

Day 1, Panel 3: The transformation of journalism from monologue to conversation – Citizens' participation in news production and dissemination

Moderator:

Jan Schaffer, Executive Director, J-Lab, University of Maryland

Panelists:

Kate Marymont, Executive Editor, (Fort Myers, FL) *News-Press*

Kyle Poplin, Executive Editor, *Bluffton Today*

Dean Betz, Online News Editor, *Houston Chronicle*

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Jan Schaffer: ...those were relationship entrepreneurs is a big emerging need in newsrooms and I think that what we see in our study, we did a number of typologies for the kinds of citizen media that are coming up and what we did is we really focused on hyper local news ventures. So we didn't do vanity blogs. We didn't do so much social networking side so though there is some social networking on these sites. Really looked at news ventures that were somewhat competitive with mainstream media. We find out they're being started by solo journalists. We find they're being started by groups of citizens who get together and sort of a cooperative arrangement and they're agree to donate 100 hours per year. Certainly there are blog aggregators in many communities and there are a lot of individual sites that have nothing to do with journalism at all. And then you have syndicated sites that are trying to sort of parlay a standard content management system around the world, like Back Fence or your hub or I think Pegasus as well. And Legacy Media is increasingly getting into this arena. *Bluffton Today*, *Northwest Voice* are trying to sometimes establish separate products that are not branded at all by the main news organization. Sometimes they are branded. There's no consistency there.

I think our research found, though, that you can really understand what's happening in this world best if you strip away the term journalism from it. I like to use the term citizen media rather than citizen journalism. And that's because what we found is by and large the content is not a news story as a journalist is trained to produce it. It doesn't have a lead and a nut graph and this site said this and that site said that. It's much more observational. It's kind of an unspooling of a story over time, with people adding to it. It may be setting up a camera and a tripod in a local council meeting and streaming the video online and making a comment about the news meeting so that the kind of content you see in this arena is very, very different. A lot of it's focused on local issues. If you're in Westport, Connecticut, it might be the old homes you're tearing down to build the mansions. It is much more like crowd sourcing that Kate will talk about. If you're a Voice of San Diego, they have a "this just in" feature in which reporters post one or two sentences about a breaking news

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story and invite the community to add to it. Sometimes it's a smart-alecky, irreverent voice and a lot of times it's about civic activism.

I think our research showed very much that some of the defining attributes in this space are a lot more inclusiveness. Get the gadflies at the council meeting that mainstream journalists really don't want to talk to, as well as other concerned people in your community who have a lot of knowledge. A lot more intimacy in this space. A lot of naked caring and passion for the community and I think that for mainstream media this is a high bar for us to meet because I think that journalists don't do naked caring and passion very well. That is a squirm zone for most of us. Sometimes humor and a lot of civic engagement. And I think that if you, if this is a trend story, the nut graph of our trend story will be as you've heard in previous panels is a growing architecture of participation that's being constructed and it's very much serving culture of contribution. People want to be able to contribute in some way.

A report is out in the table, you can read more about it. Key finding is that citizen media is much emerging as sort of a bridge median. It's linking two different things. It's linking standard news. We serve classic civic participation and civic activism. This is an aspiration for life to go well in these communities and people who are involved in this space want to help make it go well. It's not just news. It's a fusion of news and schmooze is what we call it. It's a very different kind of animal. They don't measure success the same way that mainstream media organizations measure it. They don't particularly count page views and numbers of visitors and they don't make money so they're not really counting revenue. Very much they do look at community impact. In most cases we find people reporting that they don't need to make money, they'd like to make money, but that's not going to make the difference between whether they continue or not. And they do expect to continue.

So they're very shoe string operations. Mostly the founders are applying the start up costs and paying the annual server fees. They'd love to be able to pay a token amount to their contributors but more than 51% said, "You know, if we don't make money we're not going to stop." Very little accountability in this arena. 60% of those, and by the way our methodology we did 31 in depth interviews of a diverse set of sites and then we did an online survey that we've pushed to the 500 known sites we could identify. And it's snowballed a little from there but we've got 191 responses, which is pretty high response rate.

60% said that on their sites they don't require real names, are often, more than 70% said you don't even have to have a valid email or registration. So there's not a lot of accountability in that area. Yet they said, for the most part, there were minimal problems. You could intervene as an individual operator of the site and tell someone to dial back or get off if they're misbehaving. They didn't see bad behavior as an insurmountable challenge.

We said, "Okay, you're not making money. You're not really counting your readers. You don't have a lot of readership. Are you successful?" And 73% said, "Yes, we are successful." And so we said, "Well, why?" And they really identified again and again certain layers of community impact that they perceive they were having in their community. They really felt like they were creating opportunities for dialogue, they were building connections, they were goosing local media to be a little more proactive, to post more regularly to their web sites, to cover more aggressively news in their community. There were many instances, growing up in areas that there

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were no other available media, so they were providing news and information that wasn't available elsewhere. And they even, several of them, said, "You know, we've increased candidates running for office in part because before we existed nobody knew there are positions to be filled until we reported them. So we're increasing who is running for office and we're increasing voter turnout in some areas."

We said, "Okay, as a shoestring operation, you're not making any money, you have a day job, you know? How long are you going to continue this as a free labor of love?" And 82% said, "Indefinitely. As long as I live here, I plan to keep going with this. You know, I feel good about it. It's the best thing I've done in my life. I have no plans to stop."

I do think that for mainstream media, you have to figure out where you want to be in this space because there's a lot of what I would call schizophrenia happening with mainstream news organizations. In one instance you have McClatchy buying Fresno Famous, which was launched by an individual, Jarah Houston, in her community. And yet the same chain in the Twin Cities declines to have anything to do with the *Twin Cities Daily Planet*, which was started by one of its own staff members. And in fact that staff member emailed over the weekend and said he just took a buy out and he is now going to go with *T.C. Daily Planet* as his full-time job and full-time passion. So it's really astounding to see the different responses among traditional news organizations.

We see, we funded the Great Lakes Wiki, which is a project of Michigan State's Knight Center for Environmental Journalism, and it was a, they were really struck at the unwelcome response in the environmental journalism community who they basically said, "How dare a J. school launch a wiki that wasn't verified with information and environmental journalism?" There was no feeling that this could maybe be another listening post for these environmental journalists.

