

2005 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

Friday – Keynote Speaker

"We the Media: The Rise of Grassroots, Open-Source News"

Speaker:

Dan Gillmor, Grassroots Media Inc., author of "We The Media."

DAN GILLMOR: Thank you so much for inviting me. It really is an honor to be asked to do this. I ask several indulgences before I start. One is, some of the folks in this room have heard this before, or at least a large part of it. And I also have a bit of bronchitis, so the good part of having some people who've seen this before is if I run out of voice, I'm just going to call on J.D. or Nora or somebody up here to finish the talk (laughter). So those of you who haven't heard it before will get to hear it.

I'm just going to go through what how I think this has developed a little bit, how I think it's going to proceed a little bit, and then try and get quickly to questions. And there's a bit of politics in here. I figure you're in the State Capitol, so it's OK.

So, let me just make the obvious points that there's a convergence to something we're calling "we media," a grassroots phenomenon that's based on ubiquitous networks and the ability of anyone to be a publisher and that that is a powerful and important change in the world. That it's about the read and write web. When Tim Berners-Lee started the web in the early nineties, he meant for it to be as easy to write on the web as to read from it. That disappeared for a while, in the early browser days when it was really a read-only phenomenon. Now it's a read-write phenomenon with blogs and texts and Podcasts and video. A whole bunch of things going on that are really going to be more and more part of the media culture over time. And that it's not just about the journalists or even the audience, but also about the newsmakers, the people in the institutions that we journalists cover who also have to learn some things being done to them, but have new options to do things themselves.

I want to go quickly through the process that I went through in beginning to understand this. And I say beginning because I don't think, I certainly know I don't fully understand it and I think it'll take the rest of my career before I even come close. And I also suspect that some of the students in this room are the ones who are going to teach me. That seems logical to me. And perhaps even the students in here are too old. Maybe it's a 15-year-old in Helsinki who's going to actually teach us what this all means, or his younger sister. So, we'll see where we go.

So I've been teaching for a month in Hong Kong every fall, and in 2000, at the University of Hong Kong, it was a Wednesday morning there, Tuesday night in the U.S. And I was trying to get election news, and there was no satellite available then, local stations weren't doing much with it. So I went on the Web and decided to find things. That little thing up in the upper left (points to screen) is a real stream of

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National Public Radio. And then I would flip around to various websites to go into either national or local or other kinds of news. And I realized all of a sudden that I was getting a better report about the election than anybody who was watching television in the United States. Because I was putting together what I consider the best audio plus all of this other material in a way that was good for me and it didn't matter I wasn't getting that linear stream from somebody, but what I was getting was better.

And what's more, if I could figure that out, anybody could figure that out. It was so obvious at that point.

In 2001, the terrorist attacks were another big change for everybody, not just for me. This is how we saw it initially, then people quickly got stuff up on websites.

Other things were going on (coughs) at the same time. I'm on a mailing list run by a guy named Dave Farber, who's a telecom professor in Pittsburgh. And I was in South Africa at the time with some journalists doing workshops for African journalists on how to use the Internet, and my access to standard news sources was limited, but email was getting through. And something that he sent the next day was a link to a satellite image of Lower Manhattan that I hadn't seen anywhere else and it gave me a sense of the scope of this. It was a new kind of data, data point, of what had gone on, an indicator of the absolute massive violence that had occurred in those attacks.

At the same time, the bloggers were just starting to really get into the medium and understand how to use it and doing kind of on-the-site reports.

(Man in orange shirt brings something to podium) Thank you.

I remember one blog in particular from a guy in Brooklyn across the river from Manhattan. He wrote, "Now I know what a burning city smells like." And at the moment, I remember thinking, "they used to say journalists write, were writing the first draft of history." And I thought, "No, this guy did. He wrote the first draft. And we're going to do something else in the future."

At the same time, a guy named Tameem (inaudible), an Afghan-American man in the Bay Area, San Francisco area, sent an email to a few of his friends. A passionate email about what would he knew we were going to invade Afghanistan, he just wanted us to know a few things. And his friends sent that email to a few of their friends, and on and on, and quickly this essay it turned into was on the web and in another few days, he was on national television. A guy who had kind of created himself as a source and kind of as an authority in a very bottom-up manner. I don't say this is the definitive story, I say this is how it came to me as the story.

