

2006 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

Day 1, Panel 4: The Impact of Citizen Journalism and Social Media on Newspapers

Moderator: Robert Rivard, Editor, San Antonio Express-News

Panelists:

Jim Brady, Vice President and Executive Editor, WashingtonPost.com

Scott Clark, Vice President and Editor, HoustonChronicle.com

Juan Carlos Luján Zavala, Editor, ElComercio.com.pe, Lima, Peru

Fred Zipp, Managing Editor, Austin American-Statesman

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: We're going to have Robert Rivard, who is the editor of the San Antonio Express News, who's going to be our chair. And Jim Brady, who has just arrived from Washington, D.C., the editor, the executive editor of the Washington Post. Plus, Scott Clark, who is the editor of the Houston Chronicle, and Fred Zipp where's Fred? Oh, hi, Fred. Fred Zipp, who's the managing editor of our wonderful local newspaper, the Austin American-Statesman.

So, there is no interval. Let's rock and roll! Keep going! All right! And I forgot the most important hook em, horns! [He makes the "hook em" gesture.]

ROBERT RIVARD: Calling Jim Brady.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: He's here. He's coming.

ROBERT RIVARD: He's in wardrobe.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: Oh, and Juan Carlos! Juan Carlos, where are you? [Professor Alves thanks Mr. Zavala for being on the panel]

[The panelists prepare to present.]

ROBERT RIVARD: Well, good afternoon. My name is Robert Rivard. I'm the editor of the San Antonio Express-News, which is just down the road a ways, and I am your moderator. And I this is my mic. I have to look at the mic, and not at you. We are all going to talk three times as fast as we normally would, and get right into it.

The first panel talked about the emergence of community journalism, and we're going to talk about its impact. And I'm going to be our moderator, and I'm not going to use much of our time, and I'm going to ask our panelists to stick to our time of about ten minutes, twelve minutes each, not to slow us down too much with online

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or on-screen presentations. And I'd like to invite all of you to interrupt their presentations at any time with questions. This is about a world of interactivity, and we're not being interactive enough. And there's a lot of interesting people out in these seats, some of whom I know, some of whom I don't, but we'd like to hear from you. So, as of this second, it is Q&A period, while we talk.

Now, some very brief introductions. And any individual on the panel who would like to say a little bit more about their own background is welcome to. First, right next to me, I have Jim Brady, who is the executive editor of WashingtonPost.com. This is Jim's second time, in his career, that he has been at WashingtonPost.com. He left for four years and crossed over, worked for America Online, and is back at the Washington Post. And that will be interesting, to hear about that.

Next to him is my colleague from Houston, Scott Clark, who is the head the director, vice-president, editor, of Chron.com, which is the website of the Houston Chronicle. And, for those of you that have paid any attention to the NYU study on the effects of bloggers and newspaper websites hosting bloggers, Scott's paper finished first in the country. Jim's finished second. The little old Express News in San Antonio finished sixth, I think.

And Juan Carlos, welcome. You came the farthest, from Lima, Peru, from El Comercio, and also the Catholic university there, where he teaches digital media. He's a blogger himself, and journalist, and he has a presentation we'll be very interested to hear how things are down there.

And my colleague from the Austin American-Statesman, the managing editor, Fred Zipp. For those of you who are from Austin or who have used that website, you know that it may have been the first of its kind that Fred and his colleague, the executive editor, Rich Oppel, started a blog called Rich and Fred, or Fred and Rich, I'm not sure which

FRED ZIPP: Rich and Fred.

ROBERT RIVARD: Rich and Fred. And it's not up now. And I'm not sure why. And maybe Fred will tell us about that. But, with that, I'm turning it over to Jim. Take it away, and I can't wait for the first question to be asked out there.

[Professor Alves asks Jim Brady whether he has his presentation memorized.]

JIM BRADY: Memorization? What's that?

I can start. I'll start going, since we're trying to keep it to ten minutes here. On the last panel, especially listening to Dan, who I've worked with in a couple of places He had everything he talked about, about trying to integrate the reader into the experience. This is something we've been trying to do on the website. What I want to talk about a little bit is trying to take all of those concepts, and snapping them in

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to a large newsroom that's not necessarily accustomed to that level of interactivity with readers.

Ah sorry. Here we go. Thank you. Just to give you a quick walk-through When I got to this job, back in January 05, the first goal we were aiming for was really to open up the site to readers a little more than we had previously. We realized that the way we work on the site is, we put out a piece of content, people come to that content, and that drives traffic. That's great. But what we really felt like we needed to do to reach the next level of traffic was to get people interacting with each other, so that we were not always required to put out some piece of content to get people to generate traffic on the site. So we kind of junked together some of these philosophies of interactivity on the site, which I'll run through, very quickly.

The first one we talked about, real quickly, was having a site where people come to us from Google or Yahoo or an RSS feed, read an article, and back right out, is a recipe for failure for us. We have to get people to do more on the site, or else we're just going to be another site that they come to, every once in a while, when Google sends them our way, or an RSS feed sends them our way, or a blog sends them our way. But we need people to go deeper than just one click into the site. So, to do that, we decided we needed to open up the site to readers, to other perspectives, to give people access to other information about what the Post is writing, even if that information didn't necessarily exist on the Washington Post website. And we needed to embrace blogging, which I'll get into a little bit more later, since I'm going to go on speed a little bit here.

But really, what it boiled down to is the last question on this slide. Which is: People are already talking about Washington Post content on the Internet, all over the place. Why would we not want to have that on our own site? Why would we just seed that traffic to blogs and everybody else on the Internet? If we're generating a lot of news with a Dana Priest story about secret prisons, then why don't we want to have that traffic? Why don't we want to have that discussion on our site? Even if some of what you'll see out of that will be negative, will be critical of the Post, that's OK. That's what we do as journalists; we have to be able to take criticism.

So here are some of the things to try to deepen the experience again, to get people to do more than just come to the article. One was we decided to embrace the blogging community by, literally, off of every Post story, pointing to anybody who's pointing to this story. So, in this particular case, there are nineteen blogs that are linking to this story. So if, after you're done reading the piece, you want to get a sense of what other people are saying about it, go right ahead. And again, a lot of these are not going to be positive takes on things, I can assure you. But we felt like it was important to us to make it available.

We just started this a couple of months ago, which is hyperlinking bylines. This is not exactly cutting edge; we're a little behind the times on this one, but we got this done so that, you know, if someone finishes reading the story, they can also decide to correspond with the reporter privately, if they want to just send them an email.

