attention has been paid, however, to substitution theory in the case of traditional vs. alternative media. Sources that are considered *alternative* are generally those that differ from *traditional* ones in terms of content, audience interaction, and adherence to journalistic values, though what specific sources are truly *alternative* are not definitive (Atkinson, 2005; Atton, 2002). Although users consider alternative and traditional media as functionally different (Atkinson, 2006), it is not clear whether these perceived differences lower alternative media users' judgments of credibility of traditional media, thus, reducing the amount of time they spend using them, or if they do not make any difference in traditional media credibility or use.

This study, then, investigates whether perceptions of credibility of *alternative* sources (political sites, political blogs, parody news shows, talk radio) affect judgments of credibility and the amount of time spent on traditionally delivered sources (broadcast television news and newspapers) after controlling for demographic and political variables.

## Literature Review

### Traditional vs. alternative media

This study's definition of traditional media is based on amount of audience interaction, type of content, and adherence to journalistic ethics. Media are consider traditional if they provide limited means of audience interaction, strive for objective accounts of the news, and follow the journalistic principles of truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, impartiality and the belief that journalists must be accountable to the public and work on behalf of the public's welfare (Berry, 2009; Bok, 1999; Patterson & Wilkins, 2008). Journalists strive to uphold these standards even with their blogs, whereas ordinary citizens who write blogs are under no obligation to do so (Friend & Singer, 2007).

Alternative media differ from traditional media in significant ways. Scholars point out several characteristics that identify alternative media:

- They are usually powered by ordinary citizens, pundits, and subject experts rather than by professional journalists (Atton, 2002).

- They tend to challenge existing power structures of the government and traditional media by providing stories ignored or downplayed by corporate-controlled media (Atkinson, 2006).

- They do not rely heavily on the words of elite spokespersons representing the government and business, but instead they provide a platform for the views of citizen groups and individuals who feel marginalized by the mainstream media (Bennett, Lawrence & Livingston, 2006; Rodriguez, 2001; Steele, 1995).

• They solicit feedback through open forums and attempt to mobilize citizens through in-depth politicized social commentary (Armstrong, 1981; Kenix, 2009).

Accordingly, political websites, political blogs, parody news programs, and talk radio can be considered alternative sources. Additionally, each of these four sources has unique characteristics that further identify it as alternative. Political blogs, for instance, offer a citizen-based perspective and constitute a platform for public discourse (Reese, Rutigliano, Hyun, & Jeong, 2009). Political blogs and political websites offer political perspectives that range from extremist positions, such as white supremacy and animal liberation to moderate positions espoused by the major political parties (Zhou, Reid, Qin, Chen & Lai, 2005). Parody news shows and talk radio provide perspectives that challenge the status quo, belittle government officials and traditional media, and rouse their viewers to take civic action (Bruns, 2008; Hoffman & Thomson, 2009; Hollander, 2008; Sobieraj & Berry, 2011), as demonstrated by Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert's *Rally to Restore Sanity and/*or *Fear* and Glenn Beck's work to help create the Tea Party.

**Credibility of traditional media**

Scholars recognize that credibility is not inherent to a source (Berlo, Lemert & Mertz, 1969), but rather is a judgment made by the user based on a host of factors, including believability, accuracy, fairness, depth, trustworthiness, bias, completeness, and reliability (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003) as well as ease of use and attractiveness of a site (Metzger, 2007). Credibility is crucial to a medium's success because people do not pay attention to a source they do not trust (Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2004). Thus, press observers argue that the best way for newspapers and broadcast news to regain audiences lost to cable television and alternative news sources is to convince users of their credibility. However, traditional media are failing in this task; news consumers are increasingly questioning the credibility of traditional sources (Pew Research, 2011; Pierce, 2010). For example, from 1985 to 2011 credibility assessments of the mainstream press hit record lows for accuracy, fairness, balance, and for the belief that journalists all too often acquiesce to outside influence. Moreover, a growing number of news consumers prefer information-that supports their political viewpoints, rather than sources that present more balanced perspectives (Hollander, 2008; Smith, 2011).

Several factors may explain the declining credibility of traditional media. First, the media have been hit by several high profile scandals such as accusations that News Corp hacked into several public figures' cellphones. Second, as the country has become more politically polarized, media consumers are seeking sources that reaffirm their political positions (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Stroud, 2010; Wojcieszak, 2010) and they are accusing other less favored sources of having a covert political agenda. Typically, as partisanship increases, so do perceptions that sources with opposing views are biased. For example, a large number of Republicans harbor unfavorable views of *The New York Times*, the broadcast television networks, and *CNN,* because they perceive them to have a liberal slant (Pew Research, 2010; Smith, 2009). Third, users are increasingly going to alternative sources such as political websites, political blogs, talk radio, and parody programs, like *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*, which often mock the incompetency of the news media, making them seem untrustworthy and unbelievable (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Johnson & Kaye, 2010; Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010; Sobieraj & Berry, 2011; Tsfati, Tukachinsky, & Peri, 2009).

### Credibility of alternative sources

Central to this paper are the perceptions of credibility regarding alternative media. What sets alternative media apart from traditional media is their appeal to niche audiences. While traditional media have long reached out to the mass audience, alternative media clearly target market segments with a particular political ideology, demographic, or lifestyle. Alternative media survive by attracting like-minded followers. This strategy is effective because individuals judge content that conforms to their already held beliefs as more credible than content with which they disagree (Hollander, 2008; Johnson & Kaye, 2010; Stroud, 2008, 2010). Similarly, people judge sources and messages that agree with their already-held beliefs of higher quality than those that challenge their views (Fischer, Jonas, Frey, & Schulz-Hardt, 2005; Nimmo, 1990). Thus, alternative sources, such as political websites, political blogs, talk radio, and parody news programs, whose political reports appeal to and support the opinions of their niche audience are deemed highly credible by those users (Fischer et al., 2005; Johnson, Bichard & Zhang, 2009; Johnson, Zhang & Bichard, 2011; Stroud, 2008).

The level of credibility of alternative sources could possibly increase with more exposure to these sources as evidence indicates a link between reliance on a news source and its perceived trustworthiness (Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2004, 2010). For example, Pew Research (2011) discovered that while credibility scores for news media in general had declined precipitously from 1985 to 2011, more than 60% of news consumers said their favored sources usually get the facts straight while 25% said the same about news organizations in general. Media substitution effects only occur with functionally similar media. Reliance may be particularly important in regard to alternative sources and credibility. If consumers use alternative media as a substitute for traditional sources, their exposure to alternative sources will increase, and then accordingly, perceptions of credibility for these alternative sources should improve.

### Media substitution and news sources

Whenever a new medium enters the marketplace it compels users to redistribute the time they spend with media in general and with particular sources (Jeffres, 1978; McCombs, 1972). Media substitution scholars contend that when a new medium with similar functions to an existing one enters the market, information consumers reduce the time they spend with the old source if the new one satisfies their needs more successfully or more efficiently — that is, it serves as a functional alternative. Media substitution theorists further assert that when media are functionally different (such as newspapers and broadcast news) they complement each other and do not affect the amount of time spent with the other—that is, there is no media substitution. Media substitution effects only occur with functionally similar media (Kaye & Johnson, 2003; Lee & Leung, 2008; Lin, 2001). Media substitution theory, then, is not an objective measure of time spent with the media, but perceptions of whether individuals have reduced or increased time in response to a new medium.

Researchers debate whether or not online and non-online alternative sources are substitutes for traditionally delivered ones. On the one hand, since the advent of the hypertext Web in the early 1990s, the increased amount of time spent on the Internet has corresponded with a decline in time spent with traditional media. For example, the number of people who said they "watched the news yesterday" on television dropped from 72% in 1994 to 58% in 2010. Readership for newspapers also dropped precipitously (50% to 31%). Online news users, particularly those under the age of 30, are abandoning printed newspapers, over-the-air radio and television for their online counterparts, as well as news portal sites (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010) because such sites often provide in-depth content and interactivity not available through traditional means (De Waal & Schoenbach, 2010; Kaye & Johnson, 2003; Lin, Salwen, Garrison & Driscoll, 2005). Further, half of blog users have cut the amount of time spent watching broadcast news and reading newspapers (Johnson & Kaye, 2006). Therefore, some studies have shown that alternative online media seem to be serving as substitutes for traditional media. Studies of social activists and media use before the advent of the Internet have noted that because mainstream media often discredit and marginalize protest groups and actions (McLeod & Hertog, 1992), social movements often turn to alternative media outlets or they create their own alternative sources (Rodriguez, 2001).

***Researchers debate whether or not online and non-online alternative sources are substitutes for traditionally delivered ones.***

On the other hand, some studies suggest that alternative online media serve different needs than their traditional counterparts, such as convenience and access to more up-to-date news; therefore, the use of online news sites complements traditional media (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010). In other words, individuals look for information in both online and traditional forms (Dutta-Bergman, 2004). Some research supports this assertion. For example, strong partisans use both alternative online and traditional media presumably to cross-reference content and to learn about opposing viewpoints to better rebut them (Garrett, 2009; Hart, Eagly, Albarracin, Brechan, 2009; Kaye & Johnson, 2011; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009). Additionally, because online and non-online alternative news sources (i.e. political blogs, talk radio) serve different functions than traditional media, they should, according to media substitution theory, complement each other, in terms of exposure, rather than steal time away from traditional media. Therefore, researchers offer conflicting evidence of whether alternative media should act as a complement or a substitute to traditional media.

### Media substitution and credibility

Media substitution and credibility have long been conceptually linked. Both research traditions arose as the arrivals of new media (e.g. Internet) challenged the position of established ones. Because credibility is tied to how much individuals use a particular medium, substitution occurs when users perceive a new medium to be just as credible as the old one (Fidler, 1997; Lin et al., 2005). On the other hand, there is some evidence that alternative sources spark an interest in a particular issue, political candidate or report, which sends viewers to traditional news for more information (Baum, 2003; Feldman & Young, 2008; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Thus, alternative media use may lead to increased use and credibility of traditional media. For example, high credibility of political blogs increased time spent with printed newspapers, thus, the two sources complement each other instead of one replacing the other (Kim, 2006).

### Research Questions

As the length of time spent and credibility of traditional media and their online counterparts have dropped, people are increasingly seeking out news from alternative sources such as political blogs, political websites, parody news shows, and talk radio (Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Hollander, 2008; Johnson & Kaye, 2007). This study, therefore, examines whether credibility of alternative media sites influences credibility judgments and time spent with mainstream media. This study addresses two main questions:

**RQ1: To what degree does credibility of alternative sources (political websites, political blogs, parody news programs, and talk radio) influence credibility of traditionally delivered newspapers and broadcast television news after controlling for political and demographic variables?**

**RQ2: To what degree does credibility of alternative sources (political websites, political blogs, parody news programs, and talk radio) influence the amount of the time spent with traditionally delivered newspapers and broadcast television news after controlling for political and demographic variables?**

## Method

This study examines responses to a survey that was posted online during the four weeks surrounding the 2008 presidential election. A request for survey participants along with the survey URL was posted on hundreds of politically oriented websites, blogs, and social network sites of diverse political ideologies.[2] The survey questions focused on perceptions of credibility of, and time spent with, traditional sources of political information.

Respondents could “snowball” the survey by clicking on a link that automatically forwarded it to politically interested friends. In addition to recording the number of completed questionnaires – 4,241 - the survey software monitored the number of individuals who accessed the survey and computed a participation rate of 26.2%.[3]

## Study Variables

### Credibility

This study considers credibility a multidimensional construct comprised of believability, fairness, accuracy, and depth of information. Combined, these four variables reliably measure media credibility (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Meyer, 1988; Newhagen & Nass, 1989). Respondents were asked how credibly they view political information contained in broadcast television news and newspapers, and how credibly they judge the alternative sources - political websites, political blogs, talk radio shows, and parody news programs. Respondents marked on a 1-5 point scale the believability, fairness, accuracy, and depth of each source.

### Time spent with traditional media

Respondents were asked if seeking political information on the Internet affected the amount of time they would have spent with traditional media. They marked a five-point scale that ranged from 5) greatly increased to 1) greatly decreased.

### Political attributes

Knowledge about and interest in politics, as well as knowledge about and interest in the 2008 presidential campaign were measured on a 1-10 scale with one signifying not at all knowledgeable or interested to ten, indicating highly knowledgeable or interested. Strength of party ties was assessed with one indicating no ties to ten, signifying a very strong affiliation. Political ideology was measured on a five-point scale: 1) very liberal, 2) liberal, 3) moderate, 4) conservative, 5) very conservative.

Using statements from the National Election Studies, self-efficacy was assessed by “I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics,” “I feel I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people,” “I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people,” and “I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.” Trust in the government was measured by “Most of our leaders are devoted to the service of our country,” “Politicians never tell us what they really think,” and “I don’t think public officials care much about what people like me think.” Respondents marked their agreement with the statements on a scale that ranged from 1) strongly disagree to 5) strongly agree. The polarity was reversed on last two statements of the trust index. The trust and efficacy measures were combined into separate self-efficacy and trust indexes (3-15 score range). Reliability for the self-efficacy index is .70; for trust it is .73.

### Demographics

Respondents entered their gender, age as of their last birthday, and their estimated income for 2008. They also selected their highest level of education from a list that ranged from “less than high school” to “terminal degree,” such as Ph.D., M.D., and J.D.

### Data analysis

Frequencies were run on the study variables to ascertain a profile of respondents. The first set of hierarchical regressions tested whether perceptions of credibility of alternative sources of political information predict traditional media credibility. The second set of regressions determined if credibility assessments of alternative sources of political information influenced time spent with traditional media. For both sets of regressions, the demographic variables (gender, age, education, income) were entered as the first block. The political variables (political interest, political knowledge, election interest, election knowledge, trust, self-efficacy, political ideology, strength of party ties) comprised the second block, and credibility of alternative sources (political sites, political blogs, parody news programs, talk radio) made up the third block.

## Results

### Respondent profile

This study’s respondents are highly educated with three-quarters (76.5%) having earned a college degree or higher, and they take in $92,500 per year on average. Almost all (91.8%) identified themselves as white, they average 46.4 years of age, and males represent two-thirds (66.7%) of the 4,241 respondents. Figures for at age, education and income are in line with other studies of politically interested Internet users at the time of the 2008 presidential campaign (Smith, Schlozman, Verba & Brady, 2009).

About nine in ten respondents claimed they were very knowledgeable about and very interested in the 2008 presidential election, and slightly more than three-quarters indicated they are very knowledgeable and interested in politics. Respondents were somewhat evenly dispersed along ideological lines with 39.1% of the respondents claiming they are conservative/very conservative, 38.7% liberal/very liberal, and 22.2% moderate. Respondents are also moderately tied to their party of choice (m=6.6, range 1-10). Only one in ten respondents (10.2%) is highly trusting of the government and three out of ten (29.3%) express little trust. Overall, most reported that they are moderately trusting (60.5%). The respondents, however, are highly self-efficacious with 73.2% believing they have the power to bring about political change.

### Credibility of traditional and alternative media

Of the six media examined in this study, political blogs are ranked the most credible source for political news (m=12.3 credibility index, range 4-20), with political websites as the next highest in credibility (m=11.7). Mean credibility scores for the remaining media are as follows: Traditionally delivered newspapers (m=10.7), talk radio (m=9.9), parody news programs (m=8.9), and broadcast television news (m=8.9).

## Broadcast TV news

The first research question asked if perceptions of credibility of alternative sources of political news predict credibility of traditional sources of news. Broadcast television news credibility is positively influenced by credibility of parody news programs ($\beta$=.37, $p<.001$) and talk radio ($\beta$=.07, $p<.001$), but negatively predicted by the credibility of political blogs ($\beta$=-.13, $p<.001$). Additionally, broadcast television credibility is boosted by younger, liberal, females who trust the government, but have little knowledge about politics and feel powerless to bring about change (Table 1).

## Newspapers

Judgments of high credibility of printed newspapers is predicted by high credibility of parody news programs ($\beta$=.39, $p<.001$), whereas higher judgments of credibility of political sites ($\beta$=-.07, $p<.001$) and political blogs ($\beta$=-.04, $p<.05$) lead to lower assessments of newspaper credibility. Additionally, respondents who believe newspaper content is credible are young, highly educated liberals, who trust the government, but report low levels of self-efficacy .

**TABLE 1**
**Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Credibility of Alternative Online Sources as Predictors of Credibility of Traditional Sources**

| | *Broadcast TV News Credibility* | *Printed Newspaper Credibility* |
|---|---|---|
| Predictor Variables | | |
| Gender | .04* | .02 |
| Age | -.15*** | -.13*** |
| Education | .00 | .08*** |
| Income | -.01 | -.01 |
| **R2** | **.105** | **.106** |
| Political Knowledge | -.05* | -.02 |
| Political Interest | .00 | .02 |
| Election Knowledge | .02 | -.00 |
| Election Interest | -.00 | -.02 |
| Strength of Party Ties | .01 | .01 |
| Political Ideology | -.09*** | -.20*** |
| Trust | .28*** | .28*** |
| Efficacy | -.11*** | -.05*** |
| **R2** | **.363** | **.468** |
| **R2 Change** | **.258** | **.363** |
| Political Blog Credibility | -.14*** | -.04* |
| Political Site Credibility | -.03 | -.07*** |
| Parody TV Credibility | .37*** | .39*** |
| Talk Radio Credibility | .07*** | .01 |
| ****************** | | |
| **R2** | **.444** | **.544** |
| **R2 Change** | **.186** | **.076** |
| **Adjusted R** | **.442** | **.542** |
| **Sig. of Change** | **.000** | **.000** |

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

In general, both broadcast television news and printed newspaper credibility is connected to perceptions of high credibility of parody television news, whereas judgments of high credibility of talk radio influences the credibility of only broadcast television.Traditional media credibility is also linked to judgments of low credibility of political blogs and websites.

## Time spent with traditional media

Respondents have generally cut back on the amount of time they spend with traditional media. Almost three-quarters (74.4%) of respondents spend less time watching broadcast television news programs and 67.7% have decreased their time reading newspapers. Only 4.4% spend more time reading newspapers and 2.8% watch more broadcast television news than in recent years.

### Broadcast TV news

Higher levels of credibility of parody news shows (β=.16, p<.001) and talk radio (β=.05, p<.01), but lower credibility of political blogs (β=-.20 p<.001), lead to more time spent watching broadcast television news. Additionally, young, liberal females, who trust the establishment and do not fight for political change, are likely to favor broadcast television news (Table 2).

### Newspapers

The amount of time spent with newspapers is also predicted by high credibility of parody news sites (β=.21, p<.001), but low credibility of political blogs

(β=-.13, p<.001). If readers of political blogs feel that they cannot trust what they read there, they are more likely to spend time reading a newspaper. Conversely, the more they believe political blogs, the less time they spend reading newspapers. Respondents who read printed newspapers tend to be young, low-income, liberal females who trust the government, but are low in self-efficacy (Table 2).

**TABLE 2**
**Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Credibility of Online Sources as Predictors of Time Spent with Traditional Sources**

| Predictor Variables | *Time with Broadcast TV* | *Time with Printed Newspapers* |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | .11*** | .06** |
| Age | -.06*** | .04* |
| Education | .00 | -.00 |
| Income | -.01 | -.04* |
| **R2** | **.053** | **.021** |
| Political Knowledge | -.02 | -.02 |
| Political Interest | .03 | .03 |
| Election Knowledge | -.03 | -.03 |
| Election Interest | .00 | .01 |
| Strength of Party Ties | -.01 | -.02 |
| Political Ideology | -.07** | -.07** |
| Trust | .14*** | .11*** |
| Efficacy | -.08*** | -.06** |
| **R2** | **.124** | **.095** |
| **R2 Change** | **.071** | **.073** |
| Political Blog Credibility | -.20*** | -.13*** |
| Political Site Credibility | .01 | -.02 |
| Parody TV Credibility | .16*** | .21*** |
| Talk Radio Credibility | .05** | .03 |
| ****************** | | |
| **R2** | **.168** | **.130** |
| **R2 Change** | **.097** | **.106** |
| **Adjusted R** | **.164** | **.126** |
| **Sig. of Change** | **.000** | **.000** |

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

## Discussion

***As this research found, some alternative sites seem to influence credibility of, and time spent with, traditional media more than others. Political blogs most strongly pull users away from traditional media, whereas political websites have little influence. On the other hand, parody news sites and talk radio seem to boost traditional media use.***

Traditional media are at a critical place in their life cycle. The threat of alternative sources being seen as more credible and, thus, stealing the audience looms large. This paper carries media substitution beyond the simple online versus non-online source battle by investigating whether alternative sources, online or not, predict credibility and use of traditionally delivered news. As this research found, some alternative sites seem to influence credibility of, and time spent with, traditional media more than others. Political blogs most strongly pull users away from traditional media, whereas political websites have little influence. On the other hand, parody news sites and talk radio seem to boost traditional media use.

**Credibility of traditional and alternative news sources**

This study of politically interested Internet users found that credibility ratings of traditional and alternative media are mixed. Although two alternative media (blogs and political websites) were ranked the highest in credibility, newspapers are not far behind. These findings give hope that newspaper journalists are still seen as responsible and believable purveyors of political news. Perhaps the news consuming public notices and appreciates, or at least perceives, that newspapers are abiding by professional ethics and standards. On the other hand, traditional broadcast news ranks at the bottom of the credibility rankings along with parody news shows.