Fast forward to 2002, end of the year. Trent Lott, if you recall, then the leader of the Republicans in the Senate, expresses nostalgia at a birthday party for a colleague. He expresses nostalgia for what is a segregationist era. And it was an outrageous

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remark. Outrageous. And yet the major media, they had a couple of quick items about it, and then it disappeared.

The bloggers, starting on the left, said, "That's terrible. How can he say this? Why's no one listening?" And their outrage was directed as much at the press as at the politicians in this case for not caring about the story and in the politician's case, not caring about what the colleague had said.

The right-wing bloggers then picked it up, said, "They're right. This guy doesn't speak for me" And finally, the press came back to the story, and there was a symbiotic process that I think we're seeing among bloggers and mainstream media and grassroots and mainstream. And soon after that, he lost his political support among colleagues and had to resign his position.

An important moment. The bloggers didn't bring him down, but the bloggers played a very important role. And that was one of the points along the way where I knew something was going on.

This is just another example of how kind of information from the edge of the network influenced the way I perceived an event, at least in the initial way. The shuttle exploding on re-entry into the atmosphere in 2003. There was a blog covering things in real time. He points to a satellite image. I circled that area in red there (points to screen). That's the debris field of the shuttle coming in through the atmosphere over Texas and Louisiana. And to give you an idea, it tells you again that this was a very violent event, not something we sort of understood.

The same day, something more important happened. An engineer who worked for NASA, the space agency, on a mailing list where people into space hang out, put up a note that said effectively, "I don't know if this is what happened, but something hit the left wing on the take-off." And this is somebody you would call an informed source, and in fact, this is, it turns out, exactly what brought the thing down in the end. But the first day we had an indication from someone who knew something. It would have been it wasn't journalism precisely, but it was something else that was part of journalism. And again, I saw that and said, "Yike. Something big is changing here."

And it all kind of accumulates for me into some things that I'm kind of getting cliché about. But I'll say them anyway.

We're moving from a lecture mode where we say, "Here's the news. You buy it or you don't buy it. End of transaction. Unless you write us a letter, in which case we ignore you. But, well, we might print it, sorry. And if it's on a lawyer's letterhead, we might respond. But otherwise we don't do much." But if it turns into conversational seminar, something different than what it has been, where the audience is not just part of the process, but really demands to be, and has many more options, I consider that to be good not bad.

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And the foundation of it for me was something I discovered after arriving in Silicon Valley a decade ago to write about technology, which was that my readers knew more than I did. And in Silicon Valley, they weren't at all shy about telling me that they knew more than I did and were quickly explaining to me what I'd get wrong, what I'd missed, what the nuances were, et cetera. And I decided that that was not a problem. After thinking about it for a while, it was a great opportunity, and what's more, it was true for any journalist on any beat in any news organization. By definition, the readers, the viewers, the listeners, know more. They have to know more. By definition. And that that's a grand opportunity for journalists and we should take advantage of it.

A quick anecdote about my readers knowing more. And this was another one of those moments for me when journalism changed irrevocably. PC Forum is a conference in the spring where a bunch of technology people investors, executives, journalists, et cetera hang out together in Phoenix. And Esther Dyson runs it and she had Joe Nachio who was then the CEO of Qwest a big phone company in the mountain states and he's on stage being interviewed and kind of complaining about how hard it is to raise money, and capital markets and stuff. And I'm in the audience. There's a wireless link, there's WI-FI and I'm in the audience along with a guy named Doc Searls, a journalist who writes about Linux and open source. And we're both blogging kind of real time to our blogs. And I'm thinking, "Nachio's complaining, and he runs a monopoly. How hard is that?" And so I put a note on the blog to that effect, and so did Doc, it turned out. And a couple of minutes later, both of us get an email from a guy in Florida who's reading our blog. And it's someone we both knew slightly, and he's a lawyer who's into software out there. And he sends a link to me to the following page on Yahoo! Finance, which has a link to the page of the Securities and Exchange Commission insider stock-selling database showing that while Joe Nachio's been president, he's taken out some two hundred million dollars worth of stock.

