

2004 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

Saturday—Closing Session

AUDIENCE QUESTION: My question is to Jeremy – 92% of those real world travelers are, they are also online travelers. To what is the percentage of, to what is that percentage in non-online travelers? How many...

SPEAKER: ...I'm not sure I understand what you're asking...

AUDIENCE QUESTION: ...Is that 92% of the online travelers are also real world travelers. What is that percentage in non-online travelers?

SPEAKER: Actually, the 92% was the percentage of the American students who had been real world travelers, who had been to at least one country. The percentage of those who are actually also online travelers was around half. ...I'm sorry...

AUDIENCE QUESTION: ...92% of all of the...

SPEAKER: ...92% of all of the students had traveled outside the United States, of all the American students. And of that 92% about roughly half of them had also, in addition to that, had read a foreign news website or used email or instant messaging or Usenet to communicate outside the U.S.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Ok.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Does that include Mexico? Do you consider Mexico traveling over, outside the United States?

SPEAKER: I suspect that's why it's high.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I was like 92 is incredible.

SPEAKER: That may be high.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Question for Andrew. I wonder if you could just speak a little bit to the possible applications of wikis for mainstream news organizations.

ANDREW LIH: It's a good question. Actually, wikis, beyond Wikipedia, have been of interest to businesses as well to do something that Madan touched on, which is knowledge management. So a lot of companies are actually using wikis inside the organization. I know, I think I've heard a few news organizations just using it inside to share knowledge about beats and on topics that are ongoing inside the newsroom. So the whole wiki concept as this kind of shared white board, or an evolving knowledge base for an organization, is being investigated by a lot of folks.

One of the main projects there is called Social Text. If you go online there's an online site called Social Text that hosts a lot of wikis. It's kind of like a Blogger.com type entity where you can start your own wiki and invite members in and have your own space to manage whatever knowledge base that you want. One little thing I'll add is while, after my presentation I checked in on the Internet, and I don't know how many people know about the whole - I guess they're calling it the "Jewgle" controversy - which is the, if you

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go to Google and you search for the word "Jew," or you used to search for the word "Jew," JewWatch.com would come up at the top, which is an anti-Semitic site. And that was a big issue in the last few weeks and someone had an online campaign to try to displace that article at the very top, or that website. And what's interesting is they used the Google-bomb method, which is asking people to link to another site so that it will displace Jew Watch from the top of the list, and just in the last two days they've displaced it. So, what they've chosen as the article to use to displace it is the Wikipedia article on Jew. Because they didn't want to replace it with a completely pro-Jewish site so what did they find as a neutral they used the Wikipedia article, which I think is quite a compliment to Wikipedia's effort as a kind of a fair arbiter of that topic.

And what's curious these Wikipedia folks who are dedicated to it rarely ever refer to themselves as journalists or what they're doing as journalism. It's just the fact that they believe in this kind of knowledge base and what you label it is actually not that important to them, which is quite interesting.

SPEAKER: Other questions?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Yes, my name is Spencer ? and I'm an independent multimedia designer and I'm a journalist as well. It's interesting because I left part of the symposium today to attend a completely different conference that I didn't know was going on until I found out earlier, going on on the first floor in the same building for independent filmmakers, which I'm involved with also. And it's, and I see parallels with what's going on down there and what's going on up here in that you have these individuals that are kind of working on their area dealing with the very same types of issues you're dealing with up here. But you're completely oblivious to what's going on down there and they're completely oblivious to what's going on up here.

But my main point is tied in with the issues of multimedia because, obviously, I'm involved in dealing with this all the time, and there are so many parallels. Again, we go back and look at, say a hundred years ago, when the film industry was in its infancy as well. And you look at what sound brought to film and when we look at what sound brought to film we see what the multimedia experience brings to the news environment.

What I had taken from this symposium, just to bring this point in, I think it's very interesting, is that you have so much focus here with print journalism and where does print journalism go with the Internet without really having any representation. And I'm not saying this as a criticism, but without any representation from, say, beyond MSNBC, say ABC.com or CBS.com where you see on the evening news where Peter Jennings or Dan Rather says, "for more information on this story turn me off and go to the Internet site," which is purely illogical. You'd think that you'd get more information, but the idea here that I see as a juxtaposition, is that newspapers, if they're going to go into the future into multimedia, have to really change their thoughts in regards to what are they. Are they an agency that's transferring information or are they a print medium? Because with the Internet it really comes down to whether a still photograph is going to be more powerful than making that information a multimedia experience where you have film and audio and all of that and I guess I'm going on a little bit more than that. But I just thought I'd like to share that with you.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Now, I actually agree with you very much. I think sometimes multimedia journalists get so caught up in the art of it in the reporting of the story, and the telling of the story, that they forget why they're doing it in the first place. And so I

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agree with you. I think questions like that need to be asked throughout the reporting process and the communication process for the people that are producing the content, shooting the content, the adding of the media. Why are you adding the media? So, I think sometimes those questions get lost in the telling of a story. So, I agree with you completely.