While respondents saw alternative sources as credible, credibility of alternative sources did not necessarily bring down credibility judgments of traditional sources. In only three of eight cases did credibility of alternative sources reduce perceptions of traditional source credibility, and in three instances alternative source credibility actually increased traditional media credibility.

**Time spent with media and media substitution**

This study confirmed what research has shown: people have reduced the amount of time they spend watching television news and reading printed newspapers since they began using the Internet. Nearly three-quarters of this study's politically interested Internet users spend less time watching broadcast television news programs and slightly more than two thirds claim to spend less time reading newspapers. These findings do not necessarily mean that seven in ten are unhappy with traditional media; many are simply getting traditional news online. *The New York Times*, for example, has a growing number of online users, attracting 33 million users in the United States and 49 million globally (Shaw, 2012).

Past studies have offered conflicting evidence about whether alternative media should substitute or compliment traditional media. This study's respondents rated political blogs as the most credible source of political news and reported that blogs, more than any other alternative medium, cut into time spent with traditional broadcast television news and newspapers. Blog readers are drawn to blogs because of their distrust of traditional media, their support of partisan content, and for blogs' in-depth analysis (Johnson & Kaye, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009). The blog followers in this study apparently spend more time with information that appeals to their own belief system than with traditional sources that appeal to a mass audience, thus, political blogs are a substitute for traditional media. Media substitution researchers argue that media only serve as a substitute when they are functionally equivalent (Lee & Leung, 2008; Lin, 2001), but results for blogs demonstrate that functionally different media can also serve as substitutes.

Political websites rated second in terms of credibility, but credibility had no influence on time spent with traditional media. This study's respondents have not reduced their time with traditional media in favor of political sites, thus political sites are not viewed as a functional equivalent to newspapers and broadcast television. Because political sites do not take time away from traditional media, they are not substitutes. Instead, political sites offer content and attitudes that differ from newspapers and broadcast television. Although the Internet features numerous political sites hosted by political parties and candidates, it also contains what has been termed the "dark side of the web": Websites and discussion forums sponsored by a range of extremist groups from white supremacists and militias to neo Nazis and animal liberation groups (Zhou, et al., 2005). These fringe sites and those sponsored by political parties offer unique perspectives. Moreover, they exist to persuade followers to support a particular point of view, not to simply provide information, as do the traditional media.

Parody television news shows ranked low in terms of credibility, just ahead of broadcast television news. Despite their low credibility standing, parody news programs have a more positive influence on time spent with traditional sources than any other source. Respondents who deem parody news programs as highly credible have increased the amount of time they spend watching broadcast television news and reading printed newspapers. Parody shows like *The Colbert Report* do not steal time from mainstream media, but motivate viewers to spend more time with them. Perhaps respondents spend more time reading newspapers because parody shows create an interest in a political issue, candidate, or report, which sends viewers to traditional news for more information (Baum, 2003; Feldman & Young, 2008; Young & Tisinger, 2006).

Talk radio is hardly a functional equivalent to traditional media. Talk radio hosts promote the medium as an alternative voice against the biased traditional news media. They take pleasure in attacking politicians and blaming the media for society's problems. Hosts rile up their listeners, encouraging them to express their dissatisfaction with politicians and the government (Cappella & Jamieson 1997; Jones, 2004). Not surprisingly, this study found that talk radio has no effect on time spent with newspapers. Talk radio is not a substitute for newspapers. It is odd, however, that talk radio credibility actually *increases* time spent with broadcast news. Presumably, talk radio listeners turn to broadcast television to verify claims and to find support for what they heard on the station. Talk radio, then, supplements broadcast television news and it is a catalyst for increased viewing.

This study adds to the knowledge of alternative news in terms of its relationship to traditional media, substitution theory, and perceptions of credibility. Overall, it was discovered that political blogs negatively affect judgments of credibility and lessen time spent with broadcast television news and newspapers and are a substitute for these media. In contrast, parody news programs positively affect perceptions of credibility and boost time spent with traditional media, and therefore serve as a supplement rather than a substitute for broadcast television news and newspapers. High credibility of talk radio boosts credibility and time spent with broadcast television news and, thus, talk radio is also a supplement. Credibility of political websites somewhat reduces the credibility of printed newspapers, but does not affect time spent with either newspapers or broadcast television news.

While studies have shown that the use of traditional newspapers and broadcast television news has declined in the era of alternative media, political blogs seem to be the only culprit in this study. That said, it is possible that other alternative media and news aggregators like Google News and traditional news' own online counterparts, which are the main sources people rely on for political news (Smith, 2011), are also luring news consumers away from traditional media.

## Limitations and Future Studies

### Limitations

Collecting data about politically interested online users is a challenge because there is no means to either identify or randomly select this particular group. Attempts to contact individuals through social network or other digital groups, as this study did, are hampered by privacy regulations. Though the results should not be applied to the general Internet population, relying on a convenience sample to gather data has long been an acceptable method (Babbie, 2002; Zhou & Sloan, 2011), and online convenience sampling is increasingly being employed by both proprietary (Keeter, 2009) and academic researchers (Agrifoglio, Black & Metallo, 2010; Johnson & Kaye, 2004, 2006, in press; Kaye, 2007). Moreover, a recent study asserts that while random digit dialing and online probability samples create more representative findings than do non-probability online samples, non-probability samples are more accurate than probability and RDD samples because self-selected respondents usually have a personal interest in the survey subject (Chang & Krosnick, 2009). Finally, the self-selected respondents for this study were politically interested online users who demographically resemble those who rely heavily on the Internet for campaign information: white males with high income and high education (Pew Research, 2008; Smith, et al., 2009).

This study centered on the effects of credibility of alternative sources on time spent with, and credibility of, traditional sources. However, it is possible that the reverse could be true: drops in credibility and time spent with traditional media might boost credibility of alternative news sources. Post- hoc analysis shows that credibility of alternative sources is predicted by time spent with traditional media. Increased time with broadcast television and printed newspapers predicts lower perceptions of credibility of political blogs and political websites. The longer respondents stick with traditional media, the more likely they are to view political blogs and websites in a negative light. Conversely, the longer respondents spend reading newspapers, the more favorably they view the credibility of parody news programs. Notably, the strengths of these relationships are weaker than those found with the predicted model, lending support to the decision to examine the influence of credibility of alternative sources on traditional ones, rather than the reverse.

### Future studies

This study examined types of traditional media (broadcast television, newspapers) and alternative sources (political websites, blogs, talk radio and parody programs) rather than specific sources. Therefore, it is not clear whether respondents were judging the credibility of brand sources, such as *Huffington Post* or *New York Times,* rather than the genre. Future studies should focus on credibility of specific sources to clarify the link between credibility of alternative sources and credibility of, and time spent with, mainstream media. Moreover, researchers should include additional sources of political information, such as social network sites and news aggregators. Finally, future studies need to make finer distinctions between different types of alternative sources. In this study, political websites, blogs, talk radio, and parody programs were all considered alternative news sources. However, these media are not the same. While political blogs and talk radio typically advocate a point of view, political websites and parody programs include both those trying to present unbiased information with those trying to persuade. These distinctions become important if the perception of persuasion reduces the perception of credibility.

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## Endnotes

1. While we use the term “parody news”, others use the term “satire news”.

The structure of shows like *The Daily Show* parody traditional news programs, and they rely on satire as a major rhetorical device when “reporting” on the news. We decided on the term “parody news” because that is how it is referred to it in the survey and how such programs are commonly known.

2. Notices of the survey were also posted on 37 MySpace and 86 Facebook groups, 11 media and 55 political websites and 70 blogs as well as 12 political and educational listservs/mailing lists and political newsgroups representing various political ideologies candidates and issues. For a complete list, contact the authors.

3. Participation Rate, as defined by AAPOR “Standard Definitions:” is “The number of respondents who have provided a useable response divided by the total number of initial personal invitations requesting participation.” AAPOR cautions that when using non-probability methods is not possible to know how many individuals were exposed to the survey announcement. Participation rate is better used as an indicator of effort needed to recruit participants. For this study the participation rate of 26.2% is based on the number of people who clicked on the survey link and those who actually completed it.

4. Credibility of parody news proved the strongest predictor of time spent with broadcast news (.16) and newspapers (.21). However, time spent with broadcast news was not significantly related to perceptions of parody news credibility and the link between newspapers and parody news credibility was considerably weaker. Similarly, the betas for the influence of blog credibility on time spent with broadcast news and newspapers were -.20 and -.13 respectively. However, these betas dropped to -.16 and -.10 for the effects of traditional sources on alternative news credibility.

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#ISOJ
Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 245-258

# Finding Their Voice: Examining Some Internet-Based Initiatives That Are Changing the Face of the Indian Media Industry: An Exploratory Study

***Paromita Pain***

*Citizen journalism is on the rise in the Indian sub-continent. Community-based media stations are not new in the country. But lately, certain media like the three discussed in this article are coming into prominence. Not all of them started to cater to women, but began in extremely backward regions of the country, and these news organizations have seen women become active participants. This articles seeks to examine these projects, the funding models used, and the details about the women reporters involved in these projects.*

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) Report 2010 has said that only 22% of journalists in print, radio, and television news in India are women. Reiterating this is research by the Washington-based International Women's Media Foundation (Byerly, 2011) that found women were best represented in Europe and the worst in Asia. But a slow transformation has started across the Indian sub-continent. This change is not happening in the glitzy boardrooms of the nation's most influential English dailies or television networks but in the deep rural areas where schools and toilets might be hard to come by.

> ***But the wide reach of the Internet is currently making citizen journalism possible even in the most remote areas of India.***

Areas like Chhattisgarh, Chitrakoot and the Banda districts of Uttar Pradesh in northern India are not the kind of places where anyone would expect to find a journalist, let alone a woman reporter. These are areas where media in the local language or Hindi (the national language) hold sway, where the pages are run, reported for and news items decided on by not just men, but also within a patriarchal social system that believes in child marriage and keeping women illiterate.

But the wide reach of the Internet is currently making citizen journalism possible even in the most remote areas of India.

Media initiatives like the *Khabar Lahariya* newspaper, the CGNET Swara and WAVE initiative are today striving to break new ground in perhaps the toughest Indian market demographic. And what's more? They are tasting success.

To say that they have overcome enormous odds to be where they are today would be a massive understatement. Their work is the best testimony to their grit and courage. This is their story.

**Mobile news: Empowering Chhattisgarh**

The police atrocities in the name of promoting safety are well known in India. In the Andhra region there are many displaced families who were forced to shift to the forests near the border of the state. But the police there often accuse them of being "naxalites" and keep setting fire to their makeshift homes. As one relief camp survivor said:

> Our children mostly die from the lack of clean water. Most of the people in our village are already dead. No doctors are available and even the one who used to come has stopped. I guess he is scared. I can't blame him. When you are unwanted by the government and harassed by the police, where do you go? (Personal communication, August 15, 2011).

Such stories of people forced to be on the run for no fault of their own has remained one of the many untold narratives of human angst that mainstream Indian media often fails to highlight.

***CGNET Swara is no ordinary news channel focusing on broadcasting news and information to people. It also ensures that the audience is one that will understand what being tribal, unwanted, and displaced is all about.***

But today the survivor's story, thanks to CGNET Swara, has an outlet. CGNET Swara is no ordinary news channel focusing on broadcasting news and information to people. It also ensures that the audience is one that will understand what being tribal, unwanted, and displaced is all about. Working on a simple premise that content is most effective when produced by those who are its most immediate audience; CGNET Swara's coverage ensures that it is more than just working along the principles of being media for and by the people.

The CGNET Swara news site, with its aim of producing narratives of the displaced and the most ignored segments of society, has created and empowered a whole new generation of women journalists in Chhattisgarh who today are central and integral members of the organization.

**Need for such media**

As part of a Knight International Fellowship project, Shubhranshu Choudhary set up this project with technical assistance from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He says residents of Chhattisgarh need to have a credible news source manned by journalists who know the language and culture of the land. “I am not against journalists. Nor am I cynical about the way professional journalists work. For mainstream media getting the local flavor is difficult because most don’t know the Gondi language and translation isn’t always enough” (S. Choudhary, personal communication, August 25, 2012).

A former South Asia producer for the BBC, Choudhary’s work at one point was covering civil wars and cyclones almost on a daily basis.

> I hated it after a while simply because there was no looking back, no analyzing what made a certain situation what it was. My quality of work was suffering. It was time to go back to my roots and write about my people. I wanted to add depth and character to my work writing about the circumstances I had grown up with (Choudhary, personal communication, August 25, 2012).

Chhattisgarh is seen as the epicenter of the Maoist movement in India today (Bagchi, 2011). “Thirty-three per cent of the population in the state is tribal. Chhattisgarh was ostensibly made for this population,” says Choudhary. The Chhattisgarh Journalists Union had more than 900 names of journalists allocated to cover the area from different media organizations.

“I tried to find out how many journalists spoke any of the tribal languages of the region they had come to cover. I could find only a handful,” Choudhary noted. That is when an idea struck. Twitter had not reached Dantewada (a district in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh) but the mobile phone certainly had. Using mobile technology to solve this problem of information seemed viable, almost “inevitable” says Choudhary (personal communication, August 25, 2012).

After many experiments, which succeeded to different degrees, they ended up creating a media outlet based primarily on the mobile phone and named it CGNET Swara. “Swara” means voice.

“While creating the news magazine, we didn’t aim it especially at women. Nor did we actively promote it among them. That’s why we don’t have any specific components catering especially to them,” says Choudhary (personal communication, August 25, 2012). Today there is no need for any special section for the many women who access the news or the reporters who get the reports. Men and women read the same news and work in the same conditions, doing the same work.

**Tribal women journalists**

The women reporters have joined forces on their own initiative (Bhatt, 2008). “We do have some training sessions periodically but the majority of the reporters are self-trained. They learn on the job, so to speak,” says Choudhary. “Once they understand that it’s not rocket science really, their enthusiasm sees them through.” The news is available in in Hindi and Gondi. Most of it is also available on the site.

CGNET Swara was designed to help every citizen in Chhattisgarh participate and enable them to have a say in the media scenario (Gandhy, 2010). Since the portal is accessed through mobile phones, most find it easy to use. Citizens with a story to report call a number and record the story. Senior journalists then vet the copy for facts and upload it onto the site. A message is then sent to all registered members who can call in to listen to the news bulletin.

Launched in February 2010, it logs more than 100 calls per day. But what is remarkable is how women have come forth as regular contributors, bringing in news and highlighting issues, at par with any seasoned journalist (Choudhary, 2012).

For Bhan Sahu, CGNET’s most active and earliest contributor, being a woman has certain undeniable advantages. “We see things that men don’t,” she says. Hailing from Ambagarh Chowki in the district, she has done many stories for the site but she is proudest of her expose on child labor employed in the tendu leaf collection that’s big industry in Chhattisgarh (Sahu, 2012). “Not only are children employed, they are overworked and underpaid as well,” she says, her anger at the blatant injustice still palpable. Sahu’s story on the exploitation of child workers in the tendu leaf industry forced the administration and the National Commission on Child Rights to ensure the removal of children from that industry (Sahu, 2011).

Rajim, from Saraipali block in Chhattisgarh, enjoys being a part of CGNET. “No. We aren’t paid anything for this work yet. So our main motive is just the urge to bring news to people.” (Rajim, personal communication, September 20, 2012). She talks about a story she did on school children being charged about 20 rupees (about 50 cents U.S.) to travel by bus to school every day. “Can you imagine that? Twenty rupees can feed a family of two in this state. When the children whose parents are usually daily wage earners can’t pay, they simply have to miss school. When the government is doing so much to keep children in school, can’t they make bus companies give free rides to at least the girl children?” she asks.

For Aloka Kujur, reporting for CGNET is a way of life (personal communication June 15, 2012). An avid people watcher, her mother-in-law used to beat her, saying her habit was annoying. Understanding people’s issues keeps her motivated. That is why her stories focus on issues like the setting up of herbal medicine training centers and how the Forest Act affects the lives of those living near the forests, dependent on them for their livelihoods.

> One of the best stories I worked on involved just talking to people and watching them go about their daily lives. It's not always about problems. We just spoke and didn't make looking for solutions an important aspect of the discussion. Instead a journalist and her audience just sat and exchanged stories about life and living. My story dwelt on the beauty of the land and its peace instead of the usual focus on development related issues (Kujur, personal communication June 15, 2012).

The mother-in-law who dismissed her as a gossip now actually waits to hear what she has at the end of the day (Kujur, personal communication June 15, 2012).

Gujjo Bai Sarpanch, of Gumiapal, liked taking about people, but "I never a gossip," she says quickly. She too has a great ability to notice things (Sarpanch, personal communication, September 20, 2012). But she never thought that these were talents that would one day make her stories the toast of the national media. Last year, two Naxals were allegedly killed in an encounter in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district (Sarpanch, 2011). Something prompted this 5-feet 2-inch tall, spare woman to investigate the issue. Her snooping around revealed that the dead were actually innocent people killed in a routine inquiry at night. They were woken up during the night and their houses were set on fire. This created a furor and many other media outlets came to speak with her after it was uploaded on the site.

**Difficult journey**

The problems they face are many faceted. Bhan often faces police harassment. She had to routinely go to the police station to explain her work and what her income sources are. Then her landlord, who asked her to vacate her rented accommodation, later admitted that he was doing so because of police pressure.

> Hosting our servers is often tough. I cannot prove anything on paper. We were forced to change our phone number by shifting to new servers. Unlike in the case of the Wikileaks where the Web address does not change even after servers change, we have to get new number every time we change. (Choudhary, personal communication, August 25, 2012)

This is often tough to get. Because of security reasons they cannot keep records of the people who call. The police can recover callers' numbers after raiding their office, which is why they are often unable to inform callers about changes in numbers. So every time, after a police raid, they have had to start from zero. "We know many people who have stopped reporting for Swara after mild threats from the police. Bhan and other women like her are the best exceptions who continue in spite of everything," says Choudhary.

Bhan has two children and at 39, she says, balancing her reporting and housework is not always easy. She believes reporting has given her new courage to stand up and say "no" when she sees things are not right. "I am more confident. People now listen to me. Also, I have a daughter. She is growing up seeing an assertive mother who is no one's 'yes-woman.' I want to make her a journalist as well when she is bit more grown up," says Bhan. Her family is not always supportive, especially when she has to travel long distances to get her stories. But Bhan is determined to stay on in her newfound role.

Apart from news, songs, and poems also find space on CGNET. Budhan Mehsram, a Dalit Pandvani singer, whose work is changing Pandvani from its traditional form of singing about the Mahabharata (an Indian mythological epic) to creating "awareness music" on local contemporary issues, proudly features her work here (Pandey 2010). CGNET Swara is not Internet dependent. It works on mobile software for the uploading of news (Hume, 2012). Callers are guided through voice prompts. "Literacy isn't an issue and that ensures the participation of more women, especially those who have never been to school," says Choudhary.

### Road ahead

CGNET has various plans for revenue generation from advertising to public service broadcasts for government related agencies and non-governmental agencies on issues like health, education, forest rights and NREGA. Says Choudhary: "We are hopeful as these are the only platforms in tribal languages and better than radio since it is a two way platform where a tribal can also respond and we can get their feedback immediately. Content syndication with mainstream newspapers that will use our content will also help bring in some revenue." While newspapers pick up and highlight the issues raised by CGNET Swara journalists, they are yet to start paying for the information (Knight International Fellows Project, 2010). Once that starts, the issue of financing the project might be resolved.

Before CGNET, Swara another completely women controlled media outlet called *Khabar Lahariya,* was training its reporters to report the news from a hitherto ignored viewpoint: the woman's perspective.

### Khabar Lahariya: A newspaper from women for everyone

*Khabar Lahariya* is a newspaper that has already had quite an impact. This women-run newspaper recently published a story on the pathetic state of health care in Chitrakoot. The story said that the local hospital was refusing to provide emergency medical care to women in the area. The reporters questioned the doctors on duty, fearlessly, about the situation. They weren't able to immediately solve the problem but at least the story got attention. It was published. The fact that *Khabar Lahariya* gave the issue priority and makes reporting on women's health care an important aspect of its news coverage makes the organization and its product very remarkable (Mishra, 2010).

Chitrakoot and the rest of Uttar Pradesh as a state are characterized by poverty, illiteracy, and gender discrimination. Women's issues are not given any prominence there. Women's news is not of importance. Their opinions count for very little. *Khabar Lahariya*, inaugurated in 2002, has produced an outlet where women from the Dalit and Kol communities get a chance to participate in media that features issues often ignored by conventional media outlets. But perhaps its greatest achievement is the encouragement it gives the women to read and thus addresses the issue of illiteracy because the women-oriented news focus of the paper often encourages more women to take an interest in the paper (Pandey 2009).

*Khabar Lahariya*, with a staff of nearly 12 women reporters from the marginalized Dalit, Kol and Muslim communities, is a unique media outlet. Written in the Bundeli language, it functions as a weekly that has news of politics and topics popular among the local people with a special emphasis on its female reading public. A characteristic feature that marks it apart from other newspapers is its women reporters and the editorial board's intense focus on women- and girls-related subjects affecting women and the poverty of the people of Uttar Pradesh. For example, the newspaper covers the many issues of violence against women that are almost considered routine. Many of the women on the staff are survivors of domestic abuse. They find the chance to report on these topics empowering. Staff members now have an identity. Besides being someone's wife or daughter, they are now journalists.

Khabar Lahariya means "News Waves" in Bundeli. It was created and conceived by New Delhi-based Nirantar, a civic group focusing on gender, development issues and literacy.