Well, that seemed relevant. So I put it in the blog, and this is in the space of just over a few minutes. And now you have to sort of visualize the room. It's a large hall, and about six, seven hundred people, and maybe a third to half of them have laptops open in front of them, and at least a few of them are amusing themselves reading what we're writing. So the mood starts to chill toward Joe Nachio. And by the time the Q and A came around, the audience had become downright surly. (laughter)

Esther Dyson later wrote that she was sure the blogs had something to do with this. Now I'm completely sure that Joe is capable of annoying people without anyone's help at all, but there may have been some impact. And I think the story's interesting really because of one person. Not because of the journalist, not because of Nachio. The guy who's important is the guy in Florida, who had been before that just in the audience. That's his role, he's in the audience. Read it or not. All of a sudden, he was part of the process, in something close to real time. He knew something we didn't. It was highly relevant to the story at the moment, we put it in, and bang! It's out there. That's a giant change. He's now really fundamentally part of the process and I love that. And that was a moment again for me where I was thinking, "I've got to

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understand this better. Because what I do is not what I used to do. And it's important that I get it."

So, what does this mean for people like Nachio? I won't go into this in any great detail, but for the newsmaker there's some new challenges. They have to be aware of lots of people doing something to them, but they have choices as well. I'll get to that. One of the things being done to them is there's now a global fact-checking machine, and it's pretty powerful. It doesn't always catch up with lies, but it's pretty good.

And it's also pretty fast, as a newsmaker that's also a news organization found out last fall, as we heard just a few minutes ago. And I should note, by the way, that the bloggers who said that night, "These are forgeries," they were at least as wrong as CBS was to put out a report based without knowing. Because neither of them knew, and we still don't really know. I don't think CBS came close to doing its due diligence. I suspect, I believe they were very likely forgeries, but no one really knows for sure. And CBS did have to back off, and again, the blogosphere became kind of this place where a symbiosis was occurring with major media. Because it wasn't a doubt that CBS would have responded as quickly as it did had the major media, in particular the Washington Post not jumped on the story. So, again, don't think bloggers do these things alone. It's all part of a continuum.

And by the way, the former executive at CBS who now is running CNN, who denigrated the bloggers as "those people in pajamas" (laughter), or words to that effect, I don't think they'll make that mistake again. They're actually now known as the (inaudible).

For companies that are trying to watch what's going on in this new world, there's something they need to understand, which is that whether journalists cover stuff or not, your customers, your other constituencies will. People who are into almost any gadget have their own network of news that has nothing to do with mainstream journalism. Nothing. And it's important for companies to recognize, and I think important for them to actually embrace, what Eric (inaudible) at MIT calls "the lead user," the lead customer, the person who knows a lot and cares a lot and will actually improve your product if you'll only listen. It's a very important message, and it's not one that a lot of industries take very well.

Another lesson is it's getting hard to keep secrets. I don't think we have to belabor that, but it's --- I'm very uncomfortable about the privacy implications of digital cameras because they're getting pretty small. I mean I can, a few blocks from the White House, buy a camera that fits into this button on my shirt, and very soon anyone will be able to buy one for no money. It's disturbing, but it means secrets are hard to keep. It's also hard to keep with mobile devices. The way the word of SARS came out, in Guangdong Province in China was basically through SMS, through short messages on phones going around from person-to-person rather than news media being allowed to report the story. Eventually the news media were forced, because they had no choice, and the government had no choice but to let them.

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The newsmaker has some options, too, that are kind of interesting and have implications for journalists. The Washington Post after September 11th did a big series on what the major leaders were doing and thinking at the time. Bob Woodward and Dan Balz interviewed, among others, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. As soon as the series had appeared in the paper and online, the Defense Department puts up a transcript, as it turns out they do with every major interview with Rumsfeld of the entire interview.

Now this has many values for me. I think it's a good thing to do. It's a little bit scary for the journalist in a sense because it makes us it forces us to work harder in several ways, but I think in a general way, this is a good thing to do. Now, you should be consistent. The Pentagon did another one last year when Woodward interviewed Rumsfeld, where the Pentagon snipped out a little embarrassing section of it, at which point the Washington Post posted its own transcript with that section restored, and wrote a story about it. So, you know, talk about counterproductive. They didn't need any less credibility than they had at that moment and they managed to get some.