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AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do reporters have to answer that email?

JIM BRADY: No. They do not. That was a lot of them do, though. More than you'd think. But they're not required to. We also just cut a deal with del.icio.us not that long ago to allow people to either share articles they've read with other people, or save them for later use. Again, the idea being, maybe somebody doesn't have the time to read, but they came to read, so let's give them an opportunity to go back and get it later, and again, try to deepen the experience.

We also wanted to do something a little bit different, which is to embrace the development community as well. Now that you've read the content that's on the site, why don't you take the content that's on the site and try to do something original with it? So take our RSS feeds and decide, hey, if you want to build a product using our RSS feeds, go do it. We've gotten about thirty things that have been sent to us, some of which we've put on the blog, some of which we haven't. But some of the things we've gotten included an automated news quiz, working off headlines out of our RSS feeds. Automatic Amazon commerce links, depending on the subject of the story. A lot of people have taken our congressional database, which we launched about six months ago, which has every congressional vote since 1991, and they've actually built little modules that are just their state's representatives. So that, if you want to see anybody in Minnesota or Connecticut or Wyoming who voted, you can see that all in one space. We're trying to encourage people not only to read the content the way we present it, but decide to remix it in your own way.

So what's coming? We're continuing to move down the road here. We're comments on articles is something we've been pushing for for a long time, and ironically we were about two weeks away from launching before we had BlogGate, back in December, where we had to shut down a blog for a while, which started a firestorm of surprisingly large magnitude. [laughter] But that scared a little scared a few people off on that one, but we're headed back down that direction pretty quickly. We're doing more inline linking; we've certainly heard the research about the effect of inline linking, and getting people deeper into your site.

We're also experimenting with social networking now, which is trying to give readers the opportunity to create their own pages on the site, and bookmark other readers; build a friendship base on our site. Social networking has not necessarily succeeded fully in a news environment, but we believe it can. And the one example we have of that was back in December; Gene Weingarten, who's a humor columnist for the newspaper, he has one of the most popular live discussions we do. And the people in the live discussion were starting to complain, you know, "I really like Gene, but I really also like all the other people who ask questions in this discussion. I really wish I knew more about the rest of you." And so, since we didn't have that kind of group functionality on the site, someone at the Post suggested, "Why don't you guys start a Yahoo group?"

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So they started a Yahoo group, and within two days there were 750 people in this Yahoo group. Within a day after that, 200 or so had mapped out where they live on Frappr. And so there were three Gene Weingarten happy hours being planned in New York, Boston, and Washington. Which I'm sure Gene went nowhere near. But it was interesting for us, because this kind of all just happened, again, very We weren't really fanning the flames here. This just happened because these people were interested in a certain personality on the Post site. But again, it's not in my job description no offense to drive traffic to Yahoo Groups or to Frappr. So we decided we needed this functionality on our own site, so we can build groups around personalities, issues, sports teams, whatever they may be. And we're going to be working on some personalization items as well.

One of the things, just to talk about really quickly, is WashingtonPost.com blogs. Again, I mentioned that we decided we were going to go hard into blogs last year, when I got the job. The idea being and then people said, "But did you guys just get into blogs because blogs are cool?" It was kind of the buzzword. And our answer to that has always been, "No, we got into blogs because of why they're cool." Blogs are cool for a lot of reasons: because they allow us to get people back to the site multiple times for digs Joel Achenbach's going to post three, or four, or five times. Or, even if the person who's writing the blog doesn't post again, the community is generating content all day long. They're cool because they generate an RSS feed, which is another hook another line we can throw out to try to hook people to the site. So we launched them because they are a great format for a lot of what we wanted to do.

Again, some of the things I won't repeat them here. But we launched our first blog in January '05, and we have about 25 standing blogs now. And if you count things we've done, just kind of one-offs, event-driven blogs, we've done more than 50. And on a given day, five or six of them will be in the top 30 or 40 URLs in the site, in terms of traffic. And, again, since we're in a hurry here You've seen some of these. These are some of the more popular ones that we have on the site.

What I really wanted to get into was: What are the challenges that we faced at the Post, in terms of bringing the reader into the site as much as we have? There's obviously procedural ones managing comments in blogs or on articles. Again, I assume most of you know about our blog shutdown of a couple of months ago. I had, of course, like many people who spend a lot of time on the Internet, seen people get slammed in blogs for a while, and always been like, "What a poor bastard that guy is." Now I've been on the other side of it, and it's really not a lot of fun to get slammed in the blogs for a while. But we had a little bit of an issue there. But what we learned is, you've got to have a plan to get a lot of human beings on board when you have these kind of comment campaigns, which is what we had with the BlogGate. And again, I'll take questions about that, if anybody doesn't know exactly what happened.

We also didn't we were lazy about technology. We didn't have an effective profanity filter. We didn't have registration in front of our comments, or our blog comments.

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And so it allowed people to come in anonymously, say whatever they wanted to say, and with us having almost no ability to stop them, other than take them out one at a time, which at some point you just can't win that battle. So.

And but the cultural ones are the ones that are most, I think, relevant to this discussion, which is: How do you take, how do you open the doors to readers, many of which are going to come to your site and criticize what you do, how you do it, your motives for doing it, where the newspaper stands politically, and much more personal than that. How do you get a newsroom to, sort of, embrace the fact that this is a good thing? And so what I've spent a lot of the first six months I was there at the newspaper doing, or at the company doing, was going to the newspaper and trying to explain to people, "This is where this medium is headed. People are going to have a voice; again, they're going to have it somewhere, it might as well be on our site. Let's start to embrace this. Let's start to have a dialogue with these folks."

There's a lot of folks in newsrooms not all but a lot of longtime reporters who just stopped answering email, because they just didn't want to take the time, figured there was no way they could change the minds of the people they were getting emails from. And I think we've been trying to convince them that you can, actually, when you engage people who are criticizing your journalism, criticizing your institution, you can actually get into a dialogue with them that's interesting. And so, we really worked hard to convince them of this.

But the challenges I lay out here are really the three challenges we had to worry about, which are again, I've talked about the first one. The second one: How do you enforce that line of what's an effective and fair criticism of somebody's journalism to where it becomes a personal attack? And we were beaten up a lot for this a couple of months ago, because we were taking things out that people were saying, "Well, that's not a personal attack." Calling Sue Schmidt, who's a Washington Post reporter, "Steno-Sue," which is a nickname she's gotten from the blogosphere because they believe she takes stenography from the Bush administration. We considered that a personal attack; the bloggers felt that wasn't a personal attack. But you get into these debates. But we put a very strong line between what we felt was legitimate criticism of the journalism, and personal attacks. And I think you have to do that, and you have to be consistent about how you enforce that, or else you run the risk of losing the support that you build up in your newsroom to embrace this kind of content.