And finally at New West, which covers about 11 hub cities in the Rocky Mountains region, there are some local newspapers in that region that absolutely forbid their reporters to write for NewWest.net, even though it will drive traffic to the local news organization's web site. And in one instance one of the high level executives of the local paper has been identified as a troll on the New West site. So you need to be really, really careful how you want to play in this space because you probably won't stay in the closet for long.

We, in launching the Knight Citizen News Network, we really need it to be both an aid for citizen journalists as well as mainstream journalists that want to get in this space. We have a feature that says what we like and cool things are happening around the country. You can search in your own backyard and find out what citizen media sites already exist so that rather than reinvent the wheel, maybe you want to collaborate or partner with them, you can search by state. Soon you'll be able to search by typology. A lot of learning modules here, Dan Gillmor and J.D. Lassica created a whole very deep section on principles of citizen journalism and a lot of how-tos. Hmm, corrupted the URL but it's [inaudible].org.

And I am going to wrap it up there and introduce Kate Marymont, who is I think one of the most innovative editors of a daily newspaper happening right now. And I think that she will tell us both about crowd sourcing, which is her way of helping get some citizen input into her newspaper. Come on, I'm going to pull this up here. There you go.

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Kate Marymont: Is this working? If I attach it? Just like magic, wow! Cool. Yes, I was invited here today to talk about crowd sourcing, which is just one technique that we're using down in southwest Florida, Fort Myers, Florida, to get citizens involved with us, to do the network journalism that Jeff Jarvis was talking about earlier today. But, and I have some slides and some thoughts I want to share but before I get into that I want to take just a second and talk about our mobile journalism program because it's come up here several times today and I hadn't intended to talk about that. So I don't have any slides about it but let me tell you quickly about our mobile journalism program because that was the starting point for us in citizen journalism.

A couple of years ago we knew, we were hearing from our readers that they wanted much more hyper local content. They wanted to know what was going on in their neighborhood. You've heard that this morning several times. The way we tackled that was to divert a few staffers to, and turn them into what we call mojos or mobile journalists. That was because we wanted them in those communities, not in our office. So we loaded them up with these backpacks with everything they needed to be mobile. And Jeff Jarvis talked this morning about that Florida paper that has people work out of their cars. Well that's me and my staff. And we did start with three people out, about eighteen months ago actually, working from their cars. Actually they were working from coffee shops and schools and things like that. But we learned that it was so valuable to have them out meeting people, developing sources, getting the color that you can get when you're on the scene yourself.

It was so valuable that we started outfitting all of our bureau reporters with these kits because they were out there in the communities. So by the end of the year we had I think about twelve people outfitted. And then we thought, "you know, this, if it works for them, it should work for everyone." So we asked our parent company, Gannett, "Why don't you make all of our journalists mobile?" And we just got forty more mojo kits a couple of weeks ago. So I have 52 reporters now who are mobile. They're not all, don't get me wrong, they're not all neighborhood reporters. It's my sports reporters, my business reporters, my lifestyles reporters, my city hall reporter. The reporters are all mobile. Well, almost, I still need a few more kits for everyone to be mobile. But by in large everyone is mobile. And how we are applying that is just as example, we have spring training there in Fort Myers. The Boston Red Sox train in Fort Myers. One of the delights of working in Fort Myers and my baseball reporter, who used to go to spring training games and sit there and do the pregame and the game and the postgame and then come into the office and write his story now sits in the stadium and blogs and says, "Oh, Manny Ramirez showed up for camp today." Or, you know, "David Ortiz just hit a grand slam." Or whatever. He's updating the web site because he's there and he can be blogging. He still comes in and writes his story for the next day's newspaper. Same with our city hall reporter, same with our county commission reporter. They're all mobile, they're all feeding our web site continuously.

So our mojo program, which started with three little neighborhood reporters, has turned into a staff-wide, they're all mojos now. They're not all neighborhood reporters. So that is the evolution of mojos. And we have found that having them out, they're all armed with these cards that explain our web site and how the citizens, too, can post or can submit stuff on it. So it is making all of our reporters ambassadors out getting the amateurs involved with the professionals. It's a real pro-am approach.

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So it has, that was where we started. Our pro-am or our citizen journalism. Then we've been experimenting with lots of techniques there in Fort Myers in how to do first amendment, watchdog journalism online. I really believe that online readers, digital readers want to know what the scoundrels at city hall are doing or if their schools are deficient. They want to know the same things as print readers but they need that information differently, I believe. Their reading patterns are different.

So we've been experimenting with how to do watchdog journalism online. That led us to crowd sourcing. This was one of the experiments that we have undertaken. And I wish I had time to talk about several because we've tried lots of interesting things but the crowd sourcing was our first out of the gate. Crowd sourcing is not something invented by journalists. It was being used in other businesses. Open source software is a perfect example. Everybody could go in and help build it. Crowd sourcing in the fashion industry let's people go in and design clothing. It is taking a job that a specialist once did and opening it up to the public to come in and use their own expertise or interest to help shape something.

We'd heard about this. We thought, "Let's find a place to experiment with that." We had a story pop up in our backyard, there was a community, Cape Coral, was putting utilities, sewers and waterlines, into neighborhood after neighborhood. The home owner got the bill. The bill had been about \$10,000 per home. Suddenly it spiked to about \$28,000 per home. Something was going on. And the homeowners were outraged. Some of them faced losing their homes. They couldn't pay this. We thought, "Let's go see what's going on here." And one contractor kept getting every bid. Each neighborhood was bid as the work was done and the same contractor, a subsidiary of Halliburton, kept getting

[audience laughing]

Yeah! Kept getting all of the bids. So we thought, "We need to investigate this." And if we had done traditional journalism we would have assembled everything quietly behind the scenes and just launched it when we were done. But we thought, "No, let's try this crowd sourcing notion."

So what we did was put on our web site this little, just little bitty solicitation that said, "Help us investigate," and then it was a forum. What angles do you want us to investigate? We ran this little blurb in print, same thing. Said, "We're going to be looking into this. What do you want to know?" And within twelve hours, 68 residents had sent us something. They had sent us documents they had, they shared their personal stories, they told us questions they wanted asked. And within 24 hours, someone contacted us and said, "Did you know the city commissioned an audit but they've never released it. Would you like a copy?" Well, we said, "Yes."