The staff reporters are helped with their reading and writing skills, and as a result they have vastly improved literacy skills. Writing daily articles help polish their newly acquired abilities.

Being the reporters and producers of the entire product certainly has advantages.  Meera is among its most active reporters. Never sent to school and married off at the age of 12, Meera didn't expect to do more than raise children and lead a life of drudgery. She begged to join the nearby women's literacy center where she learned to read. After six months of training at the Niranter center that helps runs the paper, she and Shanti became the first of the hired staff.

The newspaper generates nearly 20% of its operating costs through sales. Nirantar provides financial help while organizing the workshops impetrative for its production. Nirantar's is working to make the women-run paper a separate entity. Intensively training the women towards that end means vast investments of time and effort, both of which the staff of the newspaper and Nirantar actively provide.

Nearly 400 villages in the Chitrakoot and the Banda districts of Uttar Pradesh are keen readers (Government site on Chitrakoot, 2012). After much consideration, it began publishing in Banda in 2006. Estimates peg its readership at more than 25,000. The newspaper's staff is paid a small salary. They make about $60 to $140 per month

(Pandey, 2009).

This is what installs in them a sense of dignity and confidence. They say their salaries have made them dynamic participants in their family lives: they are decisive about their children's education. More importantly perhaps, they now have money to spend on themselves (Shah, 2009). They are not just reporters but they also work to sell the newspaper. They gather news from great distances, often hiking up to places inaccessible by even basic cycles. They speak to the people of the area, listen to their problems, and select their stories.

In 2009, the paper started covering politics, traditionally a male domain. This was done in India's last election cycle. Most of the staff women reporters come from groups that have traditionally been left out of the governing process (Sharma, 2009). They lacked the confidence and knowledge to report on political issues. They did not believe they had the awareness to write sensibly about issues like the political matters leading up to the 2009 parliamentary elections.

Nirantar organized special training sessions for the editors and news staff to understand the complexities about the political system and political reporting. Three special election editions were produced with a great deal of effort. The paper included interviews with local politicians written in a language suitable for the local folk to understand each politician's portfolio.

*Khabar Lahariya*'s approach to newsgathering and literacy has been appreciated globally. Three members of the staff were given prizes in 2004 from the Dalit Foundation for their sensitive reporting on the rights of the Dalit community. This has meant the opening of doors for these Dalit women, who would have otherwise never learned to read or experience life outside their homes. This will help the entire community overcome centuries of exploitation and cruelty.

The paper was awarded the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) King Sejong Prize for Literacy, which praised *Khabar Lahariya* for its "method of training newly literate women as journalists and democratizing information production" (The Hindu Newspaper, 2009).

*Khabar Lahariya* became an autonomous society under the umbrella organization called "Pahal" in 2008. They hope this will help establish them as a rural woman's media collective in India (UNESCO, 2006). An edition of the paper can be found at http://www.nirantar.net/khabar_slides.htm.

From print to the power of moving images, women journalists in India are forging ahead and using images to create a language that is specially designed to tell stories from a feminist perspective. They make WAVES with their cameras.

**WAVES: Making waves with the camera**

“I was lucky. My parents were very supportive,” says transgender activist Kalki Subramaniam. She was recently trained in the art of filmmaking that instilled in her the belief that cinema has powers to transform (Subramanium, 2010). She proved it by training six transgender women in the art of filmmaking. Armed with cameras, these women set out to tell tales of their hopes and dreams and, in the process, highlight through everyday images and familiar sounds the cruelties society callously subjects them to. These filmmakers live in slums and eke out a living either begging or doing odd jobs. They now have a new purpose to live for. For Kalki, it is all in a day’s work. “I am just passing on the amazing training I received at WAVE,” she says.

WAVE (Women Aloud: Video Blogging for Empowerment) was designed to be a digital platform for young Indian women to voice their perspectives on issues that matter through video blogs. Conceived of by Angana Jhaveri, Sapna Shahani, and Madhusudan Agarwal, director of Mam Movies in Bombay, WAVE was a product of collaboration of ideas (Manthan, 2010). They proposed a video blogging project to the Digital Media and Learning competition, sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation and HASTAC. Later they partnered with the Point of View organization that served as the NGO -partner for the actual administration of the WAVE Project.

“The name came about on its own,” Jhaveri. “We wanted to encourage young women in India to speak up. Our culture seems to groom women not speak out or think independently. We insist on cutting them off from the realities around us. One of our grant officials in the U.S. saw that its initials spelt WAVE. We loved it.”

While working in Berkeley Community Media, California, Shahani had developed an abiding belief in the power of community media. Angana’s experience was varied. She had lived in a spiritual organization as part of the communications team documenting how the organization served the communities needs over the years (Project Report, 2010).

“When we got together we discovered that we had both associated with the activist media outfit Deep Dish TV in New York, at different times,” says Angana.

Angana Jahveri and Sapna Sahani were keen to work with women belonging to a slightly older age group who could be mentored as citizen journalist video bloggers (Anand, The Better India). Female college graduates in India would be able to consider this profession as a part-time livelihood and thus create more articulate stories about community development, they thought. But the outcomes exceeded their expectations.

“I had also recently become acquainted with some prominent video bloggers whom I had invited to handle a workshop at Berkeley Community Media, a public access TV station, where I worked,” says Sapna. “They showed me the power of video blogging.”

Their first 11-day training had almost 50 women from around India (Sinha, 2010). The sessions included an overview of video blogging, scripting, camera work, editing, animation, and other program-based and creative workshops. After the program concluded, 30 women representing their Indian states, who make videos regularly, were mentored by Sapna and Angana for a nine-month term. The participants were selected mostly based on commitment level, media background, community involvement, and income level. Low-income women were given preference. Participants were provided video equipment, intensive training, and some spending money. This was important because some of them had to give up assignments to come and join and WAVE didn't want the training to be a drain on its resources.

Their target age group was 18 to 25 but many were outside that bracket (Hastac.org, 2009). "We essentially teach our participants to tell a story. Aspects of technology like animation are also given focus. Training sessions also include features on making their video programs a business that can yield revenue," says Angana.

This focus on storytelling proved to be a turning point for participant Usha Dewani from Guwahati (personal communication, August 20, 2012). "I started with nothing. In fact I wasn't even comfortable with a camera. The experience I gained has helped me make films for Project Survival Media focused on finding solutions for living with climate change."

Many topics are keen examined by the participants. There are no rules for the subjects. Bhoomika works at the Centre for Governance and Accountability in Delhi and she uses her videos to explain how women can help in the movement to make government budgets sensitive to women's needs. A print journalist, Moushumi Basu, shot a video about people in a village attempting to murder a family accused of witchcraft. "It is one of the most powerful pieces of work I have done to date," she says. Sulochana, from Goa, who works on health awareness for an NGO, made a video about cultural perspectives on menstruation, which she uses in her awareness programs.

Some of the participants do struggle with technology and the cameras. "This," says Sapna, "is mostly because of lack of accessible training and the fact that most start out completely believing that they can't do it." They have created a video production guide, which they call a "toolkit", available for free download on the website (Sahani, personal communication, August 22, 2012).

Kalki Subramanium says it taught her more about the importance of community journalism. "For marginalized and stigmatized transgender communities, this form of media is an excellent platform for voicing and fighting for the social, political and economic rights of the transgender people," she explains. Kalki's student, Kanchana, says people view her differently now that she knows how to use a camera (Subramanium, personal communication, August 24, 2012). "I was known as a beggar, who begged for a living," says Kanchana. Kalki's ultimate aim is to ensure that these women get employment as journalists or photographers. "That will help them break the cycle of poverty."

Some of the video bloggers from the WAVE workshops have been offered paid work to produce videos. Moushumi says the training has helped her get an international audience for her stories. “With its mentoring, I have written several articles that have appeared in the Web section of Radio Netherlands, highlighting the cause of women and the underprivileged.”

For Sapna and Angana, mentoring has meant guiding the women representing the many states and facets of India. But the project has changed their lives in many ways as well. Their best moments include meeting women who have broken stereotypes and emerged as unique, confident, intelligent, and passionate career-women from every town in India. “I always gave a lot of importance to work. Since WAVE is the first project I am managing that I helped conceive, I now work round the clock. Besides this, I have learned much more about India than ever before, and have a greater understanding of the grassroots community problems around the country,” says Jahveri (personal communication, August 26, 2012).

While these three media outlets may seem like isolated projects working with women, their effects are helping transform a whole generation of hitherto silent spectators of their own drama into empowered bold individuals with voices to make real difference. They are working to take their stories to a larger canvas. They are no longer just satisfied with being only child bearers and homemakers with little say in even the most ordinary of events.

**Looking into the future**

Today they are women with a mission: a mission that also pays, not just in terms of knowledge but also in simple hard cash. Their money may seem less than a pittance to the educated city-based journalist. After all, how much can a salary of $10 a month mean?  But for the women of *Khabar Lahariya* this has made all the difference between being able to send their daughters to school and make sure they can stay on till they complete their education. As Meera, the editor who also doubles as the main marketing agent, says, “Today my husband looks up to me. I am not just a journalist but I am also the same woman who can put a meal on the table. No one can question me sending my daughter to school!” (personal communication, September 22, 2012).

***For reporters like Bhan Sahu, life was divided between accepting her lot as a woman and battling the difficulties of being able to look after her daughters, and making sure they at least had enough to eat. Armed with a simple mobile phone, today she can send news about the many police-related atrocities her village is routinely subjected to.***

For reporters like Bhan Sahu, life was divided between accepting her lot as a woman and battling the difficulties of being able to look after her daughters, and making sure they at least had enough to eat. Armed with a simple mobile phone, today she can send news about the many police-related atrocities her village is routinely subjected to. In January 2010, she seemed too timid to be able to sniff out a story and actually report it. By June 2010, she was the brightest reporter at CGNET Swara. At a chance meeting at a New Delhi conference, she seemed to have grown taller. “I have a story tip for you,” she whispered confidentially.

### Funding and other issues

As The Media and Gender Reader (Brooten, 2003) asks, “To what extent do media portrayals of gender influence our everyday perceptions of ourselves and our actions?” The media outlets chronicled above do not spend too much time trying to answer questions of these kinds. Their answers are shown in their work. But this is often threatened thanks to the lack of funds. The government in India is open to entrepreneurship but it does not consider these women-led media outlets worth investing in. Most are dependent on the money they raise from sales plus donations and funding from international agencies. Shubhranshu Choudhary’s Knight Media scholarship went a long way to help CGNET Swara.

These organizations are trying to sell their reports to other mainstream news corporations to help raise funds. Video Volunteers another organization, organization that helps train community reporters has managed to transition successfully selling news stories to a news channel called 9X in India (Sahani, 2010). The issue is negotiating prices with these channels and ensuring that the price and space given to the program is fair. WAVES manages to get graduates of their programs a better monetary deal since video is an easier medium to translate, and a skill that can be used for news, documentary, and even shooting home videos for private customers celebrating marriages or festivals. It is the *Khabar Lahariya* group that is at present struggling. “We thought the UNESCO prize would help funds flow in but that didn’t really happen,” say activists from Nirantar.

Grassroots level media run by women also serve “. . . in the era of global capital (for) the protection and preservation of local cultures and cultural diversity. Their role is not limited to advancing women’s issues. Grassroots media have resulted from a vibrant history of struggle and research on gender and communication, focusing on representations of women and marginalized peoples in mainstream media and on women’s access to media” (Brooten, 2003).

How long will their role in India continue? The future unfortunately at this point seems bleak.

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## Author's Note

Material for this was gathered by the author as an independent journalist during 2010-2012. The study builds on previous research on global citizen journalism projects and online news startups. An overview of the projects described and interviews with the journalists involved provides history and context.  The media outlets were examined over three years. The goal was to study new ways citizen media was inspiring women in the most backward regions of the country to break the shackles of traditional patriarchy. The women were interviewed in their homes and places of work. Since all of them had mobile phones, following their growth and experiences outside the stories they were filing was easy.  This was not meant to be a research study in the academic sense. It is an exploratory investigation of media that might over time with the right funding, support and encouragement change the way dominant media models in India work.

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#ISOJ
Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 259-273

# Revisiting the Church-State Separation: A Comparative Consideration of the Effects of Advertiser Pressure on Traditional and Online Journalism

***Philip M. Napoli***

*This paper examines how the pressures to attract advertising revenues might affect the production dynamics surrounding online journalism. The paper begins with a brief discussion of the extant literature on the journalism-advertising dynamic. Next, this paper examines how the dynamics reflected in this literature might be affected via journalism's migration to online platforms. Specifically, this paper considers how the general de-institutionalization of the journalistic enterprise, that is a defining characteristic of the new journalistic environment, may affect the extent to which news content is affected by the pressures to attract advertising dollars.*

Professional journalism has operated in the dual-product marketplace characteristic of many media industry sectors, in which content is sold to audiences and audiences are sold to advertisers (see Hamilton, 2003). For as long as this has been the case, this dynamic has also raised questions about the ways in which the pressures to attract advertising revenue might affect the nature of the journalism that is produced (e.g., Baker, 1995; Poitras & Sutter, 2009; Reuter & Zitzewitz, 2006). These questions persist as journalism migrates to online platforms, but with a number of new and challenging complications that arise from a media environment in which consumers' willingness to pay for news appears to be diminished, in which audiences are increasingly fragmented across more news sources, and in which interactivity is both facilitating new forms of audience information and new forms of journalistic production (Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, 2009).

Although the technological and institutional dynamics surrounding journalistic production and distribution are changing, from an economic standpoint, there are some aspects of journalism that remain consistent. Specifically, news, amongst all forms of media content, has always been particularly vulnerable from an economic standpoint. News is a public good with substantial positive externalities that cannot be fully captured within traditional marketplace transactions (see Hamilton, 2003).[1] Products with such characteristics tend to be under-produced relative to their true economic value. For instance, the economic benefits of a better-informed citizenry cannot be effectively captured in the transactions that take place between news outlets and advertisers; and so, the market tends to produce less news (or perhaps lower quality news) than would be optimal for the citizenry (Cooper, 2009). Therefore, today we have a product that was, in all likelihood, already being under-produced relative to its full value now having its established business model crumbling around it; while at the same time, new and innovative efforts in news production and distribution are developing online. In this compelling period of both destruction and innovation, it is particularly important to explore the emerging dynamics of online news production (see, e.g., Anderson, 2013).

This paper addresses one aspect of this issue, assessing how the pressures to attract advertising revenues might affect the production dynamics surrounding online journalism. It is important to note that while a fairly robust literature has developed around the question of the direct and indirect influence of advertising over traditional print and electronic journalism, similar literature oriented around the production of online journalism has yet to develop. Such a body of literature seems somewhat overdue at this point, given the reasonably long-standing prominence of the Internet as a mode of news consumption in the lives of many news consumers.

***It is important to note that while fairly robust literature has developed around the question of the direct and indirect influence of advertising over traditional print and electronic journalism, similar literature oriented around the production of online journalism has yet to develop.***

The Internet's position as a news *consumption* and *distribution* platform is reasonably well-established. Online audiences have been using the web to access news and information produced and distributed online by traditional media outlets for quite some time.[2] Less established (though certainly growing rapidly) are free-standing sources of online news *production.* The distinction between production and distribution – and, for that matter, aggregation – is vital to analyzing the true state of online journalism. The focus here is on production – on the *reporting activities that produce news stories,* rather than on the processes of disseminating news stories or aiding audiences in locating and consuming news stories that have been produced by other organizations.

From this perspective, the growth of online news organizations that operate independently of traditional media organizations such as television stations or newspapers, is a much more recent phenomenon. Today, both national (e.g., *Huffington Post, ProPublica*) and local (e.g., *Patch*) online news organizations are attracting an increasing proportion of the attention of news consumers after a long period of time in which the online arms of traditional media outlets (e.g., *The New York Times,* CNN, etc.) almost completely dominated the online news space.

The relatively recent rise to prominence of such operations may explain the exhibited lag up to this point in the academic literature that examines the dynamics of advertiser pressures on online news production, as researchers have focused thus far on more basic questions involving the economic viability of such operations and how they are fitting into the broader media ecosystem (see, e.g., Anderson, 2013; Chyi & Yang, 2009). However, given the growing prominence and influence of such online news producers, it is vitally important that the academic research catches up. This paper is an effort to encourage more thinking and research on this topic via some speculation about how the overall dynamics of advertiser pressures on journalistic content might be affected by the transition online.

The paper begins by placing the issue of advertiser pressures on journalism in its appropriate historical and institutional contexts, with a brief discussion of the extant literature on the journalism-advertising dynamic. This section is based on the presumption that there is potentially substantial analytical utility in using this body of literature that has developed within the context of traditional media as a starting point for examinations of online journalism production. Reflecting this perspective, this paper next considers how the dynamics captured in this literature might be affected via the migration to online platforms. Specifically, this paper considers how the general de-institutionalization of the journalistic enterprise (i.e., the decline of traditional large, complex news organizations and the rise of smaller, specialized news outlets and individual journalism providers such as bloggers) that is a defining characteristic of the new journalistic environment may affect the extent to which news content is affected by the pressures to attract advertising dollars. The goal in this section is to identify some reasonable, testable propositions about how the dynamics of advertising pressures on journalism discussed in the previous section might translate into the online context. The concluding section summarizes the paper's main points and emphasizes the importance of addressing this issue within the context of an integrated, inter-dependent *journalistic system*.

## Journalism and advertising: An uneasy relationship

The pressure to attract advertising dollars has not always been a defining element of the practice of journalism. As Downie and Schudson (2010) remind us, it was not until the late 19th century that American newspapers began to divorce themselves from their traditional tight linkages with political parties, and started to draw heavily upon advertisers for financial support instead. Even in these early days of the journalism-advertiser relationship, newspapers "were frequently beholden . . . to advertisers and potential advertisers" (Downie & Schudson, 2010, p. 5). Thus, journalism can – and has – functioned in the past without advertiser support, and according to some contemporary analyses, it may need to again in the near future as alternative advertising platforms capture an increasing share of the ad dollars traditionally captured by commercial news operations (Downie & Schudson, 2010; McChesney & Nichols, 2010).

When we think of the issue of advertiser influence over journalism, we tend to think of the more overt examples, such as news outlets altering or perhaps even spiking individual stories due to explicit pressures or feared responses from specific advertisers. There certainly have been a number of compelling anecdotal examples of such instances, which strike at the very heart of the notion of the separation between "church" (editorial) and "state" (advertising) that became something of a mantra within the ethics of professional journalism in the U.S. (see McChesney, 2003).

But of course the processes by which news organizations can have their journalistic output influenced by concerns about attracting and retaining advertisers often are more complex than that, and need not be so overt (Baker, 1995).[3] The pressures to attract advertising dollars can be felt – and can manifest themselves – in a variety of ways. For instance, advertisers' demand for some types of audiences over other types of audiences can dramatically affect how content is produced and distributed. For instance, over the past two decades, some U.S. newspapers have increased their efforts to target high-income readers to such an extent that they have scaled back their coverage of low-income regions of their markets, and they have even scaled back newspaper distribution in these regions – all in an effort to produce an average reader profile with a higher household income that is thus more appealing to advertisers (Baker, 1995; Napoli, 2003). Indeed, as advertisers' demands for specific demographic groupings have grown more pronounced, the pressures on ad-supported content providers, such as news organizations, to cater to the interests of certain categories of citizens and essentially neglect the interests of others have intensified. Some news organizations have made concerted efforts to attract the young (e.g., 19-34) audiences so coveted by advertisers; and in so doing, have engaged in practices such as reducing hard news coverage and increasing lifestyle and entertainment coverage (Napoli, 2003).

Or, news outlets may feel pressure to cater to advertiser demands for audiences to be in a particular state of mind when consuming media (Baker, 1995). Thus, for instance, some television news outlets have been known to eschew stories of a depressing or tragic nature so that viewers are not in a negative state of mind when consuming the advertisements framing the news broadcasts (see Napoli, 2003). The logic here, of course, is that television commercials are less effective on a viewer who has just learned about a tragic accident or about substantial war casualties.

The pressures to attract advertising dollars have been linked to other more general content characteristics of journalism, such as the adoption of the "norm of objectivity." The norm of objectivity refers to the idea that journalists should be neutral and non-partisan in their reporting. It is important to emphasize that this norm arose after a prolonged period of journalistic history in the U.S. in which journalists embraced no such norm and were overtly partisan, in reflection of the fact that early U.S. newspapers received their financial support primarily from individual political parties. According to some accounts, the norm of objectivity arose in an effort by newspaper publishers to expand their readership beyond fairly narrow political orientations and thus attract more revenue from both readers and advertisers (Baker, 1995).

These pressures on news organizations also have been linked to certain structural changes – and thus any effects on content could be considered indirect. For instance,

C. Edwin Baker (1995) provides a compelling argument that the newspaper industry's increased reliance on advertising revenues contributed to the decline in competition and increased concentration that came to characterize the newspaper industry in the U.S. This structural transformation has, in turn, frequently been associated with diminished content and viewpoint diversity available to newspaper readers (Baker, 1995).

One final point merits emphasis. While this discussion has focused on reviewing the dynamics of advertiser influence over journalism in the "traditional" media world, these dynamics still matter to efforts to understand the production dynamics surrounding the news we consume online. This is because, first, the online platforms of many of these traditional news organizations remain, at this point, among the most popular among online news consumers. According to a recent analysis of online audience data by the Project for Excellence in Journalism and the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2010), "websites tied to legacy news outlets like newspapers or cable stations now attract the bulk of the news traffic." Traditional print and television news outlets such as *The New York Times,* CNN, and Fox News have completely incorporated new media platforms into their news production and distribution operations, and they remain prominent news sources for even those news consumers who do not rely on television or print for their news and information. In this way, the dynamics of advertiser influence that characterize the traditional media continue to matter in terms of our understanding of the nature of the journalism that we consume online.