I could spend a week on this particular slide, which is how do we get truth to catch up with lies. I don't know. We can work on it, and we're working on it, but it's not simple, and I do worry about this.

Something news media are starting to do in a pretty regular way now, I'm glad to see, is ask the reader a little bit more than we have in the past. After the shuttle broke up in the re-entry, NASA asked people around the descent area if they had photos of anything on the ground or that they had taken in the air, and they got thousands of responses. The BBC asked readers for pictures of, in the lead up to the Iraq war, and came up with a wonderful and very moving photo essay about family life in that period. But I have to point out that the readers they'll do it whether we ask them or not.

This is the Australian Embassy in Jakarta (indicates screen) which was bombed last year, and this is a photo by a passerby who had an account on Flickr, the photo-sharing site, and before any major news organization had done anything with this, boom, it was up. So, you know, ask them or not, doesn't matter to folks. We're going to have a globe of photojournalists before this is over when everyone is carrying around a phone with a camera in it. This is a change of some note.

So these are some of the toys and tools I'm playing with. I'm fond of the satellite uplink in the suitcase (laughter). It's a little expensive now, but it was a hundred thousand when I got this slide, and it's getting cheaper. And I think in ten years --- a decade ago, it was a million dollars to do this, and you needed a truck. Now it's ten thousand. A decade from now, it'll be hardly anything, or it'll be a mesh network or some system, but the trajectory is what's important. It's getting cheap and easy.

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And we've been saying that every person has a story, (plays inaudible recording). Well, what happens when every object has a story? This is Ken Sakamura's ubiquitous computing lab in Tokyo. And I took this little video there a couple of years ago, when he was working on putting little radio tags in everyday objects, and then connecting he put a handheld together in a special way and it basically looks at the object, goes to a database, tells you something about the object. In this case of the demonstration, it was a pharmaceutical that would conflict with another one you were already taking, and therefore, don't do that.

Mark Smith up at Microsoft research has been doing this in a more prosaic, but I think more interesting way, with bar codes, which are everywhere now. So Mark has a handheld that he equipped with a scanner and a wi-fi card. We took it to a supermarket and scanned a box of cereal. So it went to the barcode database, found out what this product was, and then went to Google. Very simple. The first Google result was that this cereal had been recalled. Why? Well because there's an ingredient in the cereal that had not at one point been listed on the box. And furthermore that ingredient was something to which a small number, but a real number, of human beings are highly allergic. And Mark put it I'm paraphrasing but as Mark put it, if every object can tell a story, you know one of the more profound stories is if you eat me, I will kill you (laughter).

So more tools, toys. J.D. Lasica here is working on a wonderful project called "Our Media," which is basically to get people's various kinds, in particular the richer video, audio-type media onto the web in ways that will be preserved. And the only reason that it's interesting to do that is it's getting pretty easy to do, to create this media with tools this laptop and a camera I haul around, I can do actually videos that are I'm not a videographer, I'm pretty bad at it. But anybody who has any visual talent can do things that are quite interesting, and quite much on the cheap.

And if you recall the "Bush in 30 Seconds" ads that MoveOn put on last year, this was the winner (plays recording) where they ask people just to submit their own videos. (music plays) So the message in this is that, people with low-cost tools can produce highly professional-looking stuff, and not only can, but will, and increasingly are. This new TV channel that Al Gore and Joel Hyatt are putting together is going to be based in some large part on user-submitted, reader or viewer-submitted videos. I'm intrigued. I hope it works. It's important that they're trying.

So where are we going? A guy told me that he thought we were seeing "self-assembling journalism." I stole the line, it's a great line. And this is journalism created by people who know nothing about newsrooms basically. Who couldn't care less about newsrooms, and usually don't know each other, just do it from locations, random locations.

This is called the Command Post, it was started after the Iraq war, kind of collecting everything they could find. It was new, and they've added politics and other things. At the conventions, political conventions here last year, you may recall the bloggers were accredited for the first time, and it was an experiment the main result of which

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was a lot of stories in mainstream media about the bloggers. Treating them kind of like pets, like, "Oh, cute little blogger!" (laughter) And, OK, so we'll get through that. It'll be more routine in a few years.