SPEAKER: Other questions?

SPEAKER: Let me comment a little bit of this. The thing of multimedia, the lack of concept, etc., and it's connected with this. I think the reason we have the print emphasis is not only because instead of blood I have ink in my veins and I have had ink since I was 16. Yeah. I started as a journalist. But also because newspapers were much more attuned with the evolution of electronic new media and were waiting for the electronic new media for decades. So they were much more dynamic. I mean you were talking about Peter Jennings. I mean, in terms of creativity, development, etc. CBS and ABC were far behind. I don't know if anybody disagree with me, but they came in the other way and they were, as far as I know, they were not doing anything in the cutting edge or multimedia like Naka's doing in the New York Times or the Washington Post is doing in the **camera at work**, etc. That's one reason.

The other thing about what the heck multimedia is and why we are doing this – you know, Leah Gentry was here yesterday. Unfortunately, she left but she had been doing for almost ten years lots of things that are same that we are doing now in multimedia. The thing is that nobody was caring about it. You have packages of the Star Tribune from Minneapolis with Flash with multimedia from 1996. They are very powerful. The thing is that nobody was paying attention to that because of technology, etc. And people were asking these questions of why you were doing that if nobody. And I think there is an obligation of the industry and for us, and the Academy, to do this experiment as part of pushing the envelope and as part of pushing to deliver the baby. Because it's the creation of the new genre. It's like when they start using sound in movies they were sometimes they were doing for the sake of experimenting, and that's what Guillermo was asking us this morning, that we should do more, and I think that's what is going on now. So, it's just a comment, but any other questions?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I've got one for Andrew or anybody else who wants to comment. As we, particular in your presentation, as we're talking about dealing with non-professionals, people that go in and edit it, I know that we had seen an instance earlier with the Concord disaster – when the Concord blew up. And the initial photograph actually got grabbed by Yahoo, not some of the other more traditional publications because they were able to get the amateur video and photographs immediately rather than have it go through a big editorial process of approval and everything.

Do you see, what is the role of the amateur news gatherers – or amateur sources, even, in terms of generating news content and being a source for (inaudible) Is that something that's going to increase through technologies like this or is this something that eventually we're going to bring the professional hammer back down and kind of establish this is what's professional and this is what's not?

ANDREW LIH: That's a good question. I think it's interesting to contrast something like All My News where you're asking people to be, you know, the shoe leather reporters out there and interviewing folks and writing original things. It's interesting because Wikipedia specifically says, we're a secondary source. And they even have a statement saying,

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“No original research,” in Wikipedia. Because you can just imagine what kind of crazy stuff would wind up there, so they have defined a very narrow, very specialized role for the content that’s there. And I think that’s a good move for them because that means people can absorb whatever news sources they have and they can put their knowledge into Wikipedia, but they aren’t necessarily citizen reporters in the All My News sense, but they are more like the, I guess, **omnti**their historians or the folks who can put their expertise into Wikipedia. So that’s an interesting part of Wikipedia.

I think, as a Madan said, one of the interesting things, at least in Asia, is the liberation of camera phones. And that is going to make a lot more citizen photojournalists of some sort out there and it’s already happening with moblogs and things like that where they’re contributing visual content. They’re contributing all kinds of things in ways that probably folks are not ready for yet. And they’re going to experimenting a lot more with those type of things. I don’t know, you might have some ideas on how they might do it too?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I – what’s a “moblog?”

ANDREW LIH: Moblog. A moblog is basically a mobile log and – that you can post directly to a weblog from your cell phone, whether that’s a text message or a picture that you can take. And they’re the same type of sites now on the Internet that give you a free moblog. Like TextAmerica.com is the most popular one right now. I’ve played with it quite a bit. I started one’s that’s more whimsical than anything else.