Second, and perhaps more germane to this discussion, even when we focus our attention on true online news outlets – that is, those news outlets that exist entirely online[4] – we cannot lose sight of the extent to which it is the news and information produced by the traditional news outlets that serve as fundamental raw material in the operation of many of these news outlets. Research continues to show the dramatic extent to which online news outlets of many shapes and sizes rely quite heavily on the traditional print and broadcast media. This reliance can take a variety of forms. Research shows, for instance, that online news outlets often rely quite heavily on the print and broadcast news media to provide direction for their own journalistic efforts (essentially an agenda-setting effect; see Boczkowski, 2010). In other instances, the reliance on traditional media is more pronounced, with online news sources simply relaying the news stories produced by print and broadcast media, or using these stories as a starting point for providing additional commentary or perspective (this is, of course a common approach of many blogs). Even much-discussed online news platforms such as the *Huffington Post* continue to aggregate news stories available on the online platforms of many traditional media outlets. The key implication of the current state of affairs is that the actual reporting that serves the information needs of a community is emanating from relatively few sources, even if it is being distributed across a wide array of platforms (see Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010; Smyrnaois, Marty, & Rebillard, 2010). In these ways, a substantial proportion of what we would categorize as online news outlets (ranging from blogs to news aggregators to community news sites) function as somewhat passive conduits for the journalism produced by traditional media. This persistent tendency further highlights – even in this new media era – the continued relevance of the dynamics of advertiser influence over traditional media. Contemporary news is produced by – and circulates through – an increasingly complex ecosystem in which there are substantial interdependencies across all actors.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, independent online journalism is still built, to some extent, on the economic, strategic, normative, and professional foundations of traditional journalism, with many of the same stakeholder groups involved. Certainly, the journalistic landscape is changing dramatically, but as is often the case in the media sector, the process is best considered as evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Thus, understanding the advertiser pressures that traditional news organizations have faced, and how these pressures have influenced news production and distribution, represents a productive starting point for assessing the current journalistic ecosystem, and for formulating a next-generation research agenda on the effects of pressures to attract advertising dollars on online journalistic enterprises.

**Journalism and advertising in the online realm**

Online journalistic production has begun to exhibit a number of distinguishing characteristics from the journalistic production that takes place within traditional media. This section considers these changes in relation to the question of how they may affect the traditional dynamics of advertising pressures on journalistic content discussed above.

First, one needs to consider the general trend towards the *de-institutionalization* of the journalistic enterprise. In media and communications research, the term *institution* has had two interrelated meanings (Moe & Syvertsen, 2007). The first (and more common in terms of its usage in media and communications research) involves the analysis of concrete organizations, such as media outlets, government agencies, advertising agencies, or audience research firms. The second more traditional meaning focuses on established norms, formal procedures, and practices (see, e.g., Leblebici, Slancik, Copy, & King, 1991). Moe and Syvertsen (2007) identify the first approach as focusing on institutions as “specific organizations” and the second approach as focusing on institutions as “spheres” (p. 50), though these are not necessarily mutually exclusive (see Napoli, 2011).

Both levels of analysis are relevant to this discussion. The organizational orientation is of particular relevance to the ongoing phenomenon in which journalistic production in traditional news organizations is on the decline for a variety of economic reasons (Jones, 2010; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Napoli, 2009). Perhaps one of the more important of these reasons is the corresponding rise in – and competition from – journalistic production from individuals and organizations that do not conform to traditional definitions (see Turow, 1990, 1992) of the “institutional communicator” (Napoli, 2010). These individuals and organizations are of course able to take advantage of the much lower barriers to entry to news production and (particularly) distribution offered by online platforms.

These patterns of course take us into the realm of individual bloggers, participatory journalism, community news sites, crowd-sourced news enterprises, and a host of other evolving, and in some cases, experimental forms of news production. There is rapidly growing literature examining these emergent forms of journalism (see, e.g., Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2004; 2010; Lowrey, 2006; Platon & Deuze, 2003; Singer, 2006; Thorsen, 2008), though questions related to the dynamics of advertiser influence have received little direct attention within it as of yet.

When we consider (in admittedly broad strokes) what the implications of these developments might mean for the dynamics of advertiser influence over journalistic production, on the plus side it certainly appears (at least at this point) that in the online space, a wide range of non-commercial, non-profit forms of journalistic production are developing (see, e.g., Deuze, Bruns, & Neuberger, 2007; Platon & Deuze, 2003). This pattern stands in stark contrast to the traditional media sector in the U.S., where non-commercial and non-profit forms of journalism have represented a miniscule proportion of available news sources. If this pattern holds, then, we are seeing the development of a journalistic environment in which the opportunities for the pressures to attract advertising revenue to affect journalistic decisions may diminish, at least relative to the opportunities that have characterized traditional news media.[5] Of course, whether this general evolutionary pattern persists remains to be seen.

As journalism history has shown, the underlying economic model for journalistic production can shift fairly dramatically over time (see, e.g., Downie & Schudson, 2010; McChesney & Nichols, 2010). In the U.S., for instance, we have seen a model dominated by financial support from political parties evolve into a model relying primarily on audience payment and (secondarily) advertiser support. Over time, advertiser support has eclipsed audience payment as the primary revenue source. And now, we appear to be in a period of widespread experimentation in economic models for journalism. Online news platforms are currently experimenting with a variety of forms of paywalls and crowdfunding and organizations such as universities and foundations are playing an increasingly prominent role in providing economic support for journalistic enterprises (see, e.g., Anderson, Glaisyer, Smith, & Rothfeld, 2011).

Moreover, in the online space, the boundary separating commercial versus non-commercial journalistic enterprises can at times be difficult to discern. Consider, for instance, the phenomenon of bloggers accepting payment (without disclosure) for blogging about certain topics, events, or products (Arango, 2009). Obviously, to the extent that blogs are beginning to replace traditional journalistic sources for some news consumers, such practices raise serious concerns about journalistic integrity. Such practices were deemed as sufficiently damaging to the public interest that the Federal Trade Commission (2009) instituted regulations requiring bloggers to disclose when payments had been received. Practices such as these highlight the relevance of the more macro-level application of the notion of institutions – behavioral norms, procedures, and practices, as they raise the question of how journalism as an institution (that is, as a set of norms, procedures, and practices) is evolving in response to technological change.

Along similar lines, the contemporary media environment (with its decline in traditional gatekeepers) has allowed a wide range of organizations that traditionally would have relied on news organizations to become quasi-news organizations in their own right. Political organizations, advocacy groups, corporations, and educational institutions all have the capacity to produce and disseminate news; though they generally do so without any of the economic or political pressures that could come from advertisers, as well as without the more wide ranging mandate to serve the information needs of communities that traditionally has been associated with a news organization. As one recent assessment of the contemporary media environment claims, all companies need to think like media companies (Kramer, 2010). To some extent this also means that all organizations need to think like news organizations. Many of them already are; and in doing so, they are further blurring accepted definitions of what constitutes a news organization.

Let us next consider more clear-cut examples of commercial journalistic enterprises that operate online and that rely – at least in part – on advertiser support to continue to function. Again, considering the online space in very broad strokes, it is important to consider how the dual-product marketplace that characterizes traditional news outlets such as newspapers, magazines, and cable news networks is transitioning online. It has, for instance, been widely acknowledged that consumer willingness to pay for news via online platforms is substantially less than what it has been in traditional platforms such as print (see, e.g., Chyi, 2005). The reasons for this have been much discussed and have been addressed in greater detail elsewhere (e.g., Jones, 2009; McChesney & Nichols, 2010).

There are, of course, some exceptions that help to illustrate the potential that online platforms have for sustaining novel funding mechanisms for journalism. Consider, for instance, a news site such as Spot.us, which proposes a set of possible topics for its investigative journalism and then investigates those that receive the largest financial contributions via online payments from the site's visitors. Such an approach exposes the process of investigative reporting to the dynamics of consumer demand much more directly than was ever the case when investigative reporting was bundled (and to some extent insulated) within larger media products such as newspapers (with their multiple sections addressing a wide range of interests) or television news broadcasts (with their multiple topics and segments). It remains to be seen if and how more directly market-driven investigative reporting differs from investigative reporting bundled within more diversified journalistic enterprises. Future research should address this question.

The point here, however, is that it seems safe to assume – both now and for the foreseeable future – that those commercial news outlets operating online generally find themselves even more dependent on advertiser support than their print and cable counterparts, who have tended to be able to rely upon consumer payments for a substantial proportion of their revenues (see, e.g., Herbert & Thurman, 2007). This would seem to put online commercial news enterprises in a somewhat more vulnerable position relative to advertisers than their traditional media counterparts.

Finally, it is important to consider the fact that commercial online journalistic enterprises tend (again, at this point and for the immediate future) to be smaller, less bureaucratic, and more decentralized operations than their traditional media counterparts (Downie & Schudson, 2010; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010). What might these fundamental structural differences mean for the extent to which the pressure to attract advertising dollars might affect content decisions?

It is difficult to generalize the direction that this structural shift might have on the dynamics of advertiser pressures on journalism. A common argument in favor of journalism delivered by large, diversified commercial organizations has been that such organizations are better equipped to resist any pressures placed on them by a single advertiser or category of advertisers than are smaller news organizations (Demers, 1995). One of the specific trends we are seeing online is the growth of “hyperlocal” news organizations (such as Patch and EveryBlock) that are closely tied to relatively small geographic communities (Miller & Stone, 2009). Certainly, when we are talking about hyperlocal news organizations, the range of potential advertisers on such a site is naturally somewhat limited; and, of course, the ability to achieve economies of scale in news production and distribution is somewhat limited, given the extremely small market for which the content is being produced. This set of factors could create scenarios in which these hyperlocal news sites feel greater pressure to satisfy the coverage preferences of advertisers. Here, comparing the journalistic output and relationships with advertisers between independent hyperlocal news sites and those that are part of growing national networks of hyperlocal news sites (e.g., Patch) would be useful for gaining a deeper understanding of how the pressures to attract advertising dollars might be affecting the delivery of hyperlocal news.

On the contrary, some research has suggested that within larger, more bureaucratic news organizations (particularly those that are publicly traded) the internal pressures to enhance profitability can be greater than those found in smaller organizations (e.g., McManus, 1994; Underwood, 1993). To the extent that this pattern is consistent (it should be noted that it has been called into question by some scholars; see Demers, 1995), it could mean that a migration to a news ecosystem of smaller, less bureaucratized, more locally oriented news outlets is one in which effectiveness of advertiser pressures on news content will be diminished.

It is important to note that, within the context of these structural shifts that are taking place, it remains open to debate whether the overall quantity of journalistic resources is increasing or decreasing, as new media platforms reduce barriers to enter to the practice of journalism (thereby promoting the entry of new resources) while simultaneously undermining the revenue streams and, consequently, the resource allocations of traditional journalistic enterprises. The answer to this question requires some sort of consensus being reached as to how best define journalistic resources.

What is less debatable, however, is the extent to which the totality of journalistic resources is being disaggregated across an increasing number of online sources and platforms. Whether news audiences – and, by association, advertising expenditures

– disaggregate accordingly also can potentially have significant effects on journalistic content. Up to this point, we have seen patterns in the distribution of online audiences and online advertising dollars in which audiences tend to cluster around a select few sources (the well-known Long Tail scenario; see Anderson, 2006), and in which the distribution of advertising dollars tends to be even more heavily concentrated within these most popular sources (Napoli, 2011). The continuation of this pattern in the allocation of advertising dollars could substantially undermine the extent to which a diversity of commercial news sources (and thus, a diversity of news content) thrives online.

As was noted previously, in his classic study of the impact of advertising on journalism, the late C. Edwin Baker (1995) offered a compelling case that the press' reliance on advertising dollars played a fundamental role in the increased concentration and diminished competition that came to characterize the news business in the pre-Internet area dominated by newspapers and television (and, from a content standpoint, the consequent diminishment in diversity that comes when fewer news organizations report on issues of public importance). Given the relative concentration of online advertising dollars at this point, it seems reasonable to be mindful of the possibility of this pattern repeating itself in the online space.

***In today's increasingly fragmented media environment (not only online, but also in television and radio), targeting niche audiences is now a necessity for most news outlets, whatever platform(s) they employ.***

Along related lines, as was noted above, Baker (1995) (among others) provides compelling evidence that the influx in advertising dollars played a significant role in the institutionalization of the norm of objectivity in American journalism. In today's increasingly fragmented media environment (not only online, but also in television and radio), targeting niche audiences is now a necessity for most news outlets, whatever platform(s) they employ. As a result, the targeting of specific ideologically-oriented segments of the population has re-emerged as a fundamental characteristic of the press, just as it was in the heyday of the partisan press of the 19th century. More overtly partisan news outlets have become increasingly prominent in print, broadcast, cable, and online. The difference this time around, however, is that the financial support comes not from political parties but primarily from advertisers. There has been little research, thus far, examining the attitudes and behaviors of advertisers in relation to the partisan slants of the news outlets on which they can advertise; but certainly, the days in which the pressures to attract advertising dollars could contribute to a meaningful push toward objectivity and away from partisanship in American journalism would appear to be a thing of the past.

As should be clear, there are a variety of factors at work that could potentially influence the direction in which – and the extent to which – online journalism is affected by the pressures to attract advertising dollars. Some of these emergent patterns would appear to have the potential to be beneficial to the practice of journalism (in terms of mitigating the potential influence of advertising-related pressures on content), while others have the potential to be damaging. The question of whether the overall effect is positive or negative mirrors the overarching question of whether the evolution of our media environment is resulting in better or worse service to the information needs of communities (Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, 2009) that is at the center of many ongoing discussions of the future of journalism, as well at the center of ongoing inquiries into if and how policymakers need to intervene in some manner to preserve and promote journalism in the digital age (Federal Communications Commission, 2010; Federal Trade Commission, 2010). This section has put forth a number of testable propositions and research questions that future research efforts could investigate in order to better inform these discussions.

Of course, work in this vein must overcome the challenge of effectively distinguishing journalism that is *better* or *worse* than journalism of the past from journalism that is simply *different* than journalism of previous eras. In this regard, empirical work on contemporary journalistic practices needs to be linked with ongoing normative discussions that have been directed not only at assessing the present state of journalism but also at reevaluating the past against contemporary standards of what constitutes effectively serving the information needs of communities (see Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, 2009).

## Conclusion

This paper has attempted to apply the insights produced within the literature on the various ways in which the pressures to attract advertising dollars have affected American journalism to the continuously evolving context of online journalism. Obviously, such an exercise is at its core an effort to hit a very rapidly moving target, so the propositions put forth in this paper are highly speculative and in some cases represent countervailing directions in which online journalism might be affected. Future research should attempt to put these speculations through rigorous testing.

In the end, it is important to emphasize that the distinction between traditional and online media that has been utilized for this analysis is a somewhat artificial distinction. It is difficult to parse out one sector of a media system for analysis without also considering the ramifications of the developments taking place within the selected sector for the rest of the media system. Thus, for instance, in terms of the analysis presented here, we also need to consider how the dramatic reconfigurations of the journalistic landscape that are manifest in the online realm are affecting the dynamics of advertiser influence over journalistic enterprises operating in the traditional media. Certainly, for instance, the extent to which “traditional” media captures a less significant share of the news audience than they used to could affect the extent to which these outlets are vulnerable to the pressures of attracting advertising dollars. Similarly, the fact that policymakers are exploring the possibility of allowing certain types of traditional news organizations to convert to nonprofit status as a mechanism for coping with the competitive effects of the new media environment (see Knight Foundation, 2010) could dramatically affect the pressure dynamics associated with attracting advertising revenues.

And, as this paper has illustrated, any such effects on the part of the traditional news media feed directly back into the content of our online news media via very tangible communications, monitoring, and distribution patterns (see above). Thus, it is vital to consider online news sources as an increasingly integrated, inter-dependent component of a much larger and highly interconnected *journalistic system* (see Friedland, Napoli, Ognayanova, Weil, & Wilson, 2012: Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, 2009; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010), comprised of both new and traditional distribution platforms, as well as both new and traditional news outlets and organizations. Mapping the dynamics of this complex system is fundamental to understanding the future of journalism and the extent to which the information needs of communities will be well-served.

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## Endnotes

1. See James T. Hamilton's *All the News that's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News*, for a thorough discussion of the unique economics of news.

2. The term "shovelware" was coined in the 1990s in reference to the extent to which traditional content providers simply shoveled the content they were producing for traditional media platforms onto their online platforms.

3. Legal scholar C. Edwin Baker provides what is, to date, perhaps the most thorough assessment of the ways in which the pressures to attract advertising dollars have affected journalism; and the implications of these effects for the integrity of the democratic process.

4. Relevant examples of such exclusively online news outlets include nationally focused news operations such as *Politico, ProPublica,* and the *Huffington Post,* as well as locally focused operations such as the *Voice of San Diego* and AOL's growing network of hyperlocal Patch.com web sites.

5. This is not to say, of course, that non-commercial news organizations are free from external pressures. Certainly, the funding sources that non-commercial news organizations rely upon, such as foundations, corporate underwriters, or government bodies, all have the potential to influence the behaviors of non-commercial news organizations.

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Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 274-289

# The 'Original Platform': How Newsrooms Build Digital Loyalty and Generate Revenue Through Face-to-Face Engagement

***Jake Batsell***

*Traditional newsrooms and, especially, online news startups are emphasizing live events as a strategic opportunity to engage readers, raise visibility, and contribute to the bottom line. This study, based on a series of U.S. newsroom visits conducted as part of a larger work, examines how face-to-face engagement is emerging as a vital complement to newsrooms' digital engagement strategies. Live events and other forms of face-to-face engagement can generate revenue while establishing news providers as trusted conveners of community – building goodwill, raising brand awareness, and reinforcing the idea that a news site's editorial content is essential.*

On a clear, cool summer afternoon in June 2012, hundreds of Seattle techies gathered at a concert venue in the city's SoDo warehouse district, cheerfully drifting between an eight-table ping-pong tournament, two bars, catered spreads, and a dress-up photo booth. The slick "Summer Bash" party – hosted by GeekWire, an upstart tech news site – drew more than 500 people from the Seattle tech scene, most of whom paid at least $50 for the chance to mingle with their peers over drinks and maybe win some table tennis bragging rights. Rebecca Lovell, GeekWire's chief business officer, grabbed a microphone and welcomed the crowd with a greeting apropos to Seattle's startup culture and grunge-music roots: "We're just so delighted to get you out of the garage tonight!"

The event also drew 14 corporate sponsors, generating thousands of dollars for GeekWire, a privately held news site started in 2011 by two former *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reporters. Summer Bash was one of nine 2012 events that collectively represented about 40% of the site's annual revenue (Lovell, 2012). Perhaps equally important, these events brought GeekWire more credibility as not only an essential source for news, but as a physical hub for the Seattle tech community. "People in Seattle, they have a personal connection to this thing," said Haresh Sangani, a local tech executive at Summer Bash who shook hands and networked with colleagues and competitors when he was not playing ping-pong. "I see [GeekWire] as a community gathering place resource, where we kind of feed them and they feed us back" (personal communication, June 21, 2012).

News organizations have a long, somewhat checkered history of assembling their readers in person through various forms of high-minded “civic journalism” (Denton and Thorson, 1995; Perry, 2004). But in recent years, traditional newsrooms and, especially, online news startups have begun to embrace live events not out of some sort of solemn civic obligation, nor as a half-hearted corporate marketing exercise, but as a strategic opportunity to meaningfully engage readers by raising visibility, building community, creating newsworthy editorial content and, perhaps most importantly, contributing to the bottom line. Across the United States, journalists are snapping out of deadline mode and hosting audiences at venues ranging from news quiz nights in San Francisco, to chef battles in Chicago, to wonky political forums in Austin. Indeed, events have become a lucrative revenue source for *The Texas Tribune*, the Austin-based nonprofit political news site. In 2012, events generated just under $850,000 for the *Tribune*, accounting for roughly one-fifth of yearly revenues, according to Evan Smith, CEO and editor-in-chief (personal communication, February 13, 2013). “You cannot wait for people to come to you, you have to go to them,” Smith said. “You’ve got to create the highest possible likelihood that people will embrace what you’re doing, will listen, will think, will talk back” (personal communication, September 20, 2012).

This study, based largely on personal observation and interviews during a series of U.S. newsroom visits conducted in 2012 as part of a larger work, examines how face-to-face engagement is emerging as an increasingly vital complement to newsrooms’ digital engagement strategies. Many of the news organizations mentioned in this paper were selected for site visits because they have been particularly aggressive in embracing live events as part of their wider engagement strategy. These outlets’ success with events, while not necessarily typical, merits a closer look as the U.S. news industry searches for pockets of supplemental revenue to support and sustain the journalism once subsidized by a now-disappearing advertising model. In addition to generating revenue that can help support more journalism, events and other forms of face-to-face engagement can establish news providers as trusted conveners of community – building goodwill, raising brand awareness, and reinforcing the idea that a news site’s editorial content is essential to stay in the know. In this sense, old-fashioned, real-life, face-to-face engagement is more critical than ever for news organizations seeking to establish and deepen digital loyalty while remaining financially viable. As Smith puts it:

> Before there was audio and video, before there was blogging, before there was tweeting and Facebooking and G-chatting and iChatting, people got in a room and talked to each other. Real time was the original platform. Real time was the thing that we first accepted as a way to deal with one another (personal communication, September 20, 2012).