This is, it's interesting for me, because this is a page that was whacked together in just a few minutes to aggregate all the convention blogs into what amounts to kind of news site. This is a profoundly important experiment called Wikipedia. Most of you probably know about it. Wikis are pages or websites where anyone effectively can edit any page. Like anyone. And it sounds like anarchy, but it really works. We have someone here from WikiNews you'll hear from later, an important further experiment in this field. I'm in awe of what they have accomplished here, and I'm learning a lot from it. I'm learning, in particular, from the discussions about the articles, the sort of meta level at Wikipedia.

People should like at that to understand online community, that's essential to look at.

Another one, this is from Canada, this one is a timeline of 9/11 assembled from people sending things around the world. Fascinating, and it worked.

Where we're going I'm a big fan of RSS. If you don't know what RSS means, please learn, especially if you're in journalism you should already know. It's just an easy way to read a lot of stuff and pull it together. It's also really adaptable. I've got an RSS reader for my phone, and there are pages Bloglines has a way of doing it on any small device, too. I recommend that.

And of course, the question we'll be talking about later is, how do we make money? This is the slide from 1999 in Silicon Valley, when the more you lost, the more you were worth (laughter). And many people are still nostalgic for this time. They're not the ones who lost the money (laughter). There was a long period where, believe it or not, this was the model. I swear. People don't believe me anymore.

But things are coming along that really prove this can work. We also have Jean from Oh My News here, and this is a profoundly important thing that's going on in Korea with Oh My News. We need to all study it carefully, because what they're doing tells me a lot about how this might work. And I hope to incorporate parts of what they do into what I'm working on. It's a great piece of work. And I'm not sure the conditions here are the same in many respects, but it's fabulous stuff.

Then there's the old-fashioned advertising thing. I mean, bloggers can get ads, and they are getting ads. There's the old tip jar model, having someone support you. Maybe patronage will be a model. I suspect that will be a substantial model for journalism in the future, especially if the major news institutions that we already have start to dissolve as I fear they will. I don't see a good business model for newspapers right now, not for the long run.

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How do we make sense of this amazing conversation? Well, we need better tools. We're getting some better tools. This is Feedster, which indexes RSS and only RSS. There are things like Technorati. And they just indexed weblogs. They're up over 7 million now. I think they just indexed their one billionth posting, or something like that. It's staggering. And I use these for a lot of things, including to find out what people are saying about my book. But there's a lot in here for people to learn about what's going on.

We do need better tools in every respect. I'm counting on my Silicon Valley friends to help us with this. If this is an emerging conversation, as I would maintain, we need a way to kind of follow it, and it's pretty hard. We don't do it very well. And again, there's a ripe opportunity for the toolmakers in this sphere, and they're not there yet. They're not even close.

OK, this is the political portion of my discussion, and this is the reminder that this is a read and write phenomenon, and that there's some threats that we should pay attention to, to this future that I think is so exciting, but which we cannot count on occurring for a number of reasons. One of them is the way Hollywood sees the Internet. That's it. And the implication of Hollywood believing that that's the Internet is a little scary and I'll explain why. You know, they have volume and channel buttons. They have added a button for interactivity. It's called "buy things." It's not my idea of interactivity. I think it's there's, but it's not mine. And I think we should fight back on this.

Two cases were heard on the Supreme Court was it last week or the week before? that are essential in understanding where we're going to go. One was called Grokster it was about whether peer-to-peer file-sharing and other technologies that might be used for copyright infringement or even likely would be used, could be stopped by Hollywood or sued to death by Hollywood and the copyright cartel, even though they have uses that could be perfectly legitimate, and in my opinion, essential to the future of distributive journalism. If Hollywood gets to tell technology people, "You need our permission before you can innovate," that's trouble. That's real trouble for all of us, and not just for journalists.

Another case heard the same day was called Brand X, which is the name of an Internet provider out in California. A small internet provider that wanted to get onto the cable company's lines to be an ISP, the way that any small company could be an Internet Service Provider with telephone. Well, the way things are structured in this new, so-called era of broadband, and I say broadband, put it in big quotes because America's version of broadband is a pathetic, a pathetic version of the real thing. Ask Mr. Min from Korea about that. But we're rapidly moving into a period where there will be two, or maybe three fat data pipes, broadband pipes, in any given home. Not only do they want the right to own and control those lines, the phone and cable companies, in particular, they want the right to control what flows up and down those pipes. Now if you think we're in a media consolidation era now, wait til they get that. Brand X wanted the right to be an ISP the way that anyone could be an ISP on the phone lines, and I think they're going to lose. And if they lose, we're all going

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to lose. We must find a way to have open access, open networks in a way that the content that the owner of the network cannot discriminate on the basis of what the content it. They must not be allowed to do that, or none of the future that I'm seeing will come true.