And the last one is a lot of the questions I got when we started hyperlinking bylines, and when we started opening up the site, was, "Do I answer to these people or not?" And this question comes up all the time. And my answer is always, if somebody sends you an email saying "You're an effing a-hole," don't go anywhere near it. Because you're not going to win that person over, whatever you do. If somebody sends you an email that says, "Your story today was a piece of garbage; this is why it was a piece of garbage," there's absolutely no reason not to engage that person in dialogue, if you think that makes sense. But ignore the cranks. But don't ignore anybody who just don't ignore anybody who criticizes what you write, because then

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you're never going to get into any real kind of dialogue. And we've been very effective on that, and in the byline linking specifically, people are starting to say, "I'm getting great tips through this, actually. This has actually worked out much better than I thought. Not only are people not ripping me every day, but I'm actually getting stuff that's actionable, from a journalism standpoint."

So again, results have been positive. The newspaper's really embraced the addition of these interactive elements we're now doing 40 to 50 hours a week of live online programming, that involves just Post or Post.com reporters. And more of them are coming every week to ask if they can do a weekly discussion. While there were a lot of initial reservations about that Technorati deal, now reporters cite it all the time as one of their favorite features. It's like, "I got 65 blogs writing about my story today." It's now become just another way reporters can rank themselves among other reporters [laughter], which for those of you who've worked in a newsroom know there's nothing reporters like doing than measuring themselves against other reporters. We get about, I think, 90% of the traffic to the most-emailed section on our site, we believe, comes from the Post newsroom. [laughter]

But we'll take the traffic any way we can get it. And again, the automated hyperlinking of bylines by the time we got to that, reporters were asking, "When's it going to launch? When's it going to launch?" We'd reached the point where it wasn't like, well, they weren't expecting the worst.

So. So that's the basic speed version.

[applause]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'll just shout it out what's the difference between what you were talking about, in the [inaudible]?

JIM BRADY: What's the difference between?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Talking to the citizens, and the paper the ombudsman.

JIM BRADY: It's just all more public. I mean, the ombudsman takes a lot of phone calls, she gets a lot of email. Getler, before her, and Deborah Howell today summarizes all that into what she does in the newspaper, but you know if you want to get, if you want the full text of what you're thinking on the site, you've got to write it yourself. If you put it if you send it in through the ombudsman, it's going to get filtered down into something that's either in the paper or on the site.

And the goal for us was, if you have a thought, you should be able to put it on the site; as long as you follow some basic rules of decency, you should be able to write whatever you want. So, this is just a much more public form, you know. And even letters to the editor get obviously, as everybody knows get edited down. So this is, sort of, your free-form ability to say whatever you want, which, you know, can be scary sometimes, but generally is a good thing.

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AUDIENCE MEMBER: Jim, is registration an impediment to [inaudible] or is it an essential tool? And speak about the fact that it also has an economic element to it, in terms of aggregating users for advertising.

JIM BRADY: I have come to the conclusion that it is an essential tool. Especially after some of the things we dealt with, with we've had two major controversies in the last couple of months, and both of them in both cases, the main outlet for that feedback did not have registration in front of it, and it just became you know people if you went into our message boards around the Deborah Howell/Jack Abramoff thing, literally, every other post was from Karl Rove or George W. Bush. It was just at some point, it just got to become a joke. Everyone was there was no real dialogue going on. It was who could be the funniest in the group; who could be the most insulting and funniest of the group, and who could figure out how to use asterisks the most effectively, to get around the profanity filter. [laughter] It just got to be a game more than a real dialogue.

So, for us, the idea is, we put registration up, we get some information from you, we expect you to be a little bit more responsible. And on the other end of it, if you're not responsible, if you register, if you have a user ID, we can rid of you. Yes, you can come back on and re-register under a different name, but the reason registration works for us as I said before when you have to take out posts one at a time, and you're getting in two or three hundred an hour, that's a game you can't win. But if we can take your user ID out, you know, in two minutes, after it takes you five minutes to log in or five minutes to sign up for registration, then the odds are in our favor. It's going to it's harder for you to keep coming back in under a different name, if we can really wipe you off the system pretty quickly, if you act up.

So, in our case, registration is just a tool that we think, sort of, puts us at an advantage gives us the lead, in terms of fighting that war.

ROBERT RIVARD: OK. Jim Brady. Thank you.

[applause]

We will jump to Juan Carlos, because he is also going up to the podium and using technology, and our other two panelists are going to speak from their chairs. So, Juan Carlos, take it away.

JUAN CARLOS LUJN ZAVALA: OK. Well. Thank you very much for the invitation. I am really proud to be here, because this is the first time that I am at this university, and an important panel. So, I am going to talk about a story that begins in our news room, the web edition. And then I'm going to the movie.

If you don't believe it, I tell you something. There is an old expression in our university, Universidad de Lima, where people said or students said that if a professor shows a movie in a classroom, that means that he didn't prepare the class.

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[laughter] In this case, in this case, I'm going to show a film, but don't worry. This is the result of a campaign that we began two months ago. If you don't believe it, let's see some seconds of this

[The video plays. Dramatic music. At a party, an enormous spider appears and is photographed by a guest. The image appears on a website, under the heading "Galeria fotografica." Brief lines in Spanish. Tagline: WWW.ELCOMERCIOPERU.COM.PE]

[laughter]

As you may see, our brand and newspaper now wants to be is very interested in what we are doing now, with citizen journalists.

[An audience member makes an inaudible comment regarding El Comercio]

No. I forgot to tell you that. OK. This commercial, this type of advertisement is going to appear on TV and on cinemas in our country. And the message is very clear: anybody could be a citizen reporter. But don't worry, because readers don't compete with us. They are our partners right now, in this new way of participative journalism.

As you may know, citizen journalists is growing in all the world, but with different [motives]. In some countries, there are editors and citizen reporters that receive a pay for their jobs. In others, the readers participate, writing for us on the web, commenting articles, editorials, or just sending email to the newspaper. Others create weblogs for the journalists, and in some cases, reinforce this tendency with external links to weblogs, photo blogs, and video blogs.

In our case, we work with photography. Here is why. We say that for me, as an editor, it is the most easy way to validate and certificate an information in the news room. We are thirteen journalists, working every day against the time, the comments of our readers we have a filter, and we need to monitor all the comments. And some sector of the print edition that don't like what we are doing with readers.