[audience laughing]

And we got the audit on a Friday with the understanding that we could release it on Monday morning at 9:00 AM. It was 387 pages long, we spent the weekend, didn't sleep, threw a team at this, pouring through it. So on Monday morning we launched on our web site a special report. And I don't have that to show you because we didn't realize what this story was going to turn into. We thought it was a flash in the pan. It was a big deal to have the audit but we didn't know how it was going to cascade. So we didn't keep screen grabs. I can't show you what we did first out of

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the gate that morning but it was a big centerpiece that had big words from the audit like “bid rigging” and, you know, “special report”, and the word spread around Cape Coral.

People started talking to each other and calling each other and the traffic soared and the Council was to meet that Monday night and vote on the next bid. Well instead the Council stopped all work. They suspended work. And this was our web site that night, the last, this was taken at 6:18 PM. The Council had voted at 6:15 PM to stop work and our reporters had their mojo stuff, were sitting there filing to online and so we were updating it. They stopped all work. You can also see on here how we had the “help us investigate”. We put up all 387 pages of the audit so that people could go in and read it themselves. It became very much a citizen driven project. The, now remember we broke the story online Monday morning. The Council stopped work Monday afternoon/Monday evening. This was Tuesday morning’s newspaper. So by the time our print readers got the first word of this, the story had erupted, the Council had acted, work had stopped. So this was all driven by online. I thought a very clear example of the power of online.

Another way we used crowd sourcing in this example, the citizens of Cape Coral had no opportunity to talk to their elected officials. So we staged a town hall meeting and we had city council members, city manager, city attorney, the contractor, all lined up and we invited the public to come in. And then we backed away. The public asked all of the questions. And they were thoughtful, smart, well researched questions. They really took to heart the opportunity to do journalism.

I’m skipping through stuff because talking about mojos and stuff, I’m trying to condense here.

Where are we taking this next? We are using crowd sourcing now in breaking news, when appropriate, and on enterprise, when appropriate, but we do not just throw a “what do you know?” up on every story. We put forums and story chats on every story but those are opportunities just to converse. We can reserve crowd sourcing for investigations or where we can use information that readers have that they can contribute to the journalism. This is about, our starting point is always journalism. So we’re trying to find ways to apply that.

The, this slide is a breaking news example. There was a double murder, again in Cape Coral, and it was tied to a teen gang that no one had ever heard of. So we put up a solicitation on our Cape Coral micro-site that said, “Who out there knows anything about this gang?” And within a couple of hours we knew the makeup of the gang, their colors, their signs. People in the know wanted to talk about it. And it built on this forum that was clearly labeled a forum. The material it comes in from the public is labeled as such so our readers understand what is material we’ve gathered and what is material the public is talking about. But it gave us information to then take back to the police department and ask the questions we needed to ask. And we couldn’t have gotten there the same way as quickly.

And then another quick example of how we’re trying to apply this, we are, we have just developed a team of citizen journalists, a panel who will be serving a one year term with us. We ran solicitations again and said, “Who out there wants to be a volunteer journalist for a year? We want your expertise.” And we put together a panel of nine people. We have a retired police chief, a retired clerk of the Supreme

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Court, accountants, lawyers. We have this wealth of information and expertise. I don't have an accountant or a lawyer on my staff so it's nice to have volunteers.

We have a lot of retired folks moving into southwest Florida who were very high in their fields and have brought great knowledge and we're trying to tap into that. We are steering them gently. We're bringing them together, giving them their mission. We're using some of the work that Jan talked about on her new Knight Citizens News Network. They've got great tip sheets and things on how to train citizen journalists. We're using that in some of our training for them. And then we're going to give them some databases to look at and turn them loose. They're going to be writing blogs about what they're finding, inviting the public to come in and respond and hope that this is self-perpetuating. I hope that they're finding, by having the time to sit and pour over this stuff, I hope they find little gems that they can break in their blogs online and become little mini celebrities.

So what have we learned in our crowd sourcing? We have learned that when you invite the public in and they start adding information in a forum, you get great information but it becomes this untidy mess very quickly. It unfolds at a pace and in a way that we're not used to. We're used to controlling what gets asked and when and how it gets released to the public. In crowd sourcing, all of that is taken out of our hands. So a story develops online in a different way than it's developing in print.

Everything that appeared on our web site during this crowd sourcing experiment eventually made its way into print, but only after we had gone back and done the reporting ourselves. We would take a tip and we would develop, put maybe several days before appeared as a story that we have developed. It was being developed by our citizen journalists at a different pace. We had to learn to give up that control.

We of course had some staff resistance, the "that's not our job" or "that hurts our credibility". But I saw far less resistance to this and to mojos than other things at other points in my career. And I think that's because we're changing so rapidly that most journalists have accepted that we've got to get moving. We've got to get busy here and figure out new ways to serve new audiences. The ones who disagree have left. And that's a shakeout that I think is necessary in this stage of our evolution.

We learned you have to explain yourselves to your readers because as this story builds online it's weird and it's different and we struggle to figure it out. Imagine the readers. You know, they come to it. So you have to explain what this is. Every page has to have a definition of what we're doing and labels and glossaries. And then someone has to own it. When we jumped into this, again we just said, "Let's do it," and we just went. And the managing editor was involved and I was involved and the project editor was involved, the Cape Coral was involved. We were all dabbling. And it just became this stew of too many, you know, editors. So we had to fix that very quickly. Someone has to drive it.

What progress have we made? We got the horse out of the barn. We just did it. I would encourage you, if you like the idea, to find an idea and just go because your readers, I believe readers are wanting to participate. We have to open the door. And this is an easy way to open the door. We've calmed our staff.

We're breaking old habits. We're letting our readers know they're very valuable. And we're getting to look at databases and documents more than we would be able to with my, the staff of my smallish paper down in southwest Florida.

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Finally, why are we doing this? We're doing crowd sourcing for the same reason that we did mojos and have done all the other experiments that we have done and that is because we know online audiences are different but we believe they want watchdog journalism. I just adamantly believe that we have to, as we invent the future of journalism online, watchdog journalism has to be an important part of that. I'm just an evangelist for that. And the crowd sourcing experiment showed that it does extend free speech to a new group of people. It did serve that purpose. It rallied people to action. It got results. I think that it reached new readers in new ways with watchdog journalism. I don't think there's anything more important for us to do than keep that the core of what we do. It was an experiment and I think the early results were promising.

Jan Schaffer: Okay, questions before Kyle takes the podium?

[audience clapping]

Audience Member: How much does it cost you to outfit your mojos? Or [inaudible].