In Asia there’s a strange culture of decorating your car with stuffed animals and Hello Kitty and pink things that just goes way over the top of anything you’re used to in the United States. People who are – I think it’s a safety hazard to have just entire jungles of stuffed animals in the back of your car window. So, I started a moblog where I took pictures of the craziest sets of decorations in the back of cars and just with a camera phone and invited other people to contribute to it. It’s kind of went stale in the last few months as I’ve been too busy to do much with it but it’s called “Rear Window.” And it’s fun because you get to snap a picture and have it show up on the website within 15 seconds. It packages the picture as an MMS, sends it over 2.5G – at least in Asia it’s **GTRS** – and posts it directly to your weblog in a picture gallery. So, that’s kind of the new moblog phenomenon now. Like what Rosental’s doing right now perhaps. There it is.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: This is actually really more of an observation than a question. It’s just that as we’ve gone through these two days one of the thoughts that’s occurred to me is that with the convergence of video and audio and photo galleries and individual photos all in one place, the role of the editor is becoming more and more and more important. And I’d like to sort of juxtapose that to the idea that technology is getting better, automation is getting better, Google News is here, there are more and more places for automation of news. But despite that I think the role of the editor has become much more important because now the role of the editor is combined with the role of multimedia producer and we have to decide should that story of Elvis be told best with video. Or is it audio? Or is it a photo gallery? And now the editors have to be much more cognizant about the storytelling abilities of each of the various media and how they’re combined into one place.

So, I just overall think that the convergence of all the multimedia into one place, whether it’s on a newspaper website or a TV website doesn’t matter, it just means that whoever’s editing that site I think has a greater and greater role than we ever used to.

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SPEAKER: I think that's a good point because one of the strange things about Wikipedia is it's not just people writing, it's actually people getting involved who may not do anything except spell check, or may not do anything except reorganize articles. And I think that's what's so brilliant about the Wikipedia concept is that it's the ultimate in participatory journalism. You don't have to be able to write a diary entry perfectly or anything like that. You can go in there and just do your specialty and you have people who do nothing but obsess about capitalization or obsess about abbreviations. It's great. You have a lot of people who are just anal on there who finally have an outlet for it. And it's quite interesting the type of folks you get there.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I actually have a question for you, Andrew. I'm curious, I mean what's the business model of Wikipedia? Who pays for it?

ANDREW LIH: No business model. It is definitely in the spirit of Linux and open software in that it is funded now by a non-profit foundation that they created called the Wikimedia Foundation. But it was really started by a guy named Jimmy **Wales**, who started **Bomis.com** in Florida. It's a, I guess a, pretty well known Internet portal. It has a fairly, I guess, interesting reputation on the net because it has a lot of porn sites posted on Bomis.com, which is the company that he owns. But he funded it out of his pocket as kind of a pet project, but now it's actually beyond that and it has its own foundation. It raised \$20,000 U.S. dollars last year. But the hosting and the machines and everything are donated by him as the Internet entrepreneur.

SPEAKER: Ok. Anybody else? I think we have some people leaving for planes. Do you want to say a few words to conclude or?

ROSENAL: Let me just say thank you very much for your patience with your organization here. Maybe there was not enough coffee and things like that, but I'm really very, very, very proud of this symposium. I think next year is going to be even better and of course this was the best symposium that I have ever organized here and I think I'm going to send you an email asking for suggestions and sort of an evaluation of what we have done here and what we should do next year, besides going to a bigger room in another building. Although with the drawback of not being next to my office. This is kind of an extension to my office.

? when I was doing one of the symposium's here years ago, a few years ago, he was the director of the school and I invited him to open the symposium and he started by saying, you know how wonderful we used to have an endowed chair that you have some money. So when Rosental, whenever Rosental has questions and doubts about the issues that he is teaching here he organizes symposium and calls, you know, invites everybody from around the world to respond to questions.

So, I think, like I said, in the beginning it's really, I expected this symposium to be one with much more answers than I had in the past because the medium is more mature now. You know we understand a lot what – and we really achieved that. I think we had lots of answers and a better picture about what is going on in the industry. And a wonderful picture about what is going on in the Academy. I mean, I am extraordinarily happy with the papers and with the interest. You know, we did this, this call for paper in a record time. I mean, we decided that I think in February. I mean, and we could really collected a collection of paper that not only are very good in quality but they kind of compliment each other in a wonderful way.

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And also the beauty of having those industry leaders, I mean, those journalists who stayed here to listen to your presentations. I think it's the first time I've been in this country and in this academic world for eight years, I think I have never seen a conference before with this mix of, you know, academics and professionals. So, I was supposed to have a wrap-up session to discuss what I'm going to do next year in the sixth symposium on online journalism – everybody's invited again, of course – but I think one of the most obvious things to grow this blend of industry and university and you know mix this kind of things that we had today, that we had some professional industry related research and also academic research and everybody in the same room and speaking the same language.

So thank you very, very much. Hope to see you next year. Thank you again for Amy, Fiorenza, Dean, Dusty, all my students from the multimedia journalism class. I don't know if you know but we have been covering this real time and actually writing stories and posting stories on the web. So you can go to that symposium site and read the stories that have been written.

We're going to have a transcript of this, of all the presentations here online and also some video excerpts of the presentation. Joanne was our camera and I thank her also. And you know all the teams, so thank you, thank everybody. See you next year. Bye bye.