But if this is not the only true. Here is an example of what we are doing now with let's see how this works. [He is navigating the computer station, for the visual aid] Come on, come on OK, there is. This is the web edition. OK. View full OK. This is the This is an example of citizen reporter. This is a photograph, in Lima. And we publish in the website. But also the print edition, like this kind of photographs. Ah Here I have some examples. OK. There is For example, this is the print edition, a page of the print edition. And now, the newspaper is included. Each Sunday, a photograph from our readers. In this case, this is a picture of a motorcyclist with her her baby.

[Someone makes the comment that the photo caption, in Spanish, notes the absence of a motorcycle helmet]

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She doesn't wear a helmet, yeah. We are writing that, in the Spanish. "Where's the helmet?" For that girl.

Another example we have here; this is the first time that the newspaper opened ah, put an editorial, in the front page of the newspaper. And we create a forum, and the people begins to comment, and in two days we received more than 2,000 of comments about our editorial, related with the next generalizations that we were going to have on Sunday.

So we create three groups: people that analyze, people that approve our editorial as you may see the check and people that criticize. Very critical, with the editorial. So the newspaper recognizes, and they told us to create that face for the print edition. Also, one day later, they said please create one more page for us because this is important for our readers. So, as you may see, this is the front page of the newspaper, the editorial, and here are the comments. With the same scenario. Analyzing, approving, and criticizing our editorial.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Did this run in the newspaper? Or is this a separate [inaudible]?

JUAN CARLOS LUJN ZAVALA: No, run in the newspaper. Only the newspaper.

[An audience member makes an inaudible comment]

JUAN CARLOS LUJN ZAVALA: He decided. Director decided to open their papers to the web. For the first time. So. This is very amazing, because we are a country that has an economy that is, just, growing since 2002. The GDP per capita is \$6,100 dollars per year. And 54% of the population lives below poverty line. That's why only 4.3 computers are in home for each 100 citizens. The connectivity

AUDIENCE MEMBER: A quick comment: do people have access to the Internet in other [inaudible]?

JUAN CARLOS LUJN ZAVALA: Ah, here it comes. Well, this is in Spanish, but most of the access it's not from home. It's from we public access, from places that are called "cabinas de Internet," where you pay thirty cents of dollars and you can use the computer for one hour. So.

Instead of that, the connectivity is going up, since last year. The total is less than a million half a million. More than half a million. But with this public access cabinas Internet we have about five millions of persons that use the Internet in Peru. OK. This is can somebody come help me? [referring, again, to the computer station] Amy? To grow this

[Inaudible comment from the audience, perhaps offering instruction]

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OK. OK. There it is. Thank you. OK. We create a poll, for this event, on our web edition. The results were very amazing. OK. Most of our readers, on the web edition, are between are men here. 66.95%. Most are men. And between 20 and 40 years old. Number three you see? Here. And they know what is citizen journalists 78%. Because they read El Comercio. [laughter]

El Comercio is the most important newspaper in Peru. It was founded in 1849, and it is like an institution in our country. That is the reason. They believe that the weblog, or the photo blogs, gives value for the citizen journalists. About 78%. And they consider that sending photographs is better than write, or comments on articles. 47% consider that, here.

Number seven: they say that they always want to take pictures in the street, because they consider that there are important things in the city. And 86%, until now, didn't collaborate with El Comercio. With the citizen reporting. And they prefer to use the camera, instead of the telephone.

And this is important for us, here. They say that the most important thing to read a newspaper is mixing information from the newspaper and collaboration from the readers. It's about 71% that believes in the mix between the role of the journalists and the readers. This is why I say that citizen journalists is enough [worth saving], for us.

The statistics, here let's see. The statistics show that the page views goes up since we began this process, in January 10th. Here, you can see [he indicates a particularly high bar on the graph], this bar, it happened when Pope John Paul died, in 2004. And now, in March, we're just trying to to we just, we can't pass that. But we are approaching to that statistic, to that number. And in April, we're supposed to gain that record. Because this was a record for our newspaper, last year. When the pope dies. For us. But using the citizen journalists, as you can see 2004, 2005, and 2006, we are going up. Only working with citizen journalists.

We took some ideas from the Internet. Remember that guy, who sells one pixel per dollar and he makes one million dollars? OK. Well, we take that idea, and we create San Valentin Day, where people where readers send their picture to us, and we publish. People from all the world, that live in different places, send pictures for that day, San Valentin Day. Using 120 by 120 pixels.

And also, we create this one which is called "First Day of Classes." Where kids, from all this country, including from other countries, were part of this album. Photographs from our readers. I don't know if they read the print edition, but I'm sure that they read our web edition. [laughter] So.

Our next steps. A new design, we are bringing in a new design, to create more interactive space for the readers; rating news, comments; subscriptions to read the print edition; video reporters, too, we are planning video reporters, too; more 120

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by 120 pixels for example, the day of the mother, Christmas, anything. And a community of podcasters, with Evoca.

Does anybody know Evoca? Yeah it has just three weeks. Yeah. Evoca It's a new program, free, where you can create a podcast. But it's very easy to create a podcast here. The program converts your computer in our records. So you can put some archive these archives, audio. And you can, right in your computer. And this is like Flipp you can create community, contacts. So we are going to create a club of podcasters from El Comercio. Trying to obtain reports for example, some kind of presentations of poems, literature. This is free for us. So. This is why we say that this is worth saving for us. This is fascinating.

We work with one person with the citizen journalists, he every day checks all the photographs, and call the reader or send an email to check the information, so we don't publish if we don't validate the information. The decision to publish is by consensus with our team, not with the print edition.

And this is what we are doing right now. So, thanks for all.

ROBERT RIVARD: Thank you, Juan Carlos. Would anybody like to ask Juan Carlos a question, before he sits down? Sir?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, Juan, I noticed that cell phone usage was pretty high in the stats that you were showing. Are you delivering the news by through cell phone?

JUAN CARLOS LUJN ZAVALA: Yeah. This program actually has a service, an additional service, where you can make your conversation using Skype. But if you buy the service, you can have sixty minutes to make. So you can make an interview using Skype. Now we are doing that, making interviews using the Skype. It's more cheaper. If you call to a foreign country.

ROBERT RIVARD: Juan Carlos, before we move on, do the indigenous communities in Peru have any access to the Internet? Is that a way for them to connect with El Comercio, or vice versa, in a way you might never have done with a print product?