Kate Marymont: The regular mojo kits do not include video. We have video mojos and we have regular mojos. And just the regular mojos have a wireless either PC or Mac. We're experimenting. We have half of each, trying to figure them out. And audio recorder, all the wireless cards and cables and things so they can work from their car and those run about \$2,500 each. The video kits I think run more like \$8,000 to \$10,000. And we have ten of those.

Audience Member: And second, how did you know that the audit that you got was the real thing?

Kate Marymont: The credibility of the source and the reaction of the city manager when we put it in front of him.

[audience laughing]

Jan Schaffer: That's great. Okay, thank you.

[audience applause]

Kyle is really the person who is behind the scenes in one of the most exciting, I think, mainstream media experiments around the country in which, Morris Digital Works basically decided that it was going to no way were they going to compete with [inaudible], a very successful McClatchy papers on Hilton Head Island and in that neck of the woods. And so they actually took their zoned edition and they took their zoned edition and just killed it and said, "We're not even going to try to compete in this neck of the woods in the area around Bluffton and Hilton Head." And instead they started an entirely new product that Kyle will tell us about.

Kyle Poplin: Absolutely. First off, where is Bluffton? It is in the southern part of South Carolina right off of Hilton Head Island and it happens to be the fastest growing town in the state. So a couple of years ago Morris Communications looked at this market and said, "Wow, we need to be in that market." And what we were doing was not working. It was a zoned edition of the Savannah paper and we knew

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we had really tough competition there with the McClatchy paper, the *Island Packet*, which was born on Hilton Head Island thirty years ago but moved out to Bluffton about five years ago. So they have their headquarters are out in Bluffton right now and they're really good newspaper. They have a circulation about, probably 18,000 or 19,000.

So we tried to figure out how can we compete with the *Island Packet* and get ourselves in this growing market? So we got the great fun task of reinventing a newspaper, a daily newspaper. I just go like this, I guess? That'll work.

Okay, so we had certain guiding principles that we went into this with and hyper local focus was first. We knew we had to be hyper local to Bluffton. Our definition of hyper local is a pothole. Okay, we have literally done stories about potholes in town. We knew we wanted to be short, pithy and fun, like a commuter paper. Ideally it would take you about twenty minutes to read *Bluffton Today*. And we knew there were a lot of new people moving to the area. In fact, more than half the people in Bluffton had been there less than five years so we knew we had an opportunity to introduce people to each other. And we knew we wanted to be distinctly different than the *Island Packet*.

So we came up with the unique concept for a small paper like this. Everybody gets a free newspaper in town so our circulation is roughly 17,500 people and that is almost everybody in Bluffton. We gave, we threw papers at your house until you told us that you did not want a newspaper. And everybody gets a free blog. So you go to our web site and register and have at it. And the concept is if you, since we're going to give you a free newspaper, the focus of the web site is not the newspaper. We're going to assume you read the newspaper because it came to your front door. On the web site we want you to blog and talk about the community and talk about things you read in the newspaper. So we want to form a cycle of communication.

And we just got these numbers last week and we're proud of this, of the people, you or some member of your household read any portion of *Bluffton Today*? Ninety-six percent regularly or occasionally, which is the highest in our company, which is pretty cool for a free paper. This is what our web site looks like, the home page and you go here and you see it's very difficult to find or it is for me at least where the daily newspaper is. It's mostly about blogs and everything but the newspaper.

Here we have some web site performance numbers. 8,000 registered users they tell me is a good number for a small town like that. and these numbers here are different than other numbers in the company in that people return to our site more often than at other places and they spend more time on the site. These are page views over the first year and when we launched in April and we're coming up on our two year anniversary I guess next week and in the first year our page views doubled. And they've continued to go up since then. And this is also a little different than other web sites in our company in that usually there's usually a spike for people visiting the web site in the morning and then at *Bluffton Today*, they do go, they do spike in the morning but they continue over the rest of the day.

These are ways we use the blogs and I'll tell you a little bit about each. Okay.

[panelists talking in background off topic]

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Kyle Poplin: Okay, is that good? Okay, readers blog and teach each other or tell each other about things going on in Bluffton. A big deal there in town is traffic and a lot of times you can get up in the morning and look at our web site and people will tell you that, tell each other that there's a big traffic jam somewhere. We post breaking news stories on the web site just like at a traditional daily newspaper. And readers give us story ideas. This was on a Sunday afternoon, a boat caught on fire in the middle of the May River and one of our bloggers blogged about it. Our editor that day saw it so we went and did our own newspaper story based on the blog. And then we've gotten in the past few months more sophisticated. If we're doing a story, this is a story our business reporter was doing on bartering in Bluffton so he was having trouble finding someone who did actually barter. So he went on the web site and blogged and said, "Hey, we need to find some barterers around town." And sure enough some people came forward and we had a good story about that.

And this is an example, every day we have a centerpiece where we try to commit journalism. This is a story about an upcoming referendum and this is almost totally blogs. This is people in the community and what they thought about this referendum.

Alright and this is readers do a lot of chit chat and speculation. This is one about Halloween. Not very newsy. Here's one that I always like to refer to. They almost got it right. Actually, actually Cheney shot somebody else and they misspelled his name.

[audience laughing]

And one of the things about blogs at *Bluffton Today*, we don't have wire copy. So when we have holes in the newspaper or we get in a pinch with a lot of space staring at us, we can always go to the blogs, lift some blogs, and put them in the paper and have some local content.

Why it works? It takes readers seriously. When we started this paper, we told people, "We really do want your feedback. We want to connect with you. We don't want a downhill conversation, us telling you about Bluffton. We want you to tell us and everyone to be involved in talking about Bluffton." When we have these blogs and we lift those and we put them in the newspaper, we prove to readers that we take them seriously. Obviously that connects directly. It's short and sweet and back to the filling the holes. If you have, in a small daily newspaper, if you're looking at a hole in the paper and you've got no copy to put there, you need something. These blogs give us something. And we, it keeps us deeply involved in the community. If we don't know about something going on there's a real good chance that a blogger will put something up there that will let us know that there's something we should be talking about.

And it works. We own the dog beat in Bluffton.

[audience laughing]

We have a reporter who loves dogs. She's got five or six dogs of her own. And she helped organize a spay and neuter festival or fundraiser or something on a Saturday morning. We had 3,000 people at that thing and they raised \$26,000, which was amazing to us.

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Here's some of the ways that we like to include people in the paper. We have local editorial cartoons. Feel free to submit one of those. We take pictures of scenes around town. This is something in Bluffton and every day on page two we run a photo like this. And we ask you to guess at that. We've had as many as 200 people try to guess where one of these things is.