## Events: An opportunity, not an obligation

The notion that journalists had a duty to convene and enlighten members of their community flourished during the "civic journalism" movement of the 1990s. An undated summary that remains on the website of the now-defunct Pew Center for Civic Journalism defines the practice as "both a philosophy and a set of values" based on "a belief that journalism has an obligation to public life – an obligation that goes beyond just telling the news or unloading lots of facts." Newspapers, academics, and radio and TV stations combined forces to craft experimental town-hall style projects designed to boost voter participation and "draw people into the public sphere" (Denton & Thorson, 1994).

A bibliography published by the Poynter Institute (Shedden, 2002) lists dozens of books and special reports on the topic, most from the 1990s and early-to-mid-2000s. During this era, the term "civic journalism" often was used interchangeably with "public journalism," as reflected in the titles of two influential titles from the genre, *Doing Public Journalism* (Charity, 1995) and *The Idea of Public Journalism* (Glasser, 1999). Whatever moniker it assumed, the movement's underlying premise was controversial at the time – that news media not only should dispassionately report the facts, but seek ways to improve the quality of their communities. During and after the economic recession of 2001, however, many of these altruistic experiments began to dissipate as newsrooms had fewer resources available to devote to civic "obligations."

During the first decade of the new millennium, the news industry continued to grapple with economic struggles while simultaneously searching for ways to build audience loyalty in an increasingly digital media landscape (Peck & Malthouse, 2011; Napoli, 2011). Against an incessant backdrop of dwindling advertising and subscriptions, news organizations began to see face-to-face events as a more attractive opportunity to generate cash. "People who won't pay $15 for a digital subscription, the theory goes, may pay $20 instead for wine, cheese and a panel of journalists" (Caplan, 2012). Magazines had organized such events for decades, but during the 2000s, a handful of tech-focused startups -- including GigaOm, paidContent, Mashable and Techcrunch -- embraced events as a key component of their revenue strategy (Briggs, 2012, p.78). This new wave of events clearly owed some degree of inspiration to the civic journalism tradition, but there was a key distinction: News startups regarded events as an entrepreneurial opportunity, not "obligations" as the Pew Center once called them.

In 2009, the year after the stock market crash of 2008 triggered a global financial crisis, American City Business Journals still managed to draw more than 100,000 registrants to events put on by the national chain's 60-plus publications (ACBJ.com, 2012). "Part of our readers' loyalty to the paper is because of the events," said Michele Matassa Flores, managing editor of Seattle's *Puget Sound Business Journal*, which regularly hosts sponsored panels as well as ticketed gatherings celebrating special publications like 40 Under Forty and The Book of Lists (personal communication, June 21, 2012).

At around the same time the 2008 economic crisis hit, WBEZ-FM in Chicago launched its Off-Air Series of events, giving the public radio station a boost in terms of both community buzz and the bottom line. Now in its fifth year, the series has drawn some 30,000 of the station’s supporters to a lineup of events including chef battles, drive-in double features for zombie movies, and children’s storytelling performances (Hall, 2012). The events often carry a fee of $10 or $15, with discounts for members, while sponsors provide the rest of the funding. Daniel Ash, WBEZ’s vice president of strategic communications, said the station has come to realize that raising money while also fostering community requires a creative approach that goes beyond black-tie fundraisers. “For our brand to grow, we needed to create experiences that had meaning and value,” Ash said (personal communication, August 10, 2012).

Ash said WBEZ’s parent company, Chicago Public Media, has averaged 4% growth in individual giving for each of the past five years, fueled in part by a rise in regular monthly donations. With more money coming in, he added, WBEZ has been able to reduce its number of on-air pledge days by 30% over the past four years. Events certainly do not deserve *all* the credit for the station’s improving financial fortunes, but Ash said the Off-Air Series is an important extension of a bedrock idea: “Build a relationship, and the money will take care of itself … with our core audience, those that know us, there’s a sense of deeper connection.” Over the last five years, he said, the station has seen an overall increase in fundraising despite a decline in total audience. So while the station’s programming is reaching fewer people, avid supporters are giving more money – and Ash credits events for accelerating that trend. “It took me many, many moons to sell this -- the theory that if we have meaningful experiences, the ultimate return would be membership dollars,” he said.

Across the turbulent U.S. media landscape, newsrooms large and small are staging similar events in search of supplementary income. Take *The New York Times*, which charges $35 for a cooking lecture with Paula Deen in Manhattan or $25 for a panel at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., about the impact of gay issues on the 2012 election – both brought to you by Citi, an official TimesTalks sponsor. Some 2,500 miles west, the nonprofit San Francisco Public Press invites members to “show off your big brain and support local public-interest journalism” at News Quiz Night, a fundraiser where $30 will allow you to enjoy wine, beer, appetizers and desserts while flexing your mental trivia muscles.

In the Pacific Northwest, events helped propel GeekWire to profitability within a year of launching the tech news site (Roush, 2012). Lovell declined to reveal specific revenue figures, but she said that in 2012, GeekWire’s nine events (quarterly casual meetups and five signature events) would represent about 40% of total revenue, with a profit margin of about 20%. “We’re proud to be creating community, and events have been an effective means for our constituents to make connections, stay informed, get inspired, and accelerate their careers,” Lovell said (personal communication, October 4, 2012). In a live chat with The Poynter Institute, Lovell added that GeekWire generally relies on ticket sales to help cover event costs, while sponsorship revenues provide the windfall (Caplan, 2012). Sponsors consider these events to be a worthwhile investment because they provide an opportunity to reach GeekWire’s passionate niche audience in person, co-founder Todd Bishop said. “It ends up being a galvanizing force for those companies, because they can come out and connect with the community but also present their own products through the venue we provided," Bishop said (personal communication, June 19, 2012). Events aren't a foolproof route to profitability; however, Bishop later said that a Fall 2012 event – which GeekWire took over from another site – presented a number of "logistical quirks that we had a hard time overcoming" (personal communication, February 5, 2013). That event, combined with planned expenses related to staffing and strategic development, left GeekWire "just short of profitability" for the full year, Bishop said.

In Austin, the city where the local alternative weekly started the now-massive South By Southwest conference in 1987 (Carr, 2009), *The Texas Tribune* is likewise attracting dozens of event sponsors. "Live events are a really great way to get companies in front of people," said the *Tribune*'s events director, Tanya Erlach, who joined the *Tribune* for its 2009 launch after spending eight years producing events for *The New Yorker* (personal communication, September 19, 2012). The *Tribune*'s audience demographics represent an appealing crowd for event sponsors – 91% are college graduates, 98% are registered to vote, and 52% have household incomes over $100,000, according to internal research. "We can say, 'You will have your logo in front of these prime people,'" Erlach said. And while it's tricky for the nonprofit *Tribune* to precisely measure how events translate into paid memberships, Erlach said both categories have been growing since the *Tribune* launched. "As people come to more events," she said, "more of them become members."

The revenues from *Tribune* events themselves are more clear-cut. Events produced more than $627,000 in 2011 and generated just under $850,000 in 2012, representing 19% of the *Tribune*'s yearly revenue (Smith, personal communication, February 13, 2013). Smith, the CEO, said sponsors provide about 90% of event revenues to underwrite policy-minded gatherings including an Austin-based interview series, on-the-road symposiums across the state, and the three-day Texas *Tribune* Festival at the University of Texas at Austin. Nearly all events are free – only the annual festival requires a $125 badge. "You're trafficking in ideas," Smith said. "You're talking about things that matter to everyone in that room, to one degree or another, if you're a Republican or a Democrat or an independent or a Wiccan."

The news business' perception of events serving as revenue sources took a hit in 2009 when Politico revealed that *The Washington Post* was courting lobbyists to pay up to $250,000 for a series of off-the-record "salons" with journalists and public officials at the home of publisher Katharine Weymouth (Alexander, 2009). Smith, however, has maintained from day one that "events are journalism" at *The Texas Tribune* (Phelps, 2011). All interviews at *Tribune* events are on the record, captured on video and, frequently, covered by reporters from the *Tribune* and other news outlets. At the 2012 *Texas Tribune* Festival, during a standing-room-only debate pitting San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro, a Democrat, against incoming U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, a Republican, Castro declared: "I don't believe taxes are inherently evil." Smith quickly turned to the crowd and quipped, "That will be tweeted. Give them a second."

Smith previously served as editor-in-chief of *Texas Monthly*, where he said he grew frustrated because the magazine’s events were mostly marketing affairs aimed at advertisers. He envisioned a livelier, more inclusive series of events that carried an editorial emphasis. “I always believed that there was a place for that type of an ongoing conversation about the world,” Smith said. “And I had a notion that there was revenue associated with it that would ultimately come back into the journalism bucket, which has happened” (personal communication, September 20, 2012). To skeptics who question whether event sponsorships might influence *Tribune* coverage – or, more pointedly, whether such sponsorships breach the news industry’s deeply ingrained church/state separation between journalism and advertising – Smith maintains that aside from brand exposure attached to the event, the only rewards for sponsors are “a handshake and a tax letter” (Phelps, 2011). The *Tribune* also includes a “disclosure link” at the end of every story that connects to a list of the site’s financial contributors.

In contrast to the aggressive events strategy at *The Texas Tribune*, the now-dormant *Chicago News Cooperative* “never reached the level of audience engagement that I would have liked,” said founder and editor James O’Shea (personal communication, August 9, 2012). The nonprofit CNC – which, like *The Texas Tribune*, produced twice-weekly sections for local editions of *The New York Times* – halted operations in February 2012, citing funding problems (Banchero & Belkin, 2012). O’Shea pointed out that the CNC’s alliance with *The Times* was established from the outset, while the *Tribune* built its own audience for a year before entering into its *Times* partnership. The CNC did host a few events during its 28-month run, including a forum on public school choice for parents and a live interview with political consultant David Axelrod. But O’Shea said, “we couldn’t convert that into support. People said, ‘You’ve got *The New York Times*, you’ve got the MacArthur Foundation, you don’t need our help.’ We never could get out from under the shadow of *The New York Times*.” If he could do it over again, O’Shea said, he would hire an events specialist from the beginning to generate more revenue, visibility and goodwill. “I didn’t put enough attention or devote enough of the assets that I had on audience development and engagement,” O’Shea said, adding with a laugh: “I spent too much money covering the news.”

As O’Shea belatedly realized, events are producing revenue that sustains watchdog journalism in Seattle, Chicago, Austin, and beyond. In 2010, events produced more than 20% of revenues at online news startups including NewWest.net, a site focusing on Rocky Mountain regional news, and The Terminal, a local news site in Birmingham, Alabama (Briggs, 2012, 100). “An event brings in new revenue and raises the site’s profile at the same time,” author Mark Briggs writes in his book *Entrepreneurial Journalism* (2012, p.99).

The financial windfall that events have produced for *The Texas Tribune*, GeekWire, WBEZ, and others may not be typical for all news outlets, but media outlets that fail to prioritize such events may be missing a prime opportunity. A recent *Nieman Reports* article co-authored by legendary Harvard business professor Clayton M. Christensen (2012), author of *The Innovator’s Dilemma*, identifies events as one of three potential revenue streams upon which news organizations should pounce. Christensen and his co-authors draw the comparison to the music industry, which was stricken by falling record sales in the 2000s, thanks to digital disruptors like Napster and iTunes. Music labels recouped some of those lost revenues through a renewed emphasis on concert tours: “Live performance ticket sales and merchandise were once viewed more as a marketing exercise to increase sales of albums; they are now considered a key source of revenue” (Christensen, Skok & Allworth, 2012, p.12). Why shouldn’t the U.S. news industry explore a similar path, leveraging its considerable brand equity to create more revenue to help fund solid journalism?

**Creating the “you-have-to-be-there vibe”**

Two days before the second annual Texas *Tribune* Festival in September 2012, events director Tanya Erlach sipped iced coffee in her second-floor office while monitoring a frenzy of updates via her laptop, office phone, and the occasional knock on her door. Suddenly, her iPhone started buzzing with mobile photos: “My assistant’s at the printer, and she’s sending me pictures of the lanyards,” she explained (personal communication, September 19, 2012). On the opposite wall, a huge grid on a silver corkboard mapped out the weekend’s 45 sessions, 150 speakers, and six concurrent tracks on topics including health, race, and criminal justice. Over Erlach’s right shoulder, a whiteboard tallied the latest registration numbers and social media followers.

It somehow all came together 48 hours later, when a packed ballroom swelled with applause on a Friday night as Smith welcomed Texas Gov. Rick Perry into the interview chair for the festival’s opening session. By the time the final session wrapped up late Sunday morning with a surprise appearance from the University of Texas marching band, the festival clearly had achieved buzzworthy status among Austin political insiders. Jason Stanford, a prominent Democratic political consultant, referred to the approaching Austin City Limits (ACL) music festival when he tweeted: “Is #TribuneFest the ACL for politicos? It’s now a fixture on my calendar … Kudos, @TexasTribune.”

> ***As Arrieta walked to a members-only reception following Perry’s talk, he said the festival – which drew more than 1,500 participants – has become one of the Texas political scene’s premier networking opportunities.***

“It’s just a real you-have-to-be-there vibe that we’ve been able to create,” Erlach said. Consider Romeo Arrieta, the government affairs director for a Dallas real-estate association. Arrieta drove 200 miles to Austin on a Friday afternoon to attend Perry’s opening session, during which the governor revealed that he would propose a four-year college tuition freeze and also delivered a memorable zinger calling left-leaning Austin “a blueberry in the tomato soup” of Texas (Root, 2012). Arrieta, an avid Twitter user, noted that while he could follow the festival from afar through social media, attending in person *and* live-tweeting “allows you to be more efficient” in taking advantage of perhaps the festival’s biggest draw: networking (personal communication, September 21, 2012). As

Arrieta walked to a members-only reception following Perry's talk, he said the festival – which drew more than 1,500 participants – has become one of the Texas political scene's premier networking opportunities. "This event, in general, has people that work policy in every respect – they promote it, they pass it, they write it," he said.

Indeed, networking was the festival's primary appeal for Kristen Carrillo, a recent college graduate who shook hands with Castro and spoke briefly with him after his festival appearance. "Prior to this event, I'll be honest, I didn't follow *The Texas Tribune*," Carrillo said. "When I saw some of the speakers they were bringing, that's what motivated me to come … it can certainly be a resource for me that I didn't know until they had this festival" (personal communication, September 22, 2012). Carrillo said her experience at the festival was nudging her toward becoming a *Tribune* member, especially to gain access to members-only events like the festival's opening-night reception.

Well before the *Tribune* started its annual festival, Smith aggressively pursued an events strategy designed to elevate the site's visibility among the state's political power brokers. At one of the first early-morning TribLive interview events in March 2010, more than 250 people gathered at the downtown Austin Club to watch Smith interview Democratic gubernatorial nominee Bill White. "It's becoming Texas's version of *Meet the Press*," political consultant Rudy England told *Columbia Journalism Review* (Batsell, 2010, p.41).

The *Tribune*'s reporters embrace the events as an extension of the site's mission to "promote civic engagement and discourse on public policy, politics, government and other matters of statewide concern." Staff writer Aman Batheja, who joined the *Tribune* in mid-2012, organized a Twitter chat about transportation issues with a state senator to promote the September festival, and he later moderated two panels at the event. For Batheja, this was a more public, extroverted role than he ever had during his eight years of reporting for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Batheja sees his responsibility at these events as a mix of promoting the *Tribune*, interacting with readers and sources, and using his journalism skills to steer the conversation. "It's engagement, but it's also publicity," Batheja said. "It actually feels like journalism, while you're publicizing the site, the event and everything" (personal communication, September 21, 2012).

In Seattle, events contribute to a sense of loyalty for readers like Sangani, the tech executive who attended GeekWire's Summer Bash. Sangani said GeekWire's gatherings are an efficient way for him to reconnect with business contacts and make new ones. "Networking is a big component for me," he said. "It's hard to make time one on one. I kind of know that (contacts) are going to be here, so I just show up and shake hands" (personal communication, June 21, 2012). Events keep Sangani in the habit of visiting GeekWire and contribute to a sense of loyalty that occasionally inspires him to send story tips to the site's journalists. "I go to GeekWire and get my fill," he said. "Because I like GeekWire and because I respect the guys and the team, I'll throw them a scoop."

*The Oakland Press* in Pontiac, Mich., has found another way to build loyalty with influential readers: by hosting free community blogger workshops. On a Wednesday afternoon in mid-August 2012, the newspaper hosted an hour-long training session for about a dozen local bloggers who write about topics ranging from pets to the outdoors to the local golf scene. Karen Workman, the paper's outgoing community engagement editor, led a presentation explaining basic blogging tips including search engine optimization (SEO), customizing blog designs, and how to post photos.

The workshops deepen the newspaper's relationships with local influencers like Rebecca Kohler, a freelance designer from a nearby suburb who started a blog called "Bye Buy Clothes" to document a year-long experiment during which she avoided buying clothes, shoes, and accessories. Kohler, a longtime *Press* print subscriber with no background in journalism, said the workshops taught her headline-writing tricks and how to use Google Analytics to track her blog's growth. Attending the workshops at the *Press* newsroom, she said, has helped instill a sense of personal kinship with the newspaper. "You have a feeling like you're really part of the community," Kohler said. "I may not be a journalist, but I have a legitimate voice and point of view" (personal communication, August 15, 2012).

**Engaging through garage sales, game nights, and open newsrooms**

Newsrooms' face-to-face engagement efforts take many forms, but they are guided by a deliberate mindset that connecting with the community goes beyond simply reporting the news. For example, the nationally respected West Seattle Blog organizes an annual, neighborhood-wide garage sale, charging residents a small fee to be listed on an interactive map. The garage sale, which drew nearly 250 registrants in May 2012, is "very much a connecting thing," co-founder Tracy Record said. "It really fits the mission of something people can be excited about and benefit from" (personal communication, June 17, 2012). Meanwhile, at Chicago's WBEZ-FM, local nonprofits can reserve a community room and third-floor deck overlooking Navy Pier and Lake Michigan, complete with an impressive view of the Chicago skyline. "By opening this space, you're opening this flow of people who are in your building," said WBEZ vice president Daniel Ash (personal communication, August 10, 2012).

Other newsrooms are taking more extreme steps to facilitate face time. In early 2012, after a wave of layoffs, the *Kalamazoo Gazette* vacated the historic but imposing downtown newsroom it had occupied since 1925 and moved to a street-level space a block away. The move was part of a strategy across Michigan by parent company MLive Media Group to relocate to smaller newsroom "hubs" designed to be more open, collaborative, and inviting to the public, said John Hiner, MLive's vice president of content (personal communication, August 13, 2012). MLive is owned by Advance Publications, which has since applied the same "hub" strategy to newspapers in Alabama and New Orleans (Myers, 2012).

The Kalamazoo hub, outfitted with sleek, minimalist furniture and surrounded by windows at the busy corner of South and Burdick streets, has the feel of a mini Ikea showroom with a touch of Starbucks, OfficeMax, and NBC's "Today" show. "We're right in the thick of things," said Mickey Ciokajlo, the *Gazette*'s community news director (personal communication, August 13, 2012). "You can wave people in," added Linda Mah, the paper’s community engagement specialist. “I think people like that sense of transparency that this is a place they can just walk into” (personal communication, August 13, 2012).

The mayor of Kalamazoo, Bobby Hopewell, did just that on a Tuesday in mid-July, walking one block over to report an error in a story about the city charging fees when Korean War veterans wanted to reserve a local park. “He walked down here, he came in and he wanted to talk to me,” Ciokajlo said. “Maybe in the past he would have called, or he would have stewed over it. This space is encouraging (interactive) behavior, both on the reporters’ part and the community’s part.”

The hub’s most visible space is the corner interview room, where passers-by can get a glimpse of journalists at work. (*Gazette* staffers do not have assigned desks; they have laptops and backpacks and are encouraged to move around.) On special occasions – such as monthly Art Hop events, or a downtown scavenger hunt for Western Michigan University freshmen – the *Gazette* sets up a photo booth in the interview room and invites the public to pose for silly shots.

An even more radical experiment in face-to-face engagement began in late 2010 at *The Register Citizen* in Torrington, Connecticut, which relocated to a new building that includes a Newsroom Café open to the public. Readers and sources can enjoy coffee, muffins, and free WiFi while offering story suggestions and, if so inclined, sit in on the daily 4 p.m. news meeting. “Anybody can literally walk up to us at our desks and ask a question,” managing editor Emily M. Olson wrote in a blog post for *Nieman Reports*. “No hiding. No turning away from any man, woman or teenager who walks in” (Olson, 2011). Not long after launching the café, a man walked in and asked to speak with a reporter about a neighboring city’s efforts to shut down his farm stand, leading to a story that drew more than 50 comments. Olson noted that while the man’s story may have drawn similar interest when the newspaper was at its former location, “our open doors, wide spaces for people to walk through, and the availability of a reporter gave this man the confidence he needed to stop by and ask us to talk with him.”