JUAN CARLOS LUJN ZAVALA: Yeah. Our We have five groups, A, B, C, D, and E, also. And most of our readers came from A, B, and C. And they use, in some cases, the cabinas Internet. These public places to connect to the Internet. You can pay thirty cents of dollar, and you have one hour of connectivity. This is a, like a small business, for a lot of people. They don't have jobs, but they rent computers. And that's Lima and most of the cities in Peru has all the [inaudible] were Internet. The countryside, the jungle, the coast you can see that work. It's the most easy way to get connectivity in South America, in Peru. So.

ROBERT RIVARD: Well, thank you very much. Scott, from Chron.com.

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SCOTT CLARK: What I'd like to do is talk a little bit about [the microphone is adjusted] That's as far as it will go. All right, I've got stereo now.

What I'd like to do is talk a little bit about the practical experience that our editors and reporters have had with interaction with readers some of it good, some of it a little bit scary. We have thirty staff blogs on the site today. And the blogs themselves are edited, but the comments that are posted by readers are managed by the individual blog authors.

And one of the biggest objections that we had at the outset from reporters approached about doing blogs is that there was going to be too much overhead, in managing these comments. But what we found is it's just the opposite: that reporters are much more concerned when they don't get comments. And they've been calling our blog editor and, you know, "What's wrong with me? What am I doing? Why don't people like me?" [laughter] And we purpose we put that in the hands of the reporters, because first of all we wanted a filter there.

But I think even the bigger reason is, we wanted to force them to actually read the comments. Because we had a feeling, if we just set up a blog and let the comments roll in, that the reporters wouldn't really pay that much attention to them. Some of them, on rare occasions, had problems handling the criticism that comes from readers. We had the journalism equivalent, with one reporter, of someone running up in the stands in the NBA and confronting a reader. And we talked to them, and we talked to all the reporters, about taking the high road: responding to comments constructively. But if people just want to have a [inaudible], just letting them have their say and not necessarily responding to them.

We've also found that, in a lot of cases, that the audience really polices a lot of those things for us. We had a situation where a band of roving jazz enthusiasts had attacked our local band blogger for the paper's poor coverage of that subject, and what happened was just this deluge of people coming on to the blog and shouting them down, and eventually it became very constructive; some of them came on and apologized. We eventually the blogger did an online chat with one of the people about the local jazz community, and the end result of all that is we're doing a better job of covering jazz. And it's raised its profile for us.

We have to, you know, occasionally remind reporters that they're having a public discussion. I think there was a problem, years ago when email first became a big reporting tool, where somebody would email a reporter a question about something, and they'd say, "Oh, I couldn't put this in my story, but you wouldn't believe X, Y, Z." They have to keep in mind that whatever they write is not only going to end up on our site, but frequently it ends up on other sites as well.

The interaction has had, I think, a tremendous impact on reporting. The interaction a typical interaction for, I think, for a reporter with an audience is maybe a once-a-month letter to the editor, or primarily discussions with their sources or other

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reporters. Those are the basic feedback mechanisms that I think we have, as journalists, typically. And by putting the audience in the mix, I think it's been a real shock for a lot of the reporters, on what it is that people read and want to read. And it's changed what they're writing about.

We had a we have a fellow who covers science on the site. And among his audience are NASA, literal NASA rocket scientists, and medical researchers, and the impact of knowing that you're writing to these guys, and they're holding you accountable for what you're writing, and if you make a little mistake that probably wouldn't find its way into the corrections of the newspaper, because we never even would know about it, because people wouldn't take the time to send it there's now a lot of back-and-forth, and it's really I think changed the way reporters think when they sit down and write.

And it changes what they write, too. That reporter is doing a lot of writing about embryonic stem cells. And what he got a lot of feedback on was... there's been a lot of work done on adult stem cells. And it was a subject that really hadn't come up as much on his radar. And so it, kind of, changed the dialogue. And whereas he normally would come to work each day and decide, "OK, this is what I'm going to write about today," in many cases now, he's hearing from his audience what he's going to write about that day. And I think that's a real positive development.

People talk about engaging readers; it also builds a relationship between the writer and the audience that they don't have as a newspaper writer. Our science reporter, during Hurricane Katrina and Rita, was blogging every five minutes about where the storm is, or what the impact is, and at the end of that process, we had people coming on the site you'd have thought this guy had carried people out of high water on his shoulders. It's the kind of enthusiasm that you normally see people reserve for TV weathermen. But it's something that I think has been a real tonic for a lot of the reporters.

I'd just like to talk, just very briefly, about sort of the flip side, and that's where we're using the audience as reporters. And our first big effort with this was during Hurricane Katrina and Rita, where we had bloggers along the coast of Texas spread out, reporting on what the conditions were, what was happening in their neighborhoods; it enabled us to cover the story in a way that we couldn't, because I didn't have twelve reporters online that I could spread out along the coast of Texas. And they not only said, "Hey, here's what the wind speed is doing; here's oh, the port-a-potty just blew over out in front of my house." They also provided good information about, you know, "Gasoline is becoming unavailable." Where is it available? What's happening with grocery stores?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How'd you find those guys? To blog for you?

SCOTT CLARK: We did it in a couple ways. We approached some existing bloggers, because they kind of knew the hardware, and then we also put a call on

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our site and some existing blogs, saying, "We're looking at this experiment." And we heard back from people, and the quality of it was surprisingly good.

In some cases, people put the journalism hat on a little too strongly, [laughter] and they one fellow went on and talked about how this company was driven into bankruptcy because of Hurricane Katrina. And, of course, it had nothing to do with it. But I would say that, with our reader blogs, we don't edit them at all. So once we turn them over, they're on their own. And that's, sort of, the hazards of it.

We also used reader blogs to cover to give us perspectives we can't get ourselves. So, during the Rose Bowl, we had a UT student who was taking the classic college road trip to the West Coast, and stopping at the Grand Canyon and having a picture taken and so on. And it's been a long time since any of us at the paper has gone on one of those, kind of, classic college road trips. And so it brought a connection with the audience that, perhaps, we couldn't do ourselves.

We also had an evacuee from New Orleans who blogged the whole process; he was a teacher who had lost connection with his students. And it was a very poignant tale of him looking for his students, and finding them and not finding them, and then talking about his return to the city.