We have user submitted photos and we've got literally I guess we could go three years, four more years with photos. We've got that many in the bank. People love to submit their photos to us. And it's a beautiful part of the world.

And here's something new. This is a box. This is anonymous phone call. You can call in and leave a phone message and we ask you to keep it short and sweet and we probably run fifteen or twenty of these in the paper every day and it's turned into a blog for old people really. I mean if they don't

[audience laughing]

They don't necessarily know how to blog or don't even understand the term but they all know how to pick up the phone and give you an anonymous message and we have some crazy debates. There's a retirement community there, Sun City, and one of the big debates here that raged for several weeks was wind chimes and is it rude to have a wind chime that your neighbor can hear? And the consensus is yes. It is not good to have wind chimes.

[audience laughing]

Lessons learned. If you ask for reader feedback and you ask for content and they give it to you, it's demanding on a, of your time. You have to edit pretty heavily if you want to put it in the newspaper. You have to manage the blogs. And in that sense we use a blog wrangler. This is one of our reporters who is especially interested in blogs and we call her a blog wrangler. She gets in there and she helps set a tone and I think that's very important. If it gets to be too much us versus them, that is not what we're after. We're, the whole concept is that we are having a discussion amongst ourselves, newspaper reporters and the bloggers, and the blog wrangler is really important in helping set that tone. And we try to have fun with it an we tell people we value their input and when we, when they ask questions and we respond immediately, that helps fulfill our mission.

And the blog, we catch a lot of heck from our bloggers. They have taken to calling us *Bluffton Today*, because we have a lot of fluffy news. We have a lot of dog news. And at the end of the day, there's just not a lot happening in Bluffton, South Carolina.

[audience laughing]

So the paper sometimes feels fluffy but so we have a good natured debate I guess with our bloggers in fluffiness. So I just wanted to throw that in there. And there you go.

[audience applause]

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Jan Schaffer: You said you really don't have a staff of young internet [inaudible]. You were, you were, not maybe stuck is the right word but you have the old timers, right?

Kyle Poplin: Yeah, that's true. We, I, we're close. We have a lot of people that are holdovers from the *Savannah Morning News* days and older people. I don't know, mid-40's, early 50's, who did not take initially to this. They thought it was not journalism. They didn't want to be any part of it. But seeing as how it was either this or nothing, they hung around and right now some of our best bloggers and most active web site participants are middle aged people.

Jan Schaffer: And how did McClatchy respond?

Kyle Poplin: They have paid attention to us. They have redesigned their newspaper. They redesigned their web site. And they've hired several people from the *Savannah Morning News*, as a matter of fact.

Jan Schaffer: Okay.

Kyle Poplin: Okay.

Jan Schaffer: Well, Dean Betz, you've already seen so many people are impressed with the *Houston Chronicle's* blogs that they've already shown some of your work. But we're going to hear more in depth now about what's happening in Houston.

Dean Betz: Thanks. Hi. What I'm going to talk about is not so much how, what we're going to do with the future but sort of how we discovered the audience and how blogs have brought us a lot closer to, to the reader, which is a terrible term because these people aren't readers. Pretty soon they're going to be what we do on our web site.

Blogs are very powerful tools for us. What they do is help get our writers and our web site closer to our readers, give us many more perspectives on topics than we could with our own resources and we think they're changing the way that the newspaper fundamentally covers news for the better. And the key thing driving that is that it's not about us. It's not about our, what we're bringing to news as journalists. It's about learning to listen to our community a lot better and give them tools to participate in the news.

We end up blogging with our staff, editors and reporters writing sort of in a traditional newspaper voice, and it gave us an opportunity to discover readers through comments. And comments have been a very powerful tool for our site. One of our first blogs was the Memo blog, this is by Carrie O'Connor, our deputy managing editor. And it started as a daily memo that she put out to her staff and it's one of the site's most popular blog and won Carrie an Eppy last year for her style of writing.

Our first reader blog was a Momma Drama and I think we'll be hearing a little bit more about blogging for women's audiences more in a little bit. These are five women who write about raising children. These are not staff writers. These are regular people who we just got to know and thought would be great bloggers. We got much deeper into blogging with the Hurricane Rita. Everybody in Houston decided to leave at the same time and caused a lot of chaos on the highways and

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this blog was a key way that we got in touch with that news. Readers were text messaging us and calling us and emailing us with information about the evacuation. And then we used that to create another blog on the way home to help people make it easier; where they could get gas, what highways were not congested, where they could get food. And this was really our first big launch in network journalism.

Some of this work was recognized last year by New York University's journalism school. They rated our blogs best of any daily newspaper by a mile. And I think critical with that is the relationship with readers. And they pointed out some things about our blogs that I think are good lessons for any blogs that are good; making them easy to use, up to date, well written, lots of links, lots of good thoughts, a unique voice, and lots of reader participation.

We brought that into what we did with covering the Enron trial and we got very deep into covering the trial. It was a very important story for us. We were blogging the trial live. The readers were very important part of that through their own knowledge and experience in the comments. Some of that grew into a blog that, into a part of a blog that was just based on reader questions. What blogs do for us is add considerable depth, content that we couldn't get from any other way on pets, guns, gadgets and religion.

Again, when it comes down to it, it's not about us. It's about the readers, the network and what we're trying to do now is give people tools to tell us their own stories, form up their own groups and create the news.

[audience applause]

Jan Schaffer: That's a lot of content. Do you have somebody look at everything, every day just to skim it or does?

Dean Betz: Well all, all these staff blogs are edited, just like any other content in the newspaper. And we're reading all of our newspaper blogs. We have one staff run the web site whose job is just to lead the effort in integrating reader content. And pretty much all of the editors on the web site are involved in nurturing reader content and we're expending that throughout the newsroom.

Jan Schaffer: Is somebody eyeballing or perusing blogs for story ideas or other things?

Dean Betz: Oh, absolutely. I mean we're, the new toolset that we're working on will give us the ability to find content by keyword. We'll have improved search abilities to find that sort of content. And we also have some ways of, well and obviously the best tool for that is really the readers, not us. By recommending content we'll be able to discover the best stuff and allow it to bubble up to the top.