Other things that are in the way right now are attacks by companies that should know better like Apple on bloggers that are simply reporting the news. I filed declaration in several of these cases at the request of the attorneys, so, and I haven't taken money for it, but I basically am helping by saying, yes, what they're doing is journalism, and a question of who's a journalist may actually become something the government decides if this goes a lot further. And we need to think about whether we want that to happen. Meanwhile, we should not permit companies like Apple, control-freak companies, to decide that they can stamp "trade secret" on everything that moves and say, "we won't let anything out ever, and if we do, we'll sue you until you're broke."

Piper links are under threat. There's a case in Denmark where newspapers are prohibiting deep links.

Satire is under threat. The New York Times went after a wonderful parody site of their corrections page. The New York Times didn't they had a policy where the columnists were not required to correct their errors. So Bob Cox, he runs a site called the National Debate, it's a very right-wing site, he said, "OK fine, I'll put up my own correction page for The New York Times columnists" where he wrote corrections for them. The Times was really stupid. They sent the lawyers after him. This prompted a lot of right-wing lawyers to say, "Oh, can I defend you, please? Please?" (laughter) And eventually everyone made a deal and it was OK, but this is non-trivial. The ability to sue by the Great American Right it's probably in the Bill of Rights somewhere that someone can find is, you can sue anybody for anything.

But it's a problem for the stand-alone journalist, as Chris Nolan likes to call them, who, just defending against a baseless lawsuit, will go broke. We have to be doing things.

I'm a fellow this year, in addition to other stuff, I'm a fellow at the Stanford Law School Center for Internet and Society, and we're pulling together a legal group and maybe even a small conference on these legal issues maybe for later in the year to try and deal with some of this. Because I think we need to protect the new kind of journalists from some of the abuses that are coming. And the reason that I worry about all this is we could see threats to innovation, to new entry in these markets, and I think we need more not less of this kind of stuff.

And I want to show you a video that is quite probably not legal. We're in an age when younger people are visually-oriented, not textually, like we are, us old folk. And they're meshing things together from various sources and they're creating a new forum, and a valuable new forum. And this is a piece of political commentary that I want to show you, and I think it's absolutely genius.

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(plays film; laughter)

I think that's one of the great pieces of commentary I've ever seen. And it's quite probably because the copyright owner of the song would not want that used. They did not ask permission. But I think we need to define ways to not just permit these things to occur, but to encourage them. Because this is the world that our kids are going to, and their kids are going to really deal with, much more than the one we're used to. We've got to not only find a way to protect the possibility of these mash-ups, we've got to find a way to make sure they happen, and more and more and more. This is part of the future and it excites me a lot in terms of what we can do with media.

So please just consider that we're going the wrong way on a lot of issues that we need to turn around on, I think in a hurry. And I have one final thing. Actually, no one has to buy this book. I rant a lot about copyright. We published this book under a license called creative comment, which instead of all rights reserved, it means some rights reserved. And in the case of this book, it was available on the web in full, roughly the day it hit the bookstores, and you can download it no charge, you can send it to someone else, fine, if you want, you can re-mix it your own way. The only conditions are that you don't do any of that for commercial purposes. If anyone's going to make money, we'd prefer it to be us (laughter). But you can re-mix it, and if you want to do that, that's OK, too, but if you want to put it out in a new way, you have to do it under the same license that we put it out in the first place. That's it. That's the conditions. I think that honors the spirit of copyright, which I very much believe in. I'm a big fan of copyright. But I think we need to restore some balance in a world that has lost its balance on these issues.

So I'm going to stop there, and if you've got some questions, and if we have some time I'd love to take some.

ROSENAL ALVES: Before questions, I invite anyone who has a question to come here, and buy his book (laughter). You know, it's nice. This format is still it has pages, it's very good, it has pages, nice, relaxing.