The one last way that we're using reader blogs in news is to, really, empower readers. In our Enron coverage, we've got I think six attorneys who are blogging the trial, about what they think about it. And they have all different points of view on that. Now, as a newspaper, we could go out and find the same six guys, and every couple of days go and interview them, and then we'd sift through their quotes, choose what we wanted, and kind of put our spin on it. I think it's brought a lot of credibility for us, allowing readers to just have their own say about that. And I think that lack of filter has also enriched our coverage, and there are some things that some angles that, perhaps, we wouldn't have developed that our audience did.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you think that those blogs increased your traffic [inaudible]?

SCOTT CLARK: Yeah, sure. The question is whether our blogs have increased traffic to the Enron story. Absolutely. We're doing, probably, about 1.3, 1.4 million page views of our basic Enron coverage a month, and about two-thirds or about a third of that total is accounted for by blog traffic.

ROBERT RIVARD: It might be worth noting, on Enron, particularly for people outside of Texas, that the story itself the trial has been something of a bust for traditional media, and outside of Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, it's not making the front page in very many places. But your reporter's blog about what's happening inside the courtroom has become a must-read, appointment kind of blog, and it's activated the community that's interested in Enron it isn't finding provocative stuff on the front page, but it's reading it in there, that they've become very interactive with her. And it's something I've noticed from San Antonio that's worked very well,

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where traditional media's kind of been disappointed and let down, and we haven't really been able to build much audience on the Enron trial.

SCOTT CLARK: It's very good for us.

[Audience member asks an inaudible question]

SCOTT CLARK: By "commercialized," you mean advertising on our blog? We have Google links on all our blogs. Not a lot of money, but a little bit. I shouldn't say "Google links." Chron links, which is our own brand of that product. [laughter]

We also have we're also starting to sell sponsorships on blogs of interest. Now, those are right now, those are just staff blogs. You know, we have a "Shop Girl" blog of a woman who has a job we've had thousands of applicants for since we started it. But she basically goes around and visits stores and talks about trends, and that blog's been sold out ever since we launched it.

For the reader blogs, you know, it's a little bit of a sensitive question. I mean, right now, we have those prime links on there, but we are not selling advertising on there. Now, as we grow that blog audience, that reader blog audience, one of the questions is you know if we do find a way to commercialize it, how we potentially share some of that revenue with those that are driving it. And we're probably going to be looking at some kind of a tier of traffic that people are generating, and at that level we may provide some kind of either direct or indirect compensation.

ROBERT RIVARD: OK. Thank you, Scott.

[applause]

Let's bring Fred Zipp into the conversation, and hear from our host newspaper and website, and then we'll go into a full Q and A.

FRED ZIPP: Thank you. Thank you, Bob.

At the American-Statesman, we started reader blogs which is what I'm going to talk, very briefly, about last fall, in September. The effort was geared around a local music festival, Austin City Limits Festival, and the idea was to invest readers in describing which of the 120 or so acts that were going to appear at the festival were worth seeing, and which were not, and to provide real-time reviews of the event. We had been in discussions with a local company, and then first discussion, and then working with a local company called Pluck, to build a platform that would allow us to do these reader blogs.

And our notion was not a brilliant one. It was: people like to talk. These social sites, blogging sites, are getting a lot of traffic. Wouldn't it be nice if some of those folks were coming to the Austin American-Statesman, so that we could build audience that way?

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In the news room, we also wondered whether something interesting would happen journalistically whether people would emerge who had the same skills, or approximation of the skills, that we require of reporters or somehow, we could cultivate people who showed some aptitude in that respect.

We decided, from the beginning, that it would be totally unfiltered. There's a warning on the "Create a Blog" page that there are certain rules; the rules are enforced by complaint; the rules are very similar to the comment rules that you saw on the Washington Post page there: no profanity, no direct attacks, respect other people's respect other people, basically. And, surprisingly to me, at least people have pretty much played by the rules. We have only had to cancel, because of a complaint, one out of something like 750 blogs that have been created in the last little more than five months. And that was for, just, excessive excessive exploration of the blogger's intimate life, let's say. [laughter] We became a little offended. Of course, they didn't have to read; but they did.

I looked, yesterday, at the topics that people were blogging on, and they were not really surprising. There was a political candidate, trashing his opponent. There was one, actually, that was surprising: a fairly detailed, sort of, rumination on death and grieving. But then there was also an entry on the UT softball team, which was number one in the nation until it just lost a game. A lot of talk about bluebonnets. And if you're not from Texas, that may seem mysterious, but this time of year, bluebonnets are a big deal in Texas. Here, it's been very dry; it's hard to find bluebonnets. So there's one person out there who actually is doing reporting on bluebonnets, without being asked at all, and will every now and then file a blog updating where the pretty bluebonnets are, so people can go take pictures of their kids in the bluebonnets which, of course, we then ask them to post.

[Audience member makes an inaudible comment]

We do need a mash-up. That's exactly right. There was somebody giving tax tips, timely advice and then there was also a person going on about the evils of toll roads, which is another big topic in central Texas. Excuse me just a second.

As I said, in a little over five months, since we've been running the blogs, we've had 750 created. About 11% of them, a little more than 11% of them, were active in the last 30 days. We've had a total of just short of 400,000 page views in that time. So, you know, it's good traffic. It pales in comparison to dog picture galleries, but which is still respectable.

And most importantly, serving an important excuse me, that paper making that noise serving an important function, in that it does give people a chance to feel like they're invested in the website. I'm not telling you anything you don't know when I say these blogs work really well for opinion. You know, people express all sorts of opinions, very powerfully. And it's a medium just made for that.

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What we've found is also probably not a surprise that they're not really at all effective for producing what we would think of as "traditional journalism." And I just had this probably naive, maybe excessively idealistic, idea that there must be some way to do that. And we've spent some time, in the news room, talking about how we might get people involved in the journalistic endeavor.

I think the best way to do it is something along the lines of what Scott is talking about, where you're asking people to just gather facts for you. For example, last night there was a hailstorm that rolled through the area; we could've asked people, "How big was the hail? Was it golf ball? Was it baseball? Was it pineapple?" And done a mash-up. You know? We could have gotten the data and graphed it some way. If we could figure out a way to get people to tell us where they hit gridlock on certain streets, in real-time, and were able to map that, people would get on their PDAs, you map the gridlock that would be a great service. We'd get a lot of traffic, if you'll pardon the expression, and we'd have little difficulty investing people in the enlisting people in the cause. But we don't have, at least at this point, at the Austin American-Statesman, is a tool that would allow us to do that quickly.