Audience Member: Thanks. Last but by no means least, Lisa Stone, which in my view I think is a perfect example of some of the news next research that says look for a, look for low hanging fruit, look for a job to be done in your community or for national community, in her case, and see if you can do it. And she sort of aggravated I think not only content providers but also audience as well. And where is she? [inaudible] Yeah, I know.

[speaker inaudible]

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Lisa Stone: Hi, everybody. It's rare I get a chance to speak with a group of people who have actually walked the talk about social media like the three people on this panel have earlier today. I actually started off in print myself. I was at the couple of weeklies in the Bay area and then I ended up at the *Oakland Tribune* where Paul Grabowicz, a very infamous investigative journalist, taught me the Freedom of Information Act and I ended up breaking a series of stories on the FAA that landed me at CNN. And then when I had my son in 1996 I decided to go online and learn at WebTV where I was for six months the incredible... Rosental is not happy with this.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Let me see.

Lisa Stone: ... the incredible value of watching the way users use something like a set top box to, thank you sir. Thank you very much. To pull the internet through television. That was a real eye opener because for years I've had a strong idea of how people use the internet and what they cared about with regard to news and I didn't think it was the city council meetings I was covering. And the metrics really proved that I was right.

So when the opportunity came up to join Women.com as the executive producer and launch what became a top thirty site, I jumped at it. Because I knew we'd be working with lots of big brands like Hearst Magazines. But more than anything I wanted to see how women were really using the internet. And this is actually how I ended up starting BlogHer with a group of people.

And I'll describe the story now. When I decided to go to Women.com, I had just come from CNN where many people were saying, "Women will never go online." And I really think the story of my experience with BlogHer and blogging is one where I feel like as a journalist our job is constantly to wipe the scales from our eyes, right? Make sure that we're not so inside the story that we can't see what is happening right in front of us. And so I didn't agree with that because at the time I was pregnant and then later I had a baby and my only life was online. Other than parenthood.

And then in 2005, ten years later, Kevin Drum of the *Washington Monthly* asked a very innocent question. Where are the women bloggers? And this was about six months after I had blogged the Democratic National Convention for the *LA Times* and I had learned to my shock there were millions of bloggers. I was completely behind. I had gone from Women.com, where we had 24,000,000 unique women a month coming to read magazine content online. Left for a one year fellowship, come back and totally lost the thread, right? Technology was reteaching me and I thought, "Wow, we've got to do something about this." And then I really got spurred into action because there were a lot of comments made after this question he raised about what women do and don't do online. And specifically when Gail Collins told Howard Kurtz that she felt that there just probably fewer women who are willing to mix it up about hard edged news topics, as someone who had been writing about new and politics and business and technology online with Women since 1997, I thought, "Okay, we have to do something!"

So I got together with a couple of other women and said, "Why don't we ask other women online if they're interested in having a conference about blogging?" Notice the approach. We decided not to announce a conference. We decided to ask if anyone else was interested. That was in 2005. we had a sold out conference of 300

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women in San Jose. One of my partners and I put the conference on our credit cards. We split the cost of the conference center, said a little prayer, and said, “Si, Dios quiere, we’re going to have a conference here.” And this year, in 2007, we’ll have our 3rd annual conference of 800 women getting together in Chicago.

I’ll talk a little bit more about what they are blogging about but I want to mention the two things that the conference lead us to. After the conference, we surveyed women who came and said, “Okay, this was fun. What should we do next?” And they said, “We really want a network. We really would like for you to break out of this little three woman blog you announce the conference on and put together something that we can all come together on.” Today in addition to having the single largest blogging conference in the world, regardless of gender, we have a community hub at BlogHer.org where we have nearly 10,000 registered members. The site only launched a year ago, by the way. January 30th, 2006. And we have more than 8,000 blogs listed on the site. We’ve been syndicated. Lots of different news sites and that has mostly to do with the fact that we have sixty, that is 6-0, different editors who started as volunteers. We now pay them small stipends each month. Who cover twenty-five different topics that the community selected. They’re covering everything from food to social media.

That wasn’t enough, though. They came to us with one more request and said, “We’d really like a business model because it’s great that the community hub is so popular and driving traffic to our blogs but we’d actually like to make more money off our blogs. We’d like to keep doing this. We’re serious about writing. We’re serious about writing about the issues we care about. And so we’d like for you to do what I had done with American Lawyer Media on Lawyer.com and for Knight Reuter Digital On that’s [inaudible]. And for Glam.com and we’d like for you to launch a blog network.”

So today we publish Rich Media Advertising with \$10 to \$20 CPMs on 165 different blogs, all of them by women. With the exception of one, which is by a couple. And we pay bloggers based on how much traffic they get. Some of our bloggers get \$10 checks, some of our, one blogger got a \$10,000 check. That was the largest one so far.

We have good partners. We have a group of people who are finding that it is increasingly difficult to reach women online because our habits as users are dramatically changing. Why does that matter to these sponsors? It matters because for a very long time, since roughly the same time that someone at CNN told me women will never go online, women have been outspending men certainly as consumers but we also outnumber men online now. That’s about a five year old piece of data. And we out interact men online. Very interesting report by Umbria stated that women actually use more words to describe the same thing in blogs than men do. And unlike men who we find it’s always impossible not to stereotype but important not to make sweeping statements, I will say, though, that [Pew] has done an excellent job of describing how men tend to transact for information. They go down, they find a piece of data, they kill it, they take it home, they use it. And what women are doing is they go out, they find the piece of data, they hunt it down, and they tell their friends. And they share it. And for those of you who are doing fantastic reporting, like these colleagues I have up here, email this to a friend is a fantastic assist for the journalism you’re trying to produce.

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Women are the power users of web 2.0 and this is why you see these numbers today. Our old majority media are slowly and surely being replaced by digital media. And because women are the majority of users and a great opportunity for all of us as journalists, as readers, viewers, users, we need to pay attention because this is the year Lauren Rich Fine at Merrill Lynch had a fantastic report on how this is the year where the share of ad spending is going to begin to equalize. We are going to see a major shift. We are finding when we're in the trenches with sponsors, that advertising budgets are not growing. Instead the money is going away from television and print.

This is not all bad, though, because you've great example of what you can do on budgets that are not as large as the national newspapers that we are well aware of. And people often ask me, " Why is this happening? Why are women in particular running online in such droves? Why are they turning their backs on the other media that we have at our disposal?" And honestly it comes down to the question did we all really love Lucy or is it just what was on? And the bottom line is that I think that female consumers would have been using the other media I just described in much greater numbers if these other media had been paying better attention to what women were interested in with all their mighty consumer dollars. And we weren't, which is one of the reasons people were telling me women wouldn't go online or they didn't know where women bloggers were or they didn't believe women wanted to submit op eds.