DAN GILLMOR: It also passes the bathroom test (laughter).

ROSENAL ALVES: Yes, exactly. So who is going to ask the first question?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I'm Michelle Steckler, I'm a graduate student here at UT. One thing that I get concerned about I never heard of blogs until I took Professor Alves' class. I've got a lot of catching up to do. And I bought the book because I can't look at anything on the web,

DAN GILLMOR: Bless you.

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AUDIENCE QUESTION: (laughs) I need a live copy. But I get concerned that with all the speed of blogs, and Wikipedia, who's going to take the time to stop and think? And if you do stop and think about the implications of any issues that do come up, if someone's already run with it, and gone on a tangent, then it's kind of you can't be heard for the crowd and the roar, and, um, the stampede, of people just moving on and blogging, and that concerns me.

DAN GILLMOR: The velocity of it all?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Yeah.

DAN GILLMOR: I can't do much about that. We live in a world of relatively short attention spans. Our kids have what Linda Stone, former Microsoft and Apple person, she calls it "continuous partial attention." Which is, if you watch a teenager with 10 or 20 instant message windows at once going, and actually keeping track of it all, that's continuous partial attention. I think people growing up today are going to do it better than we do, with some loss in the ability to focus. I'm not happy about that.

But people accumulate this deluge of facts and opinions and somehow sort it out in their minds, and come up with something they believe. Am I comfortable with that? Not particularly. But I think that's the reality, and one of the things we can do with better tools is to have reputation systems, where people can discover who and what they trust a little bit more and then gravitate toward that. I hope it won't be echo chamber-ish, but I think there's some promise in these developing tools, for tracing not tracing, but making some sense out of this flood of information, but I haven't solved it.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: My name's John (inaudible), I've been a visiting fellow here this week. I wanted you to do some more about credibility because we're bombarded with all these messages all at once, and I don't mean to sound like a total fogey who relies on editors to make sense of what goes out. But how can people know what is truth? How can we avoid being snookered?

DAN GILLMOR: How can we know what's true, and do we need editors is that summing it up? The answer is yes, everyone needs an editor. I believe everyone who wants to be a journalist needs an editor. Now, it doesn't mean that a blog has no value, and some journalistic blogs that have no editors are great. I still think even the best individual writers need editors. It's just, another pair of eyes is good. The theory is that the millions of eyes, or the many eyes that would show up to look at your work would be good editing after the fact in some sense. Certainly, people would catch mistakes and small things, but I think people need editors.

The figuring out what's true I mean, as opposed to what, exactly? We have a population in America that still believes overwhelmingly that effectively that Saddam Hussein patted the hijackers on the back on their way to the airplane, which is false. And it also develops that people who watch mostly FOX News for their news believe that more than other people.

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So I'm, I actually have more hopes that people will explore and find different things and maybe get out of their echo chambers with the web, and key to this is that people do a little more work as news consumers than they've done and not trust everything that they hear and do a little bit further due diligence when they want to make some important decision based on what they're reading, check it out a little further.

That's asking a lot. People are busy. And people don't want to do that in particular, but if they're burned enough, maybe they will. But they're being burned by the mainstream media, anyway, at some level. I say that loving the mainstream media and what it does well. I don't want to see that disappear.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Hi, my name is Hee-sook Choi, and I'm a second year graduate student in journalism, and I enjoyed your book, I read it. And you say that you promote free downloading, and appreciate your readers to download freely and read. My question is related to this. Did you lose sales for the free downloading? Or increase?

DAN GILLMOR: Oh, this is the, was there any business mistake to put the book up in creative commons form? Uh, we'll never know for sure. I do know all I know is the following: the book was essentially ignored by newspapers in the United States. There was one serious review in all of the American newspapers. One. There was a lot of talk about it online, in part because it was available online. It just went into a new printing in the U.S. It just was published in Portugal in Portuguese, and in Taiwan in Chinese, it's going to be in Korea in Korean this next month, and then in Japan in Japanese and then a couple of other things after that.