*The Register Citizen*, like Michigan’s *Oakland Press*, is owned by Journal Register Company, a newspaper chain that has dramatically reinvented itself under CEO John Paton (Kirchner, 2011). The company has drawn national attention – and scrutiny – for a series of bold experiments including a centralized digital news desk in Manhattan called Operation Thunderdome (Benzing, 2011), the open newsroom in Torrington, and mobile “pop-up” newsrooms at community events in California, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut (McAthy, 2012). The financial success of the company’s digital initiatives grew murkier in September 2012 when the chain filed for bankruptcy for the second time in three years (Haughney). Still, it would be hard to argue with Olson’s assessment of how the Newsroom Café has bolstered her paper’s efforts to engage readers: “As journalists, we are now more a part of the community that we report about.”

*The Seattle Times*, a prominent practitioner of “civic journalism” during its 1990s Front Porch Forum collaboration with the local NPR affiliate, updated its face-to-face engagement efforts in June 2012 when it hosted a career counseling event in connection with its front-page Recession Generation series. The event, free to twentysomethings who were on the job market, included résumé critiques, presentations on how to network and craft your elevator pitch, and one-on-one career counseling. Some of the 35 millennials who showed up were sources profiled in the series, said Sona Patel, a social media producer at the *Times* (personal communication, June 20, 2012). "Engagement is not just commenting or talking to people online," Patel said. "I think it's just as important – if not more important – to meet the people you're talking to."

Face-to-face engagement need not always entail hosting events. At public meetings, reporters for the *Columbia Missourian* (who also happen to be students at the Missouri School of Journalism) distribute informational handouts with summaries of the key facts framing that night's discussion, according to Joy Mayer, the *Missourian*'s director of community outreach. Before the tenth anniversary of 9/11, the *Missourian* prepared a handout with tips on how to discuss 9/11 with children and delivered them to daycare centers (Mayer, 2012).

Other examples are multifold. GeekWire routinely hosts game nights at Seattle-area restaurants, during which local techies compete in board games like RISK and Settlers of Catan. *The Dallas Morning News'* Sunday editorial section, Points, has sponsored a free Summer Book Club for six years running, engaging readers first on a blog and then meeting up to discuss the book in person. And *The Washington Post*'s Chris Cillizza, author of the popular political blog The Fix, holds regular "Politics and Pints" trivia parties at a local bar.

As the news industry obsessively focuses on how to digitally engage readers, it is easy to forget the importance of personal connection, said Linda Mah, the *Kalamazoo Gazette*'s community engagement specialist. With all the time Mah spends behind her laptop, she often finds herself wondering: "Is online really engagement? Are you really forming relationships? Is this really a conversation? To get to that point, you need to have face-to-face interaction."

### Measuring success

When it comes to events, measuring success can be as simple as tallying ticket sales and corporate sponsorships. But other forms of face-to-face engagement are harder to quantify. In August 2012, *The Morning Sun* in Mount Pleasant, Mich., set up a satellite newsroom (okay, a portable table stacked with a few freebies) in the lobby of a downtown art gallery as part of a community event called Art Walk Central. As visitors wandered into the gallery one Tuesday morning, Lisa Yanick-Jonaitis, a photographer who doubles as the paper's community engagement editor, offered them a free copy of the *Morning Sun*'s Art Walk Central tabloid, which included a map and "passport" that readers could get stamped to enter a drawing for prizes. The tabloid brought in $2,100 in advertising revenue, Yanick-Jonaitis said. But beyond that, clear metrics for the newspaper's month-long engagement project were elusive. "To me, the fact that we made money is a success," she said. "I think the fact that we went to businesses and got them excited about what we were doing is a success. I don't know how you measure that" (personal communication, August 14, 2012).

During lulls at the gallery, Yanick-Jonaitis ran a trivia contest from her laptop, quizzing the *Morning Sun*'s 4,458 Facebook fans about Mount Pleasant history. Some readers responded within seconds in hopes of claiming the prize: A vintage softball T-shirt from the parks and rec department. "I feel like it's such a new thing, we're not really sure what we're doing yet," Yanick-Jonaitis said. "You have to accept that not everything's going to be a success, because it's not." Meanwhile, her boss, *Morning Sun* editor Rick Mills, said he was convinced that the Art Walk Central project was a worthwhile investment of time and newsroom resources. "There's got to be a multiplier there in terms of goodwill and knowing we're accessible … that we're not just sitting in a corner covering our community, but we're part of the community," Mills said (personal communication, August 14, 2012).

While supervising the Art Walk project, Yanick-Jonaitis also was brainstorming ideas for another community engagement project aimed at highlighting the spiritual traditions of local Native American tribes. She had plenty of ideas for journalistic content, but was having a harder time coming up with ways to monetize the project. "I feel like there are a lot of people in my industry who are struggling with this," she said. Indeed, she is not alone: Many of the engagement specialists the author spoke with at newsrooms across the country talked about feeling pressure to justify their efforts with metrics showing a clear return on investment.

***Similarly, newsrooms must accept that some of their face-to-face engagement efforts may produce intangible results, but are still necessary to build loyalty and goodwill with their audience.***

Yanick-Jonaitis' *Morning Sun* colleague Holly Mahaffey, a community engagement producer, said she considers her job a hybrid of customer service and journalism (personal communication, Aug. 14, 2012). When measuring the return of journalistic engagement efforts, then, it may be useful to consider a customer-service example from the retail world. The famous no-questions-asked returns policy at Nordstrom department stores subtracts revenue every time a customer takes advantage of it, but it has helped the company build an iconic, customer-friendly reputation that keeps people coming back. Similarly, newsrooms must accept that some of their face-to-face engagement efforts may produce intangible results, but are still necessary to build loyalty and goodwill with their audience.

The pitfalls of face-to-face engagement extend beyond fuzzy metrics. Flores, the *Puget Sound Business Journal* managing editor, admits that hosting events "[b]lurs the lines a little bit between the newsroom and your marketing side. You're a little more cozy with your sources when you're putting on events." And Bishop, the GeekWire co-founder, notes that successfully pulling off an event requires the ability to juggle a myriad of logistical details. "It's a different skill," he said. "We've learned so much about events and how hard they are – there are so many moving pieces."

## Discussion/Conclusions

As the U.S. news industry scrambles to unearth new revenue sources, more online news startups and legacy media companies are turning to live events and other face-to-face opportunities to engage and monetize their audience while also building community. This new paradigm of face-to-face engagement differs from the style of "civic journalism" that once inspired news outlets to convene their audience out of an obligatory duty to serve as a town square, and it goes beyond the advertising-driven events put on by magazines for decades. Instead, the entrepreneurial approach views in-person engagement not merely as an obligation, but an opportunity to attract revenue while building a mutual sense of loyalty between journalists and their core audience.

Through trial and error, American newsrooms that are now prioritizing face-to-face engagement have learned some common but important lessons:

- **Designate an event planner.** Ideally, a full-time specialist can assume the role on a full-time basis. But depending on the scope, event planning also can be handled part-time by a staffer on the business side, or by a community engagement manager in the newsroom. Regardless, successfully executing an events strategy demands a singular sense of focus and accountability – without which, as O'Shea discovered with the Chicago News Cooperative, events are unlikely to take off.

- **To make money, seek out sponsors.** Ticket sales mainly cover overhead costs. The real money in events – 90%, according to *The Texas Tribune*'s Smith – comes from corporate sponsorships. And the main way to attract sponsors is to convince them that the event's audience will be demographically desirable.

- **Networking is a prime draw.** Events with a "you-have-to-be-there vibe" carry a higher probability of success, particularly among professional niche crowds – think GeekWire's legions of Seattle techies, or the scores of politicos who follow *The Texas Tribune*. And events that are consistently perceived to be worthwhile can have a spillover effect, bringing a news site more readers, subscribers, members and/or donors.

- **Newsroom buy-in is key.** When hosting events, giving newsroom staffers a prominent role boosts their visibility and motivates them to act as positive ambassadors for the news organization's brand. Certain events also help feed the beast by doubling as news content, and such events can build buzz by conveying the sense that attendees are witnessing news in action. However, newsroom leaders must convince the staff that directly engaging the public through face-to-face events is an important part of 21st century journalism, and it does not violate the hallowed "church/state" separation between news and advertising.

- **Provide memorable experiences.** Not every event needs to be a brainy, newsy, networking extravaganza. Watching a zombie double feature at the drive-in, talking food with a celebrity chef, or competing in a local trivia contest can build a deeper affinity between attendees and the news outlet hosting the event.

- **Returns aren't always quantifiable.** Children's storytelling performances in Chicago, book clubs in Dallas and art walks in mid-Michigan may not rake in tens of thousands of dollars, but one would hope they have the "multiplier" effect described by *Morning Sun* editor Rick Mills, generating a sense of goodwill and loyalty among readers. This style of face-to-face engagement contributes to the sense that a news organization not only covers the community, but actually is part of that community.

The *Texas Tribune's* Smith admits that not every newsroom can generate close to $1 million a year through live events, as his staff has managed to do. "I don't know that the scale of what we do is replicable elsewhere," he said. But Smith said he's convinced that any news organization can find ways to bring together – and monetize – its community through face-to-face engagement. "You know what? It's there, it's there, it's there," he said. "You've got to know where to go, you've got to figure out who it is, you've got to be creative about it, but it's there."

Perhaps more importantly, people who attended gatherings put on by news organizations from Washington state to Texas to Michigan in 2012 said the events made them more likely to make a habit of visiting that news organization's website. Kohler, the freelance designer in Michigan, said *The Oakland Press*' blogger training workshops symbolize the newspaper's faith in the community. "They acknowledge us, and we acknowledge them," Kohler said. "That's engagement."

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#ISOJ
Vol. 3, No 2, Spring 2013. 290-318

# Diffusion and Use of ICTs in Egyptian Newsrooms: A Longitudinal Approach

## *Ahmed El Gody*

*Although Internet technology arrived in Egyptian newsrooms in 1993, it was not until 1996 that the first Egyptian newspaper Al Gomhuria hit the Internet. By 2000, all major Egyptian newspapers had electronic versions on the web claiming to integrate ICT resources in the news production process. In spite of the fact that this trend implies development, whether ICTs have been realised and used in Egyptian newsrooms' daily routines still needs further examination. This study aims to explore the use and implementation of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), especially Internet technologies (netCTs), in Egyptian newsrooms. Furthermore, the study examines whether/ to what extent and in what way(s) Egyptian newsrooms incorporate ICTs in their daily routine. This discussion is important to see the role of newsrooms, before January 25 revolution, in facilitating political discussions with their audience.*

In order to understand the diffusion of ICTs inside Egyptian newsrooms and journalists' utilisation of new technologies, this study used three waves of questionnaires - constituting longitudinal survey questionnaires assessing Internet diffusion - in 11 newsrooms. These questionnaires were conducted over the span of 10 years in 1999/2000, 2004/2005 and 2009/2010. The collection and analysis of data over time measured newsroom culture change in relation to ICTs. Through this repetition of cross-sectional observations from the data collected throughout the research waves, measurement of differences or changes in the newsroom could be compared from one wave to another.

### ICTs in Egyptian newsrooms

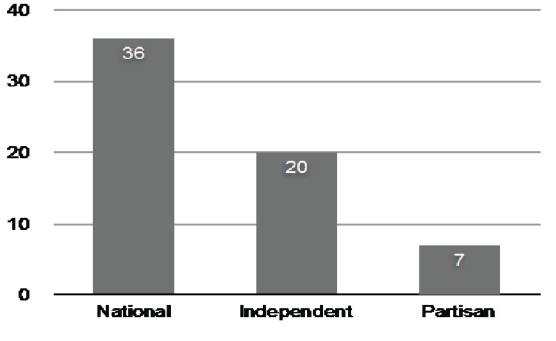
The Egyptian print media environment for the past 60 years has been shaped by loyalty to the political regime. One can still use Rugh's (1979) classification of media in Egypt as being authoritarian (Rugh, 1979, 2004). By definition, an authoritarian media system is controlled by the government through direct ownership and/or strict laws and regulations. The purpose of newspapers in such a media system is to promote the main political, social, and economic programmes of the regime. The government steers the media agenda and the direction of news to filter what receivers hear and see. Egyptian journalists do not explore beyond the limits of a traditional system of a relationship between the political class and the rest of the population (El Gody, 2005). The failure of the Egyptian print media to have an active presence in people's lives has led the audience to turn to other alternative online independent media forms for news (Salama, 2009).

Internet technology was introduced in Egyptian newsrooms in 1996 as a government-induced aid for media organizations to develop their telephony infrastructure. The Dar Al Tahrir publication *Al Gomhuria* was the first Egyptian print newspaper to go online with gif/jpg images of clips from the newspaper. Between 1996 and 2000, 18 Egyptian newspapers – including the major dailies- joined the cyber world (Author, 2000; Mahmoud, 2001). By February 2010, 63 publications, representing 40.4% of the Egyptian print media industry (see Table 1 and Figure 1), had their own websites (Information and Decision Support Center, 2010). Although, superficially, this trend implies development, the question, however, of whether ICTs have been realized and used in the daily routine of Egyptian newsrooms remains unanswered and needs further examination.

Table 1. Number of Electronic Newspapers

| Year | Number of Publications |
|---|---|
| **1996** | 1 |
| **1998** | 4 |
| **2000** | 18 |
| **2002** | 26 |
| **2004** | 29 |
| **2006** | 42 |
| **2008** | 56 |
| **2011** | 63 |

Figure 1.



In transitional societies moving toward democracy such as Egypt, political development is a central topic, which journalists mediate with their audience. Indeed, journalists inform the audience and facilitate informed choices as ‘gatewatchers,’ not as watchdog ‘gatekeepers,’ in the power struggle between audience, media, and politics. Egyptian journalists have been criticized for not being ‘connected’ with their local audiences, for losing their ability to help citizens connect their everyday life with politics, and for failing in their capacity to encourage local people to participate in political debates or even to provide them with the skills needed for this participation (El Gody, 2007).

In Egypt, a lack of freedom in the traditional media has enabled the alternative independent online media to develop. News websites became the playground for political parties, activists, and groups from various ideologies creating ‘online spaces of flows’ to cater for the emerging needs of the readers. Political actors started to invest in creating news portals to attract communities and to enable these communities to interact with each other’s ideas on the one hand and with the ideas of the news portals on the other (Hofheinz, 2005; Livingstone & Bober, 2005).

Egyptian online discussions were at a high after 9/11 as citizens began to cluster into groups, each with its own agenda, and to foster several scenarios for the democratization process. Egyptians saw in ICT sources, a medium that was likely to have profound implications on their country’s socio-political democratization. Activists saw in the Internet an opportunity to curb government censures, creating a ‘space’ in which individuals participated in discussions about matters of common concern in an atmosphere free of coercion or dependencies, acquiescence or silence. Internet technology led to a more horizontal communication model in Egyptian society, enabling people to bypass the controlled regime and traditional mass media, allowing the society to create a developmental agenda of its own (Bakkar, 2008; El Gody, 2007).

However, when one turns to newspapers, the development of ICTs looks more modest. A study conducted on twelve Egyptian newspaper websites showed that the Internet played a role in expanding newspaper circulation, “it is only another form of the printed paper” (El Gody, 2003, p.47) and not a tool to develop news content or interactivity with an audience. In a previous study, entitled ICT and Journalism in Egypt, I concluded that Egyptian media are not providing any services in addition to presenting free replica version of their paper to their online readers. Furthermore, this study showed that 80% of news sites are not updated, with some not being updated for more than four months. The study revealed that 75% of Egyptian news sites did not offer any real-time news services to the readers, 80% of the online sites did not provide news archive or database services, and 70% did not provide a news search tool (El Gody, 2000).

### Research Questions

Considering the above discussion, the following questions now pose themselves:

**RQ1: What role do ICTs play in the news-making process in Egyptian newsrooms?**

**RQ2: What elements of ICTs are adopted and utilized inside newsrooms?**

**RQ3: What are the potentials and problems respectively for convergence and interactivity in the usage of ICTs inside newsrooms?**

This study aims to explore the utilization of ICTs in daily news production and investigate to what extent journalists integrate new media technologies into their work routine, as well as to what extent journalists/news organizations interact with their audience.

## Methodology

Studying Egyptian newsrooms, this article has integrated quantitative longitudinal survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews. Integrating quantitative and qualitative methods is a conventional method when conducting newsroom studies, especially dealing with the integration of new media in news routines (cf. Bryman, 2004; Domingo, 2006; Jensen, 2003; Tuchman, 1991). This method aims to provide pragmatic advantages when exploring complex research questions, which are true for this study.

The reasoning and justification is straightforward: it allows access to different levels of reality within the scope of the study. Furthermore, because quantitative and qualitative research have their own strengths and weaknesses, it is not hard to see that each would be relevant to some issues but not to others. The crucial issue is to be aware of the appropriateness of a particular combination of methods for particular issues (Bryman, 1989, 2004).

Quantitative studies aim to give a broader look at journalists' attitudes towards the use of ICTs. Three cycles of questionnaires established a longitudinal survey conducted in 1999/2000, 2004, and 2009/10. The 10-year longitudinal survey aims to monitor ICT diffusion in news organizations and examine the use of ICTs inside newsrooms. The longitudinal survey also aims to look at the diffusion of new technological elements inside newsrooms. Moreover, questionnaires with closed-ended questions enabled the researcher to determine, with greater comprehensiveness and precision, journalists' perceptions of the change in production practices and routines as well as of the use of the new digital technology in news production.

By conducting qualitative interviews, the researcher was able to describe how management teams (from both print and online media) viewed the online transition process and how it affected the structure and workflow in the organizations. Interviews allowed the researcher to discover the most important factors in the transition as well as how the business model has been reshaped and defined.

### Sample profile

Two-hundred-and-forty journalists participated in the study, 39 of which participated in all the three survey tiers. Most of the organizations and journalists participating in the study represented national/government newspapers (See Table 2). This is probably due to the organizational structure, size and economy of national media, which are larger than independent and opposition organizations. The overall statistical results reflect the Egyptian press syndicate records, where over 75% of registered journalists are employed by one of the national (government) press institutions (Zakareya, 2010, Pers. Comm).

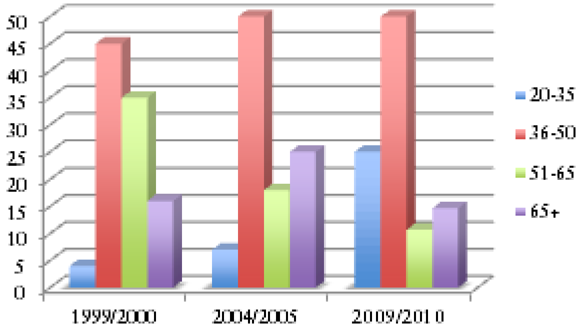
Results from the three survey tiers showed an increase in the number of journalists responding from independent media organizations (See Table 2). This reflects the increase in number and size of the independent organizations in Egyptian media during the past decade. Furthermore, the figures showed a decline in the number of journalists responding from opposition media, which again reflects the reduction in the number of journalists working in opposition media in Egypt. This also testifies to some of the changes within the Egyptian print media market which took place during the past decade, whereby independent media gained audience share. This is in contrast to governmental media, which are losing their audience because they follow the government agenda and opposition media who are struggling for legal legitimacy (Pintak and Fouda, 2009; El Tantawy, 2009). The gender distribution of participants who responded to the survey waves (average 56.1% male and 43.9% female) further reflects the Egyptian journalism market, where out of the 3,886 registered journalists in the Egyptian Journalism Syndicate, almost 60% were males and 40% females (Zakareya, 2010, Pers. Comm.).

Table 2. Journalists and Their Affiliation

| Organisation | Affiliation | Type | Circulation Est. 2009 | Journalists 1999/2000 | Journalists 2004/2005 | Journalists 2009/2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Al Ahram** | Government | Daily | 215,000 | 14 | 12 | 34 |
| **Al Akhbar** | Government | Daily | 150,000 | 5 | 7 | 10 |
| **Akhbar Al Youm** | Government | Weekly | 700,000 | 6 | 4 | 7 |
| **Al Gomhuria** | Government | Daily | 100,000 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| **Al Messa** | Government | Daily | 90,000 | 4 | 3 | 9 |
| **Al Wafd** | Opposition | Daily | 40,000 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| **Al Arabi** | Opposition | Weekly | 40,000 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| **Al Dostor** | Ind. Opposition | Daily | 95,000 | 10 | 6 | 19 |
| **Al Masry Al Youm** | Independent | Daily | 195,000 | 2 | 6 | 27 |
| **Al Alam Al Youm** | Independent | Weekly | 25,000 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| **Al Osboa** | Independent | Weekly | 52,000 | 6 | 5 | 7 |

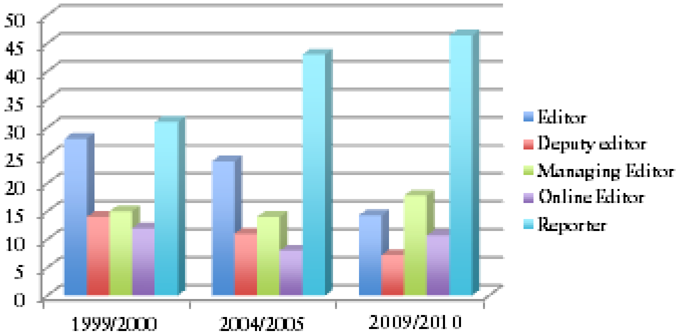
Statistical analysis showed that the survey incorporated a representative sample from all age groups, reflecting both the editorial and reporting bodies of participating news organizations. Moreover, cross-examining results from the three waves showed a growth in the number of younger (under 30 years) journalists by 50%. This further emphasises the increasing number of print media outlets during the past decade that incorporated several young generations of journalists (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).