Well, I'll tell you, after the 2005 conference, I, again trying to wipe the scales from my eyes, went back to the community and said, "Okay, you say you want a community hub. But let's do this right. We can't cover the community. You're going to have to cover the community. And we'd like to know what you're writing about." So we asked 300+ women and men to answer a survey on what they were writing about. Roughly 116 answered and you'll see in bold that the most popular categories were not food, sex, fashion. The most popular categories were some of our harder edged issues; politics, technology, social media, serious current events. Current events became a catch all that included war. Family, very big issue, but we found, we find that women are writing about it. They are writing about everything under the sun with regard to family, including the tougher issues like how do you work with a teenager and how do you manage your divorce and what do you do about custody.

The other category I highlighted there because these were people who were very to edit my taxonomy that you see here. They didn't like some of the terms I used to refer to some of these and they were already trying to improve the network, which they did do.

Today BlogHer.org's community hub looks like this. We're about to launch a relaunch. But one of the things I want to point out, these by the way, what's hot, these are the hot topics you'd see cascading down below here that were on the previous page. But one of the things we found was really important was that we decided not to edit the home page at all. Other than the five headlines you see under Posts of Note in the upper right hand corner, this page is determine by what the editors decide to write. And the comments that the users contribute to the conversation.

So this has been really valuable because I'm no longer a bottleneck. We don't have to wait for me to find out that Cheney's been shot by another hunter. We can just

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tune into BlogHer and whoever is up in that time zone and thinks it's valuable and covers that beat for us has already blogged it. It's been a really exciting and interesting approach, I think, and the only thing I tend to do is just edit the headlines for search engine optimization because I do need the ad revenue in order to pay these women their monthly stipends.

I thought I would also show you how BlogHer ads work. We have embedded contextual ads on those 160 blogs. We also use a webring approach that I strongly recommend where we link the blogs, parenting blogs to parenting blogs, politics blogs to politics blogs. It drives a wonderful amount of traffic. And if one person hits a really good story, many more people tend to find out about it. More traffic we drive, the happier the sponsors are, the better everyone does. There's a real sense of community among our bloggers. We don't sell our blogs individually. We won't divide the network. We take a much more cooperative effect and we really think that helps the sponsors because all the studies online show that in order to make your message really effective, people need to see it about three times.

I think the most important question or issue that we need to address with women online in order to get their help and their support or their eyeballs is we need to be able to answer the question of who cares, right? They're inundated. They're time impoverished. They have more media and email, I know we all do, than we can answer. And in order to answer who cares we need to write stories in exactly the kind of open, non-patronizing and interested way that you've heard espoused earlier today. I also think that we need to consider the very true issue of taking care of our users with trust and respect. I think that's why Craig's List, eBay, Yahoo, Google have done so well from the beginning because they haven't been prioritizing sources and advertisers.

So when people ask me what do women really want, I offer up some of the same terms that you've heard up here. I think the most important thing in any social media is that if you're going to offer it to users or by your reporters, you need to be completely transparent. Who is blogging or writing or talking? What are they talking about? Why are they talking about it? Are you paying them? Say so. Are you not? Say so. And then they can decide who cares.

The, I speak with a lot of journalists. I get emails from lots of journalists who say they're having a really hard time advocating with their management about good, effective approaches to social media and I often recommend [Pew]. I offer up a number of different studies. I think Jan's study that she introduced is fantastic. I also recommend the State of the News Media from a Business Perspective on Journalism.org. It's a very depressing and important document. But this is base, these are basically five bullets that wrap up what [Pew] said to try to work with management. The bottom line is right now, today that, the internet is the majority medium and your brands, whatever they are, radio, television or news, have to work with them. So I think that if we can figure out a way to evangelize that our credibility is news brands are going to be determined not by what's on your destination web site, which is an old dead model, but much more how your paper or your presence online appears out and distributed social media, like these do. You're going to be much more successful with both users and advertisers.

And I think that the only way to do that is to go out and do what these folks have done, is to ask your users what they want. Ask people like we asked women who blog what they want to do and why. Don't tell them what you're going to do. You

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might really miss the story. And then I just wanted to show you my partners, Jarah and Elisa, because we really work as a team and I'm finding that the age-old model of sort of hierarchical editorial management is best gone, for us as well. We're having a lot of fun working together. So that's it. Thank you.

[audience applause]

Jan Schaffer: What does this say for what mainstream news organizations are offering for women? I mean you have your examples of indie moms and some niche sites but by in large it seems to be a lot of food, fashion and, you know, maybe some parenting stuff.

Lisa Stone: Yeah, I think, it's so, it's so frustrating, you know, because what we're finding on our site, Jan, is that the food, the fashion, the family are posts that get the most comments. They're the easiest to comment on. But we actually have by far the highest traffic on our hard news, politics, Iraq and race. Many women, we have, you know, the only thing harder in today's society than being a mom is to be a woman who has decided not to have children either now or ever, right? So we really are working on ways to grow the comments under politics and hard news. I think the best thing papers can do who want to get women involved in those topics is to have women blogging about those topics. Because I noticed the most recent Nielsen net ratings review of blogs and how influential they've been for newspapers, they're like 200, 300% year over year increase in page views for blogs. But talking about how it's really a man's world. Well you have men blogging those topics, not women. And, you know, I think that there's a real podium approach that some traditionally male columnists and male bloggers tend to take to politics. And that's not the same thing as a dialogue. What these women are looking for is a dialogue.

Jan Schaffer: So the framing of the topic may be different?

Lisa Stone: Uh hum, enormously.

Jan Schaffer: I also, I think I've said to you and no offense to the opposite gender in the room but I can skim male blogs while I'm talking on the phone to someone else. If I am reading a woman's blog, I actually have to stop and use some brain power.

[audience laughter]

Because there are more words and they're much more complex. I mean what do you make of that?

Lisa Stone: Well I would say that it's really important not to make sweeping statements about gender because the next thing you know is someone will walk up to us and show us a blog that will blow our minds. And Jay Rosen, you know, is like Byzantine with his syntax. But I think that, I think that the most important thing that can possibly be said is the stereotypes I lead with on the opening slide about women are an example of this single biggest missed opportunity for the news industry that's every existed and I just have to be very thankful for that because we're doing very well.