I think the next step is that you find an issue that people are really passionately interested about, and you sort of guide them through the process of doing the reporting. One example that occurred to me: in Texas I feel like I have to give you a little primer on Texas in Texas, there are very many school districts in each county. There are 200 counties, 254 counties, well over 10,000 I believe it is school districts. Very small, some of them. But there's a there are debates that go on in each of them. One is the debate between the amount of money dedicated to the education of people with one sort or another of disability, and the amount of money that is spent on the football team. And, in particular, on the coach's salary. [laughter] And this is, literally, a topic that has come up at three or four school districts in our area, and we probably have fifteen school districts in the in our circulation area. So, one possibility would be to go to a parent of a disabled child in each of those school districts, and give them a set of questions to ask, show them what a public information request looks like, give them access to a database, and have them fill the you know populate the database for us.

Ultimately, I think, it would probably be less efficient than a reporter doing it. But it might, it might somehow again further that sense of community. And it certainly would be an interesting experiment. I think the grail, for me, at least, would be if all those tools were out on the website all the time, and somehow people with passionate interests could find each other, perhaps through these social relationship engines, determine the questions they want to answer, divide up the work, graph it on the website, and then write a story. And then, you know, we're out of the process entirely, and maybe good journalism is happening. So I'll leave it to the really smart, technical people to come up with the tools to make that happen, because I certainly don't have the wherewithal.

And as far as the Rich and Fred blog goes, it was started in March of 2005 I don't think we were the first, Bob. I think Doug Clifton of the Cleveland Plain Dealer was

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doing it long before we were. He also stopped long before we were, and I think for about we did, and I think for about the same reason, which is: blogging well requires discipline and consistency. And we weren't very good at those two characteristics. [laughter]

ROBERT RIVARD: I'm glad to hear you say that, in some ways, because there were many of us editors elsewhere who logged on daily to see what you were writing, feeling a tremendous sense of guilt [laughter] that we hadn't quite embraced blogging ourselves, and wondering how you were doing your day jobs.

FRED ZIPP: We weren't. [laughter]

ROBERT RIVARD: And I think the answer is that you found out what community bloggers have found out, which is that doing journalism takes time, brains, talent, training, resources, and and you can't often do both.

And I think, in the case of community blogs, they've added a wonderful new dimension and richness to what we do, particularly online, so that we can get past this era of just mirroring our print products online. But they really aren't, fundamentally, changing the equation of journalistic inquiry in our communities, and content-gathering in that respect.

FRED ZIPP: Correct.

ROBERT RIVARD: Well, I think we really want people to line up to the microphone, for posterity here, because you'll be on camera. And we're going to open it up to

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: Millions of people are watching!

ROBERT RIVARD: Millions are watching. We're ah are we podcasting?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So, I'm just curious to know is this working? I'm curious to know just, from each of you and if it didn't apply to you, then you don't need to answer have you had cases, with the community blogs, or just any kind of contributed content, where somebody obviously has an agenda, and they just keep pushing their own agenda, and kind of bending facts in their direction? And if so and what I'm thinking of is, like, a politician, someone with a business, with a vested interested in something, and trying to kind of change this, effect truth? And bend it, you know, in their favor? And if so, has that been a problem? Or are you not concerned about it? And if it is a problem, how did you deal with it?

ROBERT RIVARD: I hope that we can all take a crack at that, I think. I haven't said anything today about MySanAntonio.com, the website for the Express News in San Antonio, but we have about 35 staff blogs that are active, and more community blogs 50 plus. And if they're not active, I don't think we continue to carry them.

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And when we first started linking to the community blogs, I got very similar emails from all of them: sheer delight at the increase in their traffic, and the variety of their traffic. They were no longer just preaching to the choir; they were starting to get more.

But what happened very quickly is, those particularly the political zealots it fell right off. People stopped going; they weren't interested. We have one guy on our website, "All Things Conservative" he used to call himself the Alamo Commando, but he's tried to moderate [laughter] his sole task in life is on behalf of the Bush administration, was to bash our newspaper, and at the same time, develop a blog as a media critic. And I think what he quickly found out is that he was a political zealot, and unless he wanted to do serious media criticism, he wasn't going to get anyone else except the zealots into his forum.

And so, by bringing him under the tent, as it were, and linking to our worst critic, he is moderated tremendously over a period of time, and now is all about audience-building writes positively about things the newspaper does. Still reverts, on occasion, to being the Bush spokesperson, but more and more is getting away from that.

JIM BRADY: We had one situation It's one thing when people pose as Karl Rove and they write "the Bush administration rocks!" I mean, you know that's a joke, right?

But we have had a local town supervisor someone write under the name of a local town supervisor, weighing in very soberly on issues of development and traffic, and have had that town supervisor say, "That's not me." But there so it's actually much more damaging when someone is really trying to pull the wool over your eyes. So. So we have to we keep a very clear eye. That's why one of our rules is, if you pose under a name that's clearly a public figure, we take it down generally, because public figures generally we have not had a lot of cases where public figures have responded in the comments area of blogs. They've sometimes called about what's in them, but they don't generally post. So we keep a close eye on names, especially in a case like this; the blog was about the town of the county of Fairfax. And this was the Fairfax county supervisor. So that was one case.

We've had accusations in our DC politics blog that one of the people who was com who always continually rips one of the candidates, the candidate who's being ripped all the time is telling us that the guy who was posting the comments is his opponent. But it's, kind of, one of those more accusation than, yeah, than And we can't, because of we've not been able to check the or, the IP address lookup has not been effective in that case, for reasons which are far too complicated.

SCOTT CLARK: Our philosophy is similar. As long as somebody is complying with our basic terms of service, you know, we would let them have their say on the site. If somebody had a blog that like I said before is a screed, you know, we'll let them scream in their quiet little room, and we just won't promote it on the site. It'll be in a nice, dark little corner.

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JUAN CARLOS LUJN ZAVALA: We don't have blogs in the newspaper. But what we do is, we recommend some blogs from our readers. Especially from Peru area. Because we should more journalists that validate and certificate that this blogger is, that blogger is really working with the truth. Because we always, in the newspaper, try to defend some values. Especially their credibility.

FRED ZIPP: My answer's similar to the others you've heard. We have a set of fairly basic rules, and we enforce those by complaint. We don't monitor the blogs for campaigns, or truthfulness, or or whatnot.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is for the entire panel. Are you seeing that your reporters are having a harder time opening up with the public? The panel before you was saying that the reporters were having a hard time dealing with the public, instead of public officials.

FRED ZIPP: Ah no. No, I haven't noticed that problem, actually. I think most good reporters most reporters, really enjoy the contact, and enjoy even the sparring, in some way. And I've not noticed that problem.