Figure 2. Age Distribution of Journalists by %




N1999/2000=53 N2004/2005=50 N2009/2010=119

Figure 3. Respondents' Position by %




N1999/2000=61 N2004/2005=54 N2009/2010=122

## Results

Longitudinal results showed a direct relationship between time and diffusion of ICT infrastructure within news organizations. Moreover, results showed a direct relationship between time and journalists' awareness and acquisition of new media technologies.

Journalists reporting that their organizations have a direct Internet connection increased from 60% in 1999/2000 to 93% in 2009/2010 (see Table 3). Only members from one opposition newspaper organization, throughout the decade of the study, reported that their organization abandoned the direct Internet connection due to economic conditions, nonetheless adding that this organization expected journalists to use their own resources to connect to the Internet.

Table 3. Diffusion of Elements of ICTs inside Newsrooms by %

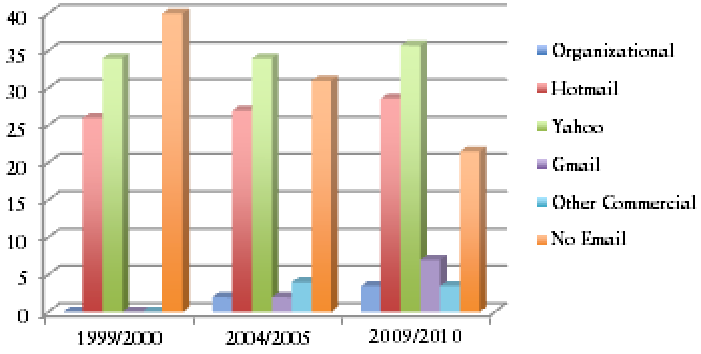
| Technology | 1999/2000 | 2004/2005 | 2009/2010 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Internet Connection** | 60 | 82 | 93 |
| **Intra-network** | 15 | 30 | 67 |
| **Work PC** | 40 | 64 | 89 |
| **Online Database** | 20 | 40 | 72 |
| **Multimedia** | 40 | 78 | 81 |
| **Email** | 60 | 69 | 78 |
| Total (n) | | | |

*more than one category can be selected

Journalists reported an increase in intra-networks in their news organizations by more than four times, from 15 to 67%, in the span of ten years. In addition, longitudinal analysis showed an increase in organization databases. The number of journalists stating that they use online databases increased from 20% in 1999 to 72% in 2009/2010. As for the diffusion of new media elements, journalists reported that it had more than doubled in the past 10 years from 40 to 81%.

Results from the longitudinal research showed an increase in the number of journalists with access to computers inside their newsrooms from 40% in 1999 to 89% in 2009/2010. Results also showed an increase in the number of organizations having email addresses. Furthermore, the number of journalists with their own email addresses increased over the span of the study (See Figure 4). However, although the figures indicate diffusion in the number of email accounts, these figures do not match the increase in the awareness level of the importance of using organizational email in the work process. Although most news organizations offer business emails to their employees, many journalists prefer using commercial emails to their business ones. Some journalists answered that they prefer using commercial emails in their work primarily to have freedom in conducting their work; others stated that they prefer using commercial emails to accommodate their writings for different organizations; a third group stated that they feared their organizations would tap into their information. Organizations that do not offer business emails stated (besides ignorance) that they had no interest in hosting and administering email accounts. On the other hand, two editors from government media stated that their organizations preferred their reporters to use commercial emails rather than run the risk of the organization being liable for content and any potential legal outcomes.

Figure 4. Journalists' Email Type by %




N1999/2000=59 N2004/2005=47 N2009/2010=120

However, analysis of the longitudinal results showed that the acquisition of technology does not always mean the availability of technology in government newsrooms, with an average of 69% of journalists responding to the survey stating that they believe their organizations do not have enough ICT infrastructure available. This can further be indicated by analyzing longitudinal results from government news organizations that showed a slow increase in the number of journalists who confirmed their news organizations' interest in developing the ICT infrastructure increased by 3% over the span of ten years, reaching 54%. Some of the comments provided by journalists on the questionnaires stated that not all journalists were allowed to use the technology. Others stated that their organizations were using obsolete technologies that could not satisfy the pace of gathering and tapping information. The majority of journalists in independent organizations stated that their news organizations have enough ICT infrastructure, increasing from 48 to 97% in a decade of study.

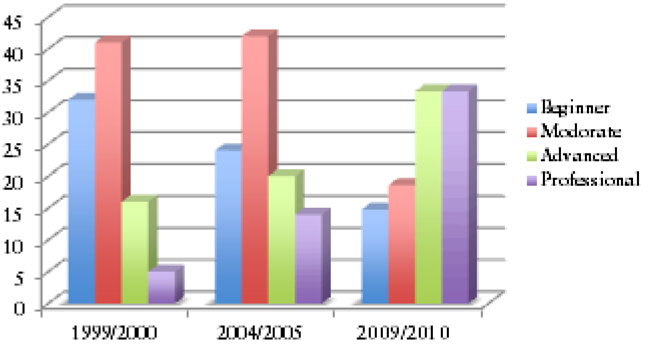
What follows is an assessment of journalists' perceptions towards the diffusion of new technologies inside newsrooms and its effect on their work routine.

**Journalists' use of ICTs**

Developing a successful career in journalism in today's competitive market takes more than just writing and editing skills. The growth of the Egyptian media industry during the past decade forced many journalists to adopt ICTs simply to be able to compete in the current market. That is why ICT diffusion in a journalist's routine is a different story than with organizations.

Longitudinal results showed a direct relationship between time and the diffusion of several elements of ICTs in journalist routine. This was reflected in the increasing number of journalists who stated that they have 'advanced' and 'professional' command of the Internet in their work, which doubled and tripled during the decade of study respectively (See Figure 5). In the 2009/2010 survey, 73% of journalists stated that they did not have any problem using and implementing ICTs.

Figure 5. Internet Literacy Among Egyptian Journalists by %




N1999/2000=61 N2004/2005=53 N2009/2010=125

This was primarily an outcome of the increase in the number of training courses and sessions operated by International funded training programs such as IREX, AMIDEAST, and USAID, or through the Egyptian Supreme Council of the Press and the Egyptian Press Syndicate. Basic Internet training was a popular training course during both the 1999 and 2004 survey tiers, whereas using basic multimedia skills and writing for new media were the popular courses as reported by journalists in the 2009/2010 survey. Nevertheless, it was further noted that not many journalists reported receiving advanced new media training courses such as Computer Assisted Reporting (CAR), online video production, generating and using Wikis, RSS feeds, online production, and blogging.

Examining the use of ICTs as an alternative source of information, the longitudinal study showed a split in journalists' acceptance of ICTs as an alternative source for information. Figures showed journalists use ICT elements, especially the World Wide Web, to gather story ideas and research work-related background information for their stories. Examining journalists' perception of ICTs as a source for providing story ideas showed a slow but steady increase, from 25% in 1999 to 57.1% in 2009/2010. It is worth noting that the number of journalists who were sceptical about ICTs as a tool for providing story ideas, which was 50% in 1999, positively changed by declining to 14.3% in 2009/2010. One explanation provided by journalists is that their organizations (mainly governmental) still regard the Internet as an unreliable source of information. Further data from government newsrooms indicates that editors are not encouraging their journalists to use ICTs in their reporting. The majority of government media editors, especially senior management, advocate that journalists' sources should always be reliable sources (i.e. from the government).

Furthermore, statistics showed a growing number of journalists who used new media applications such as chatting and blogging in their work routine. In 1999/2000, only 12% of respondents stated that they wrote stories that originated on the Internet, but this figure doubled to reach 24% in 2004/2005 and more than tripled in 2009/2010, with three quarters of the sample stating they have reported a story that started on the Internet.

***Examining the use of ICTs as an alternative source of information, the longitudinal study showed a split in journalists' acceptance of ICTs as an alternative source for information.***

Over a span of 10 years, journalists reported spending less time in their daily routines using traditional newsgathering techniques, such as government sources, press releases, telephone, fax, and wire services. Surveyed journalists also reported spending more time incorporating elements of ICTs, including satellite television, the World Wide Web, email, listserv, and newsgroups.

Looking back at a decade of studying ICT use in newsrooms, in 1999 Egyptian newsrooms looked like typical traditional newsrooms where journalists depended mainly on telephones (92%), press releases (91%), and wire services (84%) in their daily work production. The introduction of ICTs changed a significant part of journalists' work routine. The results of the 2004 survey showed that journalists continued to depend on traditional press releases in their work, (76%), but also used new ICTs such as the World Wide Web (76%), electronic mail, (66%), and wire services (60%). This showed a solid diffusion of ICT elements in journalist work production. This was further seen in 2009, where elements of ICTs such as the World Wide Web (75%), email (61.7%), and television (50%) became crucial in journalists' daily work activities, as well as there being greater diffusion of further elements such as listserv, newsgroups, multimedia, and online databases (See Table 4). It is noticeable that the introduction of ICTs generated more diversified information resources for journalists, as can be seen in the general decrease in the percentage of technologies used, which further points at the conclusion that ICTs are incorporated within journalists' daily activities (See Table 4 and Table 5).

Table 4. ICTs Used by Journalists in Daily Work Routine by %*

| Technology/Year | 1999/2000 | 2004/2005 | 2009/2010 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Press Release** | 91 | 76 | 42.8 |
| **Primary 'Government' Sources** | 50 | 40 | 30 |
| **Wire Services** | 84 | 60 | 42 |
| **Telephone** | 92 | 50 | 40 |
| **Fax** | 70 | 10 | 4.3 |
| **Television** | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| **World Wide Web** | 74 | 76 | 75 |
| **Email** | 66 | 66 | 61.7 |
| **ListServ/Newsgroups** | 0 | 0 | 28 |
| **Multimedia (AV Material)** | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| **Online Databases** | 0 | 0 | 14 |

*more than one category was accepted

Table 5. Journalists' Perception of ICT Utilisation by %

| Utilisation of ICTs will lead to | 1999/2000 | 2004/2005 | 2009/2010 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Free Flow of Information** | 58 | 77 | 71.4 |
| **Enhanced Freedom of Expression** | 66 | 77 | 78.6 |
| **Minimising of Censorship** | 67 | 53.9 | 49.9 |
| **Speeding of the Democratisation Process** | 83 | 46.2 | 82.2 |

Further examining journalists' use of technologies while reporting, statistical analysis shows that the increase in the use of ICTs – especially during the 2009/2010 tier of research – is led by members from both opposition and independent news organizations. Results showed that 71.4% of journalists from opposition newspapers and 66.7% of journalists from independent newspapers use the World Wide Web while reporting, in comparison to 36.7% of journalists from government newspapers (the majority of government journalists that use the web are from the younger generation of journalist under 35 years old. Only 2% of senior government editors surveyed reported using the web at least twice per week). Similarly, 94.4% of journalists from opposition media and 85.7% of journalists from independent media reported that they depend on email in their daily reporting.

In comparison, 68.5% of government journalists from the 2009/2010 tier reported using email on a daily basis. Again, the majority of government journalists came from the younger generation, with 14.3% of members from the government editorial body reporting using email for journalistic purposes daily. On the other hand, 68.5% of journalists from the government media reported using press releases on a daily basis in comparison to 11.1% of journalists from opposition media, and 33% of journalists from independent media. Also, 74.3% of government journalists reported using telephones while reporting, in comparison to 17.1% of journalists from the opposition and just 8.7% of journalists from independent newspapers. This shows more diffusion of elements of ICTs in opposition and independent media than in government media.

ICTs elements not yet diffused include online databases, specialized website materials, blogging, audience feedback, and audio-video material.  Again, the majority of journalists stating they were incorporating these elements on a daily basis came from opposition media, scoring 21.1%, 25.3%, and 21.3% respectively, in their quest to diversify their sources away from government control. This was followed by journalists from independent media, scoring 20.1%, 22.3% and 23.4%. Finally the majority of journalists from government media (averaging 88.7%) reported they rarely/never depended on chatting, blogging, audience feedback, multimedia, or online databases in their work routine.

As a result of their diffusion, journalists testified that ICTs made their work easier. This was asserted by asking journalists whether they were expected to deal with newsroom problems, in terms of data collection, writing, editing, etc. in the same way they did before the introduction of ICTs (See Table 5). For the majority of journalists, ICTs gave them the opportunity to be autonomous in their work. Throughout the decade of study, the number of journalists who believed that ICTs were a tool that could help them be autonomous in their work increased from 53% in the 2000 tier to 78% in 2009/2010 tier, with half of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement. On the other hand, only 14.3% of the journalists in 2009/2010 disagreed with the statement, compared to 38% at the turn of the century.

Further, journalists testified that ICT diffusion made them realize their ability to escape organization and government pressures, confirming that, given time, ICTs would lead to a freer flow of information (See Table 5). Since the introduction of ICTs in Egyptian newsrooms, 58% of journalists believed using ICTs as an alternative source of information could lead to a freer flow of information; a decade later, 71.4% of journalists agreed with the statement, with 60.7% strongly agreeing. Furthermore, the number of journalists who disagreed with the statement decreased from 17% in 1999 to 7.2% in 2009/2010. Similarly, the majority of journalists believed that the utilization of ICTs would develop the notion of freedom of expression. A decade of study showed that the magnitude of approval increased from 66% in 1999 to 78.6% in 2009/2010, with half of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement (See Table 5).

Examining the effect of ICTs on censorship showed a decrease in the number of journalists agreeing that censorship would be minimized (See Table 5), though they represent a larger number than those journalists who disagreed with the statement, from 33% in 2000 to 28.6% by 2010. However, the magnitude of agreement and disagreement has changed, mainly due to the increased measures of censorship conducted by the Egyptian government during Mubarak's regime, especially in relation to the Internet during the past 10 years. Unnerved by the freedom the media had, the government increased restrictive measures against Internet activities, including imprisonment, harassment, hacking and cracking websites, and closure, with the number of such incidents increasing from 25 in 2000 to over 500 actions from 2007 to 2010. This also explains the increasing number of journalists who stated that they were uncertain or neutral towards the statement increasing from 0% in 1999, when little or no government measures were taken against Internet users, to more than one fifth at 21.4% of journalists who participated in the 2009/2010 survey wave, when government pressure on Internet users became a daily occurrence. Furthermore, more journalists are against government Internet manipulation, which can be seen from the intensity of agreement of journalists where 42.8% strongly agreed with the statement in 2009/2010 compared with 24% in 1999/2000 and 31% in 2004/2005.

Statistical analysis showed an ambivalent agreement with the concluding question to this section inquiring whether journalists' use of ICTs in the daily routine had the potential to speed up the process of democratization. Although the majority of journalists believed that the utilisation of ICTs could play a positive role, with 83%, 46.2% and 82.2% agreeing with the statement over the three waves (See Table 5), statistical analysis showed an increase in the journalists' neutrality towards the statement during the second wave compared to the first wave, increasing from zero to 30%. This level of neutrality decreased during the third wave, dropping to only 7.1% of total respondents in 2009/2010. Likewise, the number of journalists disagreeing with the statement increased from 5% in 1999 to 24.3% of the sample in 2004/2005, only to drop again in 2009/2010 to 10.7%.

**Convergence in Egyptian newsrooms**

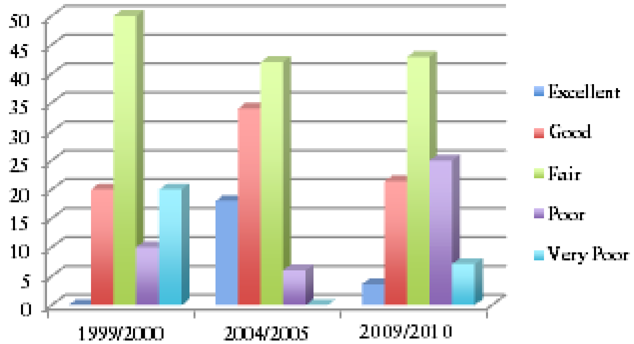
Jenkins (2001) defined ICTs' convergence and diffusion inside media organizations as an 'ongoing process' occurring at various intersections between media and technologies, industry, content and audience for producing and distributing news (Jenkins, 2001, p. 93; Kolodzy, 2006). Therefore, in order to understand the process of diffusion, one must look at news organizations' attitudes towards adopting new media technologies, how they perceive the function of their online presence, introducing and utilizing technologies inside newsrooms, and the role of the audience in this process.

**Attitudes to the ICTs' diffusion in the newsroom**

At the heart of any successful convergence pattern is a coordinated organization that has a level of commitment and vision about diffusing and implementing ICTs within it (Meir, 2007). In general, the longitudinal research showed that, along with a significant level of diffusion of ICTs in newsrooms, the majority of journalists who responded to the survey (72.8%) stated that their organizations did have a clear vision of how to integrate ICTs inside newsrooms. They also affirmed that their managements saw ICTs as an additional service to the core traditional product − the paper version.

Examining Egyptian news organizations' presence on the Internet, the majority of journalists stated that they did not see their organizations investing in developing either the structural design or the content of their websites. This was indicated in the longitudinal study, where the highest proportion of surveyed journalists, 45.3%, throughout the decade of the study stated that Egyptian media have only a 'fair' online presence (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. Assessing Egyptian Media Presence Online by %




N1999/2000=60 N2004/2005=54 N2009/2010=119

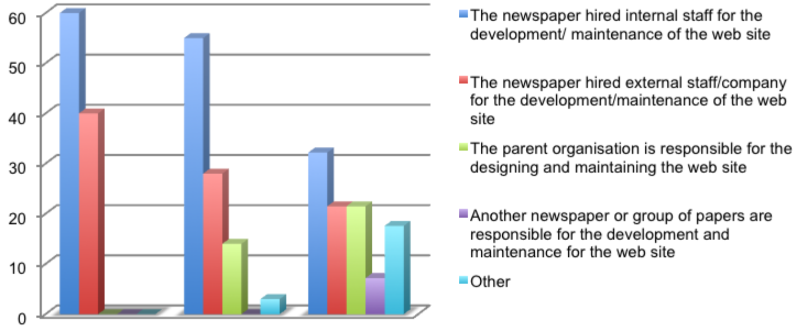
Further examining the results of the longitudinal study, statistics showed that, despite slight improvement during the 2005 tier, due to new website designs being rolled out across different news organizations, the majority of journalists shifted their position during the 2009/2010 survey tier, stating that their organizations do not have strong online presence. It is noted that the number of journalists who reported that the Egyptian media has a “poor” presence over the Internet increased more than four times between 2004 and 2009. Several journalists reflected noted that the static nature of almost all Egyptian newspapers forced the audience to shift to other more vibrant and interactive online services, such as independent news organizations in Egypt as well as other pan-Arab online news organizations.

This notion was further verified by asking journalists whether they consider their organization’s online presence to attract more audience share. Throughout a decade of study, results showed an increase in the number of journalists who do not believe that their online presence is attracting a bigger audience. Further, statistics showed an increase in journalists’ tendency to answer “don’t know” in relation to the statement. This indicates journalists’ ignorance about the online production process, as well as the segregation between the online and offline production. Moreover, the increase in the number of journalists stating ‘don’t know’ points towards a lack of transparency of information among members of the same organization.

This poses a question about how organizations perceive the function of their websites. Surveyed journalists were asked about their organization’s motivation for their online presence. Most news organizations viewed their websites as an added value. The majority of journalists throughout the study (77.5%) stated that their management developed their online presence mainly to mimic other organizations. Moreover, 68.6% of journalists who responded to the survey saw that an online presence served as an international edition, and 67.9% saw their websites as tools to attract bigger audiences. The answers that described an online presence as a tool to communicate with audiences and as a tool to promote the organization's image, received the lowest level of support throughout the study, at 45.1% to 37.9% respectively.

Typically, news organizations outsource to a software development company in the early stages of website development and maintenance; however, a decade of studies showed that Egyptian media websites were still stuck in that phase. Survey results showed that most Egyptian media's online design and maintenance did not take place 'physically' inside the organization's newsroom (See Figure 7). The majority of journalists (100% of the first wave, 83% of the second wave, and 53.7% of the third wave) stated that their organizations hired external companies or staff for the development and maintenance of their websites. Furthermore, most of these external companies were non-media companies that catered only for the static content of the organization. Only a few websites include dynamic or interactive interfaces (El Gody, 2007); a critique that overshadows previous discussion that media online presence is 'fair' failing to 'attract audience' since the websites are not 'communicating with audience.'

Figure 7. Responsibility for Creating Organizations' Presence Online by %

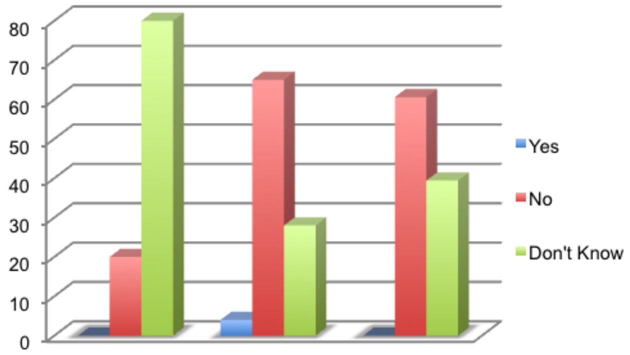



N 1999/2000=61 N 2004/2005=50 N2009/2010=121

Again, the increasing number of journalists who replied "don't know" indicated a level of disconnection between journalists from the online/offline world on the one level, and between journalists and editors/managers of the same organization on the other. However, it should be mentioned that there are efforts being made towards local development and maintenance of the online organizational presence, as observed in the second wave and developed throughout the third wave of the survey. The idea of online/offline segregation was further reflected when exploring the nature of the online content provided.