So, did it hurt us? I don't see the evidence that it hurt, and I see a lot of evidence that it helped. In part because American newspapers just flat-out ignored the book. So we might have been much worse off had we not done it, but it didn't matter. I don't care. I didn't do it for the financial return because there will never be that much of a return. That wasn't why I wrote the book. Nobody should -- please don't write a book expecting to make money. Please don't do that. And don't write a book expecting to have your social and family relationships intact by the time you finish (laughter). Write a book because you need to. That's the only reason.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Hi, I'm a doctoral student here in the Radio-TV-Film Department here at UT Austin. I sometimes feel like the problem (inaudible) with our media is not the communication between people and the media. Sometimes I feel like it is the problem of communication between grassroots media and the mass media, CBS, things like that. Of course, the regional success of Oh My News, that is because of the communication between Oh My News and mass media in Korea. They deal with issues made from Oh My News and other grassroots media. So I'm wondering how the mass media deals with the issues made out of the grassroots media. Is there any tension between those two areas, or --- just, I want to ask about that.

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DAN GILLMOR: Right. If I understand the question correctly, is there tension between mainstream media and this grassroots media? Yes. Lots. But I don't think that mainstream media have a choice but to adopt it. I don't think this is even a close call. I think it's a it's so obvious to me that the company I just left must adopt this that I take it for granted that they will eventually.

I hope there's an ecosystem developed where there's a lot of new things going on where the best parts of mainstream media are preserved. But the business model is eroding at least around newspapers in America and I believe around television, and probably radio. So we need to have many different media sources, and we need just good journalism. And I don't care where it comes from as long as we have good journalism.

The tension, I think there are two levels of tension from mainstream media, and they're not -- they're very logical if you feel this way. One is that this is not going through the standard processes that we've done in the past, sort of, editors, reporters, people with at least some training in most cases, this sort of thing. Instead there's this kind of free-for-all.

And the other thing, and this is the much bigger threat to the mainstream media in all of this it's not the journalistic threat, it's the business threat. And I didn't really touch on that, but you have a terrific group this afternoon looking at those questions.

The world's largest classified advertising thing is called E-Bay, by far. And E-Bay is taking money away from newspapers. Tough, I'm sorry about it, but too bad. That's life. And better get used to it. I'm really worried, though, that the newspapers could disappear and we don't have something to replace them with over time that is protecting society, and I hope we'll all work together. But if newspapers don't adopt this, they'll go out faster than they might otherwise. I think it's just essential.

ROSENAL ALVES: I would like to remind the people who are watching us on the webcast around the world, we know there are people in Latin America, in Africa, in Europe, people with insomnia in Asia (laughter) that they can email people with any questions and comments. We have in the webpage, in the webpage we have email addresses. So, the last question. Thank you.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Dan, hi, I'm Charlotte-Anne Lucas. I'm the content director for MySanAntonio.com, which is half a mainstream newspaper

DAN GILLMOR: Right.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: the San Antonio Express-News and half a television station, KENS-TV. Can you be more specific about what you think mainstream newspapers should be doing today to adapt to the grassroots journalism?

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DAN GILLMOR: I'll give you one example of I think there's one obvious entry point for mainstream newspapers into this new world. And the place to start, if that would be OK, I'll tell you where most of them could start, as opposed to having a blog here and there.

And that is to take the editorial page, and completely invert it. The editorial page is the one place in a typical newspaper where there is already the beginnings of a conversation with the community happening. Letters to the editor, that's what they are effectively, part of a conversation. So I would take the editorial page and say, not right now, but over time we're going to flip it. We're going to turn the print pages, editorial pages, op-ed, into the printed guide and best of to the conversation we have with our community on the web. And think of it that way. And I think that would be a good start.

Now there's a lot of reasons you don't just do that, in part because there's a lot of people who don't have access even today to that online world. But they will over time, and I just, that's where I would start. And then over time you just start asking the readers, "What do you know? What do you want to know? What can you tell each other?" Not so much what you can tell us, what can you tell each other.

News is not about the journalist, it's about the person who reads it, or listens to it, or watches it. And we need to encourage more of this community journalism, and then it's going to take a huge leap from the typical newspaper standard, which is we vouch for what's in our pages, although that's not entirely true, even now. How much do we vouch for everything? Not as much as we think. But we do sort of vouch for it. So we're going to have to start putting things online which our readers do, which we don't vouch for, but we think is valuable anyway. That's a giant leap. You know, it's not in the DNA of newspapers to do that, but they're going to have to.