JUAN CARLOS LUJN ZAVALA: We just, but only with the print edition reporters. I came from the print edition, about ten years ago. But we only need to train these people to talk, to talk every day, to make sense about this new opportunity to work.

ROBERT RIVARD: One of the things I'd like to point out that's happened with blogs it involves both community journalism and staff journalism is that the reporters at our newspaper, three to four or five years ago, all went through a culture change over whether they were going to answer email. And I think, once they found out that they didn't have to respond to the usual suspects, they didn't have to engage people that were uncivil, that they embraced it.

The reporters who blog particularly business reporters, who are on beats like the Toyota beat, where there's a huge amount of interest in "Can I get a job at this new car factory?" Or the Volero, or AT&T beat, where you have thousands of people inside who have no effective means of communicating with the media, and we no longer have any effective way of reaching them.

There is such a corporate seal around how business is conducted these days, that these blogs have opened things up for reporters with employees. And, in that sense, people who are in the trenches are engaging in community journalism by telling our beat reporters things that we wouldn't otherwise know that, in turn, turns into journalism, both in the print product and online. So, in that respect, I think reporters are starting to find out that they're able to drill down deeper, because of blogs, than they were before.

JIM BRADY: One thing I'd throw in there, too, is that the rise of blogs has also put us into this society where we're always on the record, now. Journalists are always on the record. And I think that, probably, has helped the tenor of the email debate

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some. Because five years ago, if somebody sent you a nasty email, you might just fire something back saying, you know, "Go do whatever you want to yourself."
[laughter] Fill in the blank. But nowadays, reporters have to be very careful about how they get it's much better to ignore things like that than to fire something back like that, because five minutes later, it's up on somebody's blog.

I mean, this has happened with our ombudsman last week; she was in Minneapolis, talking to a group of twelve people, I think, and somebody asked her about this controversy we had recently about a blogger we brought on, who turned out to be a problem, and she said it was an effing disaster. Which wasn't helpful, but maybe not inaccurate, but certainly not helpful. And she didn't realize one of the people of these twelve was blogging, and two days you know, five minutes later, this is up on a blog somewhere, and she's got us apologizing to the entire Post news room for, you know, going to a conference and not only dropping the F-bomb, but saying something that probably would have been better kept in the building. So, I do think this "always on the record" environment has probably helped keep the reporter/reader conversation more civil than in might have been five years ago.

ROBERT RIVARD: Jim, we're probably a little late but is anyone blogging?
[laughter] OK. Great.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What you just brought up, about the employees inside these big corporations since I teach at a university sort of like this one, in another state, and I work with people who teach public relations I mean, they're my colleagues down the hall. Well, they're all really, really, really interested in blogs.

And, of course, the corporations now corporations have their own public blogs, that you've probably seen. But, you know, public relations people are just as smart as journalists. And so the idea that a corporation can have a blog that looks like it's from an employee, but maybe it's spin right? I mean, how are you guys going to deal with that? How are you going to know when a blog is really a blog and when it's PR? Because, I mean, some of them are going to be smart enough to cover that up.

ROBERT RIVARD: Scott, that sounds like a question for you. [laughter]

SCOTT CLARK: Well, the first thing I'd say is PR people are people, too, and so [laughter], you know, we would welcome a blog like that on the site. Again, you know, we're not going to particularly feature that blog. And, again, it's going to be subject to our terms of service, and included in there is, essentially, a blog spam provision, so if we feel, or we get complaints, that a corporate blog has crossed over into being an advertisement, you know, we would take it down, or take those posts down.

But, generally speaking, I think the premise of all this is: you've got this big marketplace, and you sort of let the marketplace figure out what they want to believe. You may come on and do a blog for company X, and there may be someone

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else come on and do the equivalent of "company X is F" kind of thing. And again, as long as you're both playing within the rules, you know, we let you have your say.

JIM BRADY: I think we've decided you know, there's always going to be a couple of actors who may have ulterior motives for everything they do. And we, kind of, feel like we'd rather do these large, community-based projects and deal with the two or three percent that are problematic than not do them, so we just assume that there's always going to be some percentage of garbage in anything you do, and try to deal with it when it surfaces.

But but, you know, we talked a lot about this blog controversy a couple months ago. Our experience with opening up the site to users has been 99% positive, and in fact, in the year before we had this Abramoff blog thing, we'd only removed about 75, 80 comments total, on the entire site, over the course of a year, without registration. So, I mean, these communities have built up on the site very, very effectively, without a lot of moderation. So. And when blogs are bad, or when commenters are bad, people have a pretty good BS detector, and they tend to get starved of oxygen, essentially.

ROBERT RIVARD: I think that's a good point. Probably I'm not the only one that read with interest on the Poynter site a week or so ago, about the Cincinnati Enquirer's blogger from Iraq I think her name is Grandma from Iraq who turned out, I believe, to be a public relations person with the US Army, which was never disclosed to users. And, if I were the editor of the Cincinnati Enquirer, my own view on that would be, "I don't care about how much traffic she drove; in the end, that's a real negative thing for the newspaper, and its reputation, to have been caught at not disclosing that," and the end result would probably be the end of that blog, and a lot of work ahead of you to recover your reputation. So the marketplace does put the "smell test" on everything that's out there, whether we produce it or someone else does. And I think that's going to keep us honest.

One more question, and then we'll wrap up. We didn't start on time; we're going to finish on time. We're pretty close to it. Last question? Comment? Yes sir.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'll ask one. For those you that have staff blogs

[Another audience member makes an inaudible comment presumably, asking the questioner to approach the microphone]

ROBERT RIVARD: It's your image we want.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: For those of you that have staff blogs, when a reporter is posting and this is a question for all of you who have staff blogs when a reporter is posting, is there another set of eyes looking at the post before it's published?

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ROBERT RIVARD: We call that the "light edit" in our newsroom, and that's what we do. And most reporters know to draw our attention to "you'd better read this one closely;" otherwise, if it's routine, it pretty much goes through the pipeline.

JIM BRADY: It depends on the blog. We have Bill Arkin, writing about military affairs that one we put two edits on before it goes live, you know. Someone at the paper, someone at the site we both look at it. If it's Joel Achenbach, kind of riffing on Katie Couric hiring, we'll put a light read on it. It just depends on the subject of the blog, and it's potential potential problems, if it's not read well. So.

ROBERT RIVARD: Well, thank you to our panelists, who came from as far as Peru and Washington, and as close as Austin and San Antonio, and [laughter] Houston, and thank you, all of you.

[applause]