Dealing with news content online, it is clear that the Egyptian media were still in the first phase of online news, where content is shovelled from the offline to the online version (see Figure 8). Looking closely at the longitudinal survey, results showed that 80% of the journalists in the first wave of the survey, 28% of the second wave and 39.4% of the third wave stated that they "don't know" if there is a difference between the online copy and the traditional version. This further testifies the observation that there is a gap between online and traditional production inside the majority of Egyptian newsrooms. Furthermore, the number of journalists who stated that there is a difference between the online and paper version statement contradicts the statements of other journalists from the same organization. This indicates a level of information miscommunication and a problem of information transparency between members of the same organization.

Figure 8. Differences between original and online version by %

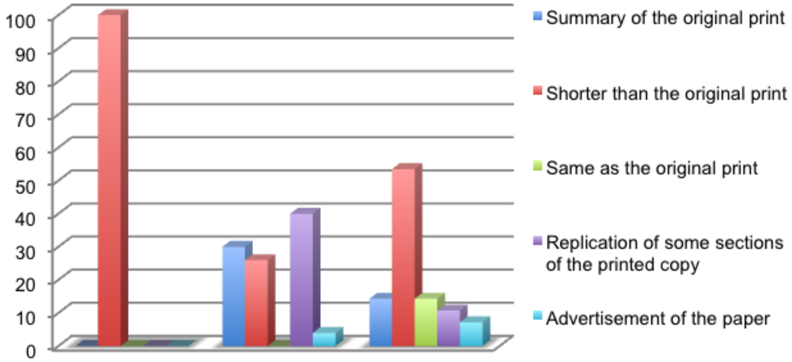



N1999/2000=60 N2004/2005=54 N2009/2010=123

Examining the nature of the online version, five choices – based on previous studies on online news production, (Boczkowski, 2004; Deuze, 2008; Garrison, 2005; Li, 2006; McAdams, 2005; Van Der Wurff and Lauf, 2005) in addition to personal studies on Egyptian online media (El Gody, 2003, 2007) – were presented to the respondents to choose from. The preferences were: a summary of the offline product, a shorter version of the original version, a presentation of some sections/stories of the original, an exact copy of the original, or an advertising of the original version.

Longitudinal findings showed variations in the respondents' choices over time (see Figure 9). Results from 1999/2000 showed that the Egyptian media have behaved like a typical organization that has started the online diffusion process, where 100% of respondents stated that their organization presented an exact replica of its traditional version.The presence of Egyptian newspapers online thus matched the organizational motivation that the website should play the role of an international edition of the paper. Results from 2004 and 2009/2010 were more diversified; however, where the highest proportion of journalists (40%) responding in 2004 reported that their organization's replicate some sections from the original content, whereas the majority of the 2009/2010 journalists (53.3%) stated that their websites represented a shorter version of the original content.

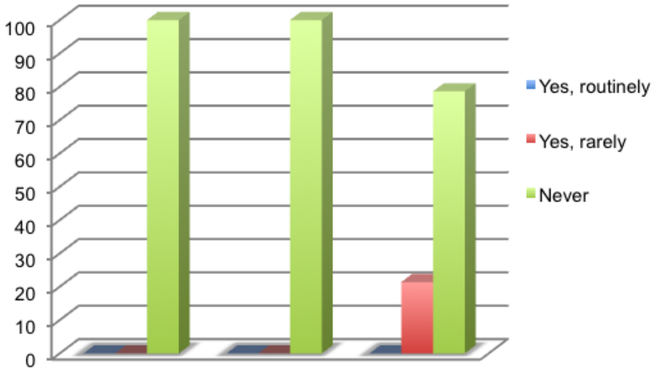
Figure 9. Nature of the Online Version by %




N 1999/2000=58N 2004/2005=49 N 2009/2010=124

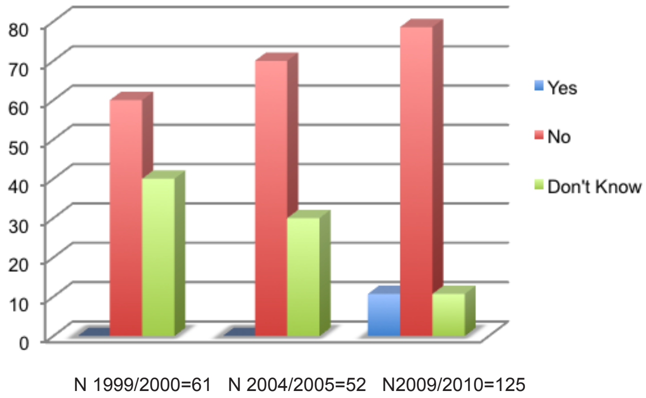
The above discussion supports previous discussions that an organization's online presence is an added value, not something integrated in the journalism routine. This statement was further asserted by the majority of journalists – 94% in 1999/2000, 93% of journalists in 2004/2005 and 84% of journalists from the third wave – who reported that they did not produce original content for the online version. An average of 89.3% of the journalists stated that their organizations did not allow their 'original content' to be available online before the traditional print, even when breaking news occurred (See Figure 10 and Figure 11).

Figure 10. News Organizations Allowing Their Online Version to Scoop the Traditional Version by %




N1999/2000=61 N2004/2005=52 N2009/2010=125

Figure 11. Does the News Organization Update its Website When Breaking News Occurs? by %



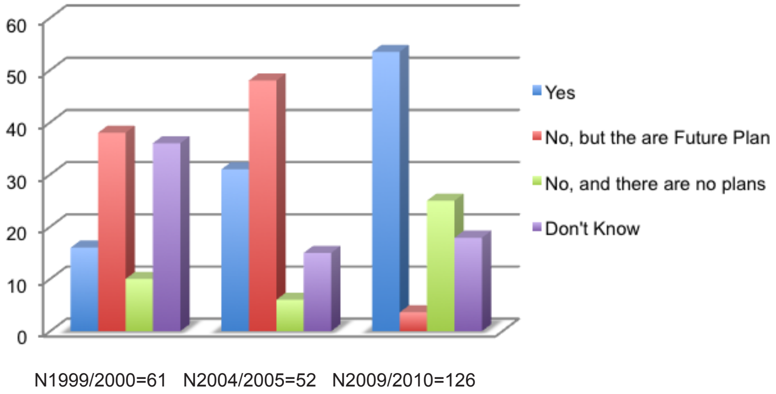

It is clear that, over 10 years, Egyptian media organizations still look at the online version as a competitor to the traditional version, where news and analysis should be presented first in the 'original' paper version before hitting the Internet.One in five journalists from the 2009 tier stated that their organization 'rarely' allowed the online version to scoop the traditional one. Furthermore, the digital version of almost all news organizations hit the Internet a few hours after the starting circulation process, as news organizations fear that online production may threaten their profitability.

**Management attitudes towards implementing ICTs in news production**

It is clear that Egyptian news management is cautiously integrating ICTs in the daily news routine, seeing new media technologies as an add-on that functions to support traditional production. Statistical analysis showed that, although ICTs have physically developed within newsrooms, mainly to mimic other organizations, Egyptian news organizations are still sceptical about their function in the daily production. News organizations do not motivate journalists to use new technologies. For most news organizations, the Internet is an archiving tool that replaces libraries and databases. Information found on the Internet is not seen as a primary source, but more as a secondary resource that needs to be backed by credible sources, i.e. by the government.

Results illustrated a direct positive relationship between time and implementation of online "Internet Teams." Statistical analysis further demonstrated a gradual increase in journalists agreeing with the statement, from 16% in 1999 to 53.5% in 2009/2010 (See Figure 12).

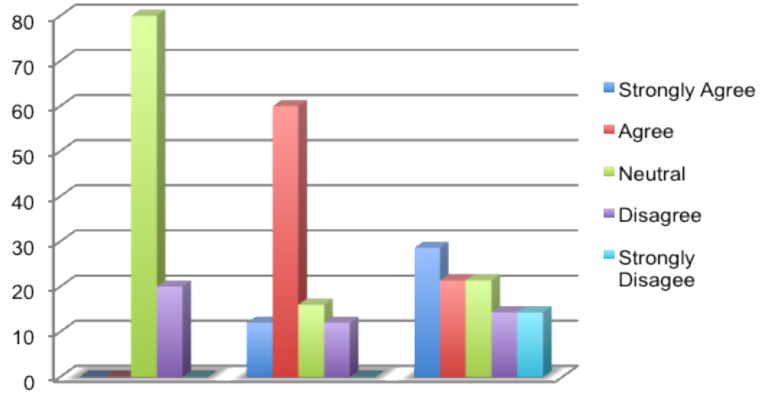
Figure 12. News Organizations with Online Teams by %




Another observation indicated by the results is the increase in the number of journalists who stated that there were no ‘online teams’ developing organization’s websites, databases, and for many news organizations, there were ‘no plans’ to implement one. This group of journalists was found to be coming mainly from national newspapers where several journalists hinted that their organizations did not depend on ICTs as a source for information, but depended mainly on government releases as a primary source. It is worth mentioning that, in several incidents, journalists from the same organization gave contradictory answers, which is seen, again, as an indicator of a lack of transparency inside newsrooms. Qualitative interviews and participant observations confirmed that ‘Internet teams’ are seen by many news organizations as an archive team, or as stated by one of *Al Ahram* editors, ‘library and documentation teams’ whose job is to digitize the ‘heritage’ of the organization for future generations of journalists to learn from. Other interviews with government management staff showed a tendency to see online reporters as second-class journalists whose job is to help ‘traditional’ or ‘real’ journalists with background information about their stories or to file the pictures and documents sent by news agencies online for future use.

Although Internet technology was introduced in Egyptian newsrooms in the mid-1990s, 80% of journalists who participated in the survey in 1999/2000 stated they were ‘neutral’ towards the statement ‘online journalists participate in daily meetings.’ Longitudinal research showed that only 22% and 21.4% of journalists responding to the 2004 and 2009/2010 survey stated that online teams join daily news meetings. Interview results further confirmed that online teams or online journalists did not participate in general organization meetings for discussing the general policies of the organization. Journalists’ dissatisfaction with the organization’s attitude towards ICT diffusion is summed up by the unanimous agreement that ICTs are still underused by Egyptian media management (See Figure13).

Figure 13. News Management of ICTS by %




N1999/2000=61 N2004/2005=52 N2009/2010=126

Further, the number of journalists who disagreed with the statement decreased from 25% in 1999/2000 to 12% in 2004/2005, climbing again to 28.6% in 2009/2010, with the journalists using ICTs to their highest capacity. The number of journalists who agreed with the statement increased from 0% in 1999/2000 to 72% in 2004/2005. It is the diffusion of this technology in Egyptian newsrooms that meant journalists became more aware that there is more in the technology to be explored. This figure decreased, reaching 50% in 2009/2010, which again showed that, although journalists are aware of the technology and understand its capabilities, they still need to explore further.

**ICTs as a Tool to 'Network' Newsrooms and Audience**

News convergence is about the audience, as convergence refocuses journalism on its core mission "to inform the public about its world in the best way possible" (Kolodzy, 2006: p.25). Involving citizens in the whole process of news making (not only letting them see news in its final shape) is thus an integral part of today's news making.

Re-examining organizations' motivation for their online presence (See Figure 14), communicating with the audience was the journalists next to last choice. Looking at the survey results from 2009/2010, it is clear that communicating with the audience was selected by only 10.8% of the journalists. Communicating with the audience was further investigated by examining the role of audience feedback in the process of journalism. Longitudinal results revealed general approval among journalists of the importance of a feedback mechanism; however, cross-examining the results showed a decline among journalists' appreciation towards audience feedback, decreasing from 83% in 1999 to 64.3% in 2009 (See Figure 15). Many journalists did not see any role for journalist – audience dialogue in their work process. The majority of surveyed journalists – especially from government media (84.7%) – stated that journalists consider themselves to be at the front line guiding society. Audience feedback is appreciated when it deals with appraising journalists' work, but not in discussing, evaluating, challenging, criticising, or bringing other angles to their work.

Figure 14. Organization Motivation for Online Presence

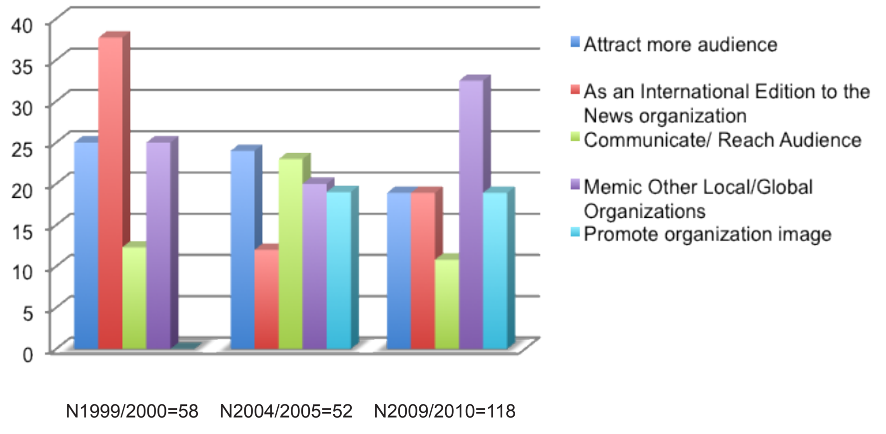
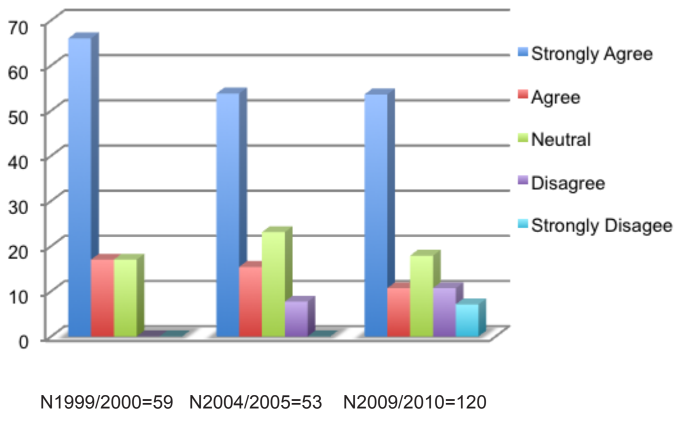



Figure 15. Importance of Reader Feedback for the Journalism Process by %




The notion of audience feedback was further tested by asking members from news organizations whether they should allow their audience to develop a relationship with the newsroom (See Table 6). Although the majority of journalists stated that organization websites should give their readers a chance to develop relationships with the journalism community, this unanimity decreased over time, dropping from 88% to 60.7% in the 2009/2010 tier. On the other hand, statistics showed an increase in the number of journalists disagreeing with the statement from 0% in 1999 to 17.8% in 2009/2010. Furthermore, the number of neutral/unsure respondents increased from 17% in 1999 to 21.4% in 2009. These figures are seen as evidence of the journalists' uncertainty regarding the form of relationship that should be established between them and their audience.

Table 6. Organizations' Vision of Their Website in Relation to Audience

| Element | Strongly Agree | | | Agree | | | Neutral | | | Disagree | | | Strongly Disagree | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 00 | 05 | 09 | 00 | 05 | 09 | 00 | 05 | 09 | 00 | 05 | 09 | 00 | 05 | 09 |
| Organization Websites should give Readers a chance to develop Relationship with Journalists | 33 | 30.8 | 35.7 | 50 | 46.2 | 25 | 17 | 15.4 | 21.4 | 0 | 7.7 | 10.7 | 0 | 0 | 7.1 |
| Organizations Websites Should Develop a sense of Network Community with Audience | 50 | 30.8 | 42.8 | 50 | 38.5 | 21.4 | 0 | 7.7 | 14.3 | 0 | 7.7 | 10.7 | 0 | 15.4 | 10.7 |
| Organizations Should think their Websites as a Forum for Discussing Ideas | 8 | 17 | 21.4 | 33 | 33 | 17.9 | 12 | 17 | 35.7 | 36 | 33 | 7.1 | 11 | 0 | 17.9 |
| **Total (n)** | **60** | **51** | **123** | **60** | **51** | **123** | **60** | **51** | **123** | **60** | **51** | **123** | **60** | **51** | **123** |

In 1999, the idea of a "service website" where a news organization's online presence serves as a forum for ideas between journalists and their audience was not common for many journalists, as websites were then simply seen as an extension of a traditional organization news service. This explains why results differed among respondents, with almost half of the respondents (47%) disagreeing with the statement, while half of the journalists responding to the 2004 survey agreed with the statement. In 2009/2010, although the number of journalists who agreed with the statement decreased to 39.9%, the number of journalists who disagreed with the statement dropped also, to reach 25%. Journalists' uncertain/neutral comments towards the statement increased throughout the survey, tripling from 12% in 1999 to 35.7% in 2009/2010. This may be because journalists could not yet find the proper dynamics to deal with news organizations' websites and how they could be used for facilitating discussions among the audience, as technically websites were administered and run separately to the production process.

> ***Involving ICTs in a newsroom may, according to the literature, allow the audience to not only establish a communication 'network' with journalists and news organizations, but also to give the audience the opportunity to play an active role in the making of the news.***

The growing disapproval of audience networking was further supported when journalists were asked whether their organization should be seen as a 'space' for the audience to communicate and develop a sense of "network community" among themselves. Longitudinal results showed that all journalists agreed with the statement in 1999. This figure decreased to 69.3% in 2005 and reached 64.2% in 2009/2010. This indicates that, although most journalists believed it was important that their news organization websites develop a sense of community among their audience, there was a growing tendency among journalists who felt that being a part of the audience network or facilitating networking among their audience was not the role of the news organization website, viewing their websites only as a tool to disseminate offline content.

Involving ICTs in a newsroom may, according to the literature, allow the audience to not only establish a communication “network” with journalists and news organizations, but also to give the audience the opportunity to play an active role in the making of the news. This notion was not statistically proven in the case of the Egyptian media. It was clear that the discussion regarding diffusion of the concept of audience networking in Egyptian news is still in its initial stages. Although questions about audience networking were asked from the first stage of the research, statistics showed, a decade later, a general unawareness and a lack of appreciation about the role of audience networking in the journalism process.

## Conclusions

This study aimed at assessing the diffusion of ICTs inside print newsrooms, describing the extent ICTs are used by Egyptian journalists in their work routine, as well as investigating the degree journalists are networked within the Egyptian “public network sphere.” Three waves of questionnaires constituting a longitudinal survey were designed to collect and analyze the information provided by Egyptian journalists about the diffusion of ICTs in their newsroom.

In order to answer the first question, ICTs are often thought to bring radical and fundamental change at the organizational structural level, where the boundaries between original and new traditions of news making are becoming less clear and the relationship between different forms of media production is characterized by increasing cooperation and compatibility.

Dealing with Egyptian media organizations, ICT diffusion proved to a slow evolution. In terms of technology, ICTs are available in almost all media organizations; however, the central focus of most organizations is the traditional printed version. It is clear that organizations do not integrate ICTs within newsrooms for the purpose of improving the quality of work. For news organizations, ICTs are an added value, primarily serving as an international edition complementing the organization’s original printed version. News organizations do not encourage the use of online material without attributing information to a reliable source. The adoption of ICTs in the newsroom seemed to occur as a result of journalists’ initiative rather than as an institutional decision.

Organizations’ websites further show how the current climate in newsroom convergence in Egypt is rather evolutionary. The Egyptian online presence was described by the majority of journalists as being “fairly” designed and ‘poorly’ administered and moderated. Journalists further testified that their websites failed to attract an audience, since the majority of the content is a simple transferral from the printed version. Statistical analysis indicated that most organizations failed to present original content online, update the information presented, or interact with their audience. Furthermore, journalists testified that their news organizations segregated the online and traditional journalists, where online journalists were seen as second-class journalists responsible for building news archives or helping “real” journalists produce their work.

Reviewing journalists’ attitude towards incorporating ICTs in their routine, longitudinal research showed a diffusion of ICTs’ “online” elements in their “offline” routine activities. It is clear that journalists do use ICTs for developing their own work and in order to keep up with the competition in the market. However, the journalists’ level of interactivity with the new media did not exceed simply researching information online.

The longitudinal research showed that the idea of network journalism is still in its initial stage. Several news organizations as well as journalists stated that the audience’s role is not of particular importance in the process of news making. The failure of many news organizations to look at the audience networking potential of ICTs forced respondents to look at other online alternatives where they could look for “news” information, communicate, interact and network regarding topics of their concern.

Furthermore, many journalists failed to see their organizations’ websites as a ‘space’ for journalist – audience/audience – audience networking. The increasing number of journalists who remained ambivalent toward these questions showed that they had not yet found the proper tool to communicate and interact with their audience. Few journalists reported that they joined networks or created network communities to communicate with an audience or sources of information. In addition, journalists who reported that news organization websites should be a tool for communication between journalists and their audiences due to the importance of the role of audience feedback in the process of journalism making stated that they usually did not interact with their audience and only a few journalists reported using audience feedback while reporting.

Finally, statistical analysis of data on the journalists’ use of ICTs in relation to the organization indicated a gap between the organization and the journalists. This is made clear in the number of journalists who reported not knowing about ICT diffusion on the organizational level but were still giving answers on their own individual level. This raises the issue of the transparency of information within news organizations.

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