[audience laughter]

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Jan Schaffer: Great, can you say how well you're doing? How much money you're bringing in?

Lisa Stone: At this point, we have these three different lines of business. We break even, we pay sixty editors monthly stipends, we have about ten different contractors, 2 of which are full time equivalents, but we three founders are the only ones who don't regularly get a paycheck every month. So we're still growing. Thanks, Jan.

Jan Schaffer: Open it to the floor. Thank you, that's great.

[audience applause]

Jan Schaffer: Questions from the floor. Yes?

[comments inaudible]

Audience Member: I was struck by your crowd sourcing part about the double murder, I believe it was. And I was curious what the reaction would be from the police or was on whether they hampered, helped or what?

Kate Marymont: We did not hear from them in that case. There have been other cases, though, where yes, the police were initially itchy because they thought too much was getting out too quickly. They've backed off that very quickly. We sat down and had some conversations with the chiefs of the different departments there and they've all accepted it.

Audience Member: What was the city manager's reaction when you showed him the audit?

Kate Marymont: He didn't know we had it so he was shocked. Didn't want it released at that time. Tried to suggest that we hold it, which we did not do. But shock was his first reaction.

Audience Member: Were you a little bit concerned about your alerting your competition to what you were looking into and what you were investigating?

Kate Marymont: A little bit but I don't think that we owned the news. As soon as we know something, we share it. And this is just one more step in that evolution. If the public knows something, we should be sharing it. It's so, I was at the beginning but I got over it.

Audience Member: Were readers' tips, they were shared with all other readers, not just with you, right?

Kate Marymont: Correct, yes.

Audience Member: Mr. Poplin, I'm just curious, it sounds, I've been to South Carolina, had to go there to watch my son's basic training and I would have gone down to your community if I'd known it was so much fun down there. I'm just curious, do you have readers from other areas? Because it sounds like you're having a lot of fun, I mean you and your readers.

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Kyle Poplin: We do. We don't really keep up with who hits our web site from outside the area. It's mostly Bluffton people but we do have readers from elsewhere and there's a lot of people who are planning to move to Bluffton and we feel like we're a resource for those people, too, to check on the area.

Jan Schaffer: Sure, is it on?

[audience comments inaudible]

Audience Member: Yes, I also have a question for, well more than a comment for Mr. Poplin. I really found your presentation really interesting and your telling us how you receive all this email from all the older people and you're having these discussions about the wind chimes and whatnot but I think that's actually very interesting because your newspaper is opening a, you know, I mean if we think of what the rule of journalism as we understand it today. It's a recent concept. I mean it's changed a lot through centuries and very folks and information and you're offering them space for a forum and I mean wind chimes are not very informative but I guess, you know, some of the concerns of many of the people in the island here is, you know, the community's participation, integration. Just becoming a larger users of the newspaper and I find that it's a great way just to open these, you know, channels for people, especially in a small community when in larger community like here in Austin if someone writes an article about a homeless people, I'm sure we'll all find it very interesting but we cannot sympathize it so we read it to be informed and for example in a smaller community if you just make it more accessible to have this communication, this feedback. I mean most decisions, most of the things that happen affect everybody. So, yeah, I think your, what you're doing with your paper is really amazing.

Kyle Poplin: Well I appreciate that. Thank you.

Audience Member: I guess this question is for all the panelists. All of y'all, all of your media endeavors are pretty synergistic endeavors and require reader participation so I was just wondering like how long it took for y'all to build that conversation and to get the community input in your blogs and comments? And just what other papers or online entities could do to create that two-way conversation?

Dean Betz: Start blogging! I mean it's really no harder than that. Create vehicles to allow readers, the people we used to call our readers, to participate in what you do. And give you input and give you direction. I mean there's all kinds of great tools that are out there. These guys have a great toolset. We're working with another company who is one of the sponsors here to put together another toolset that is going to enable that process. But it's as easy as going to, you know, a blogger.

Kate Marymont: And I would say, I agree with that. you want to touch nerves. You can touch nerves with things in people's every day life that they care about, the dogs. But you can also touch nerves with watchdog journalism. I think it's important that you have both layers and we have found that the community gets really involved with us when we're giving them hard hitting journalism that they can either help contribute to or comment on after the fact. I think you have to have both sides of the equation. We can't give up the watchdog journalism. Our community wants that an will get involved if you give them that.

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Lisa Stone: I think that's a great point because I don't think BlogHer would have taken off with the trajectory it did if we, if there weren't so many women blogging online who were feeling like the Who Horton never hears, from Dr. Seuss. You know, there were all these big blogging communities of technologists and political bloggers and others starting up and the women were really being ignored. One of the things I think is really valuable as well as this combination is to identify and editorial weak link in whatever you're producing. Maybe you need feedback from accountants or attorneys. Maybe you need feedback like today on BlogHer we have a huge initiative going on about cyber bullying and we're having a bunch of women come and provide links to the stories that they've written or the posts they've written about how they deal with online bullying. And it's really something that one person can never cover by themselves.

Jan Schaffer: Do you deal with the bullies, the miscreants, those who want to spoil the party, the trolls, whatever?

Kate Marymont: They should each other down generally.

Jan Schaffer: You let them shout?

Kate Marymont: Very self policing.

Kyle Poplin: We have about six people, they call themselves the Gang of Six, and they oppose almost everything we do.

[audience laughing]

We had a meeting with, we called a meeting and we told them, "You can come to this meeting, you don't have to tell us who are you or whatever. We'll just honor your privacy or whatever." So we met them at the library and had a discussion with them about some of the criticisms they had and a couple of people told us who they really were and then I think four people or more refused to tell us who they were but they did meet with us and express their concerns in person, which calmed them down. It's more difficult to harass somebody face to face.

Jan Schaffer: And so on the site you noticed that they kind of?

Kyle Poplin: They did. They calmed down for a couple of months but they're back.

[audience laughter]

[audience comments inaudible]

Kyle Poplin: Yeah, they were legitimate. They didn't think we did a good job covering the school board and there was a referendum that came up that we did not give two sides of that. Looking back, I don't think we did a good job covering that and they called us out on it.

Kate Marymont: I think you have to have community guidelines that are strictly posted on the site and you have to have buy in from people online that if they don't see something or if they see something that is counter to those that they have a place to report it in. And I think individuals have to learn to completely ignore the

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trolls but email your kitchen cabinet and complain about them and get your hurt feelings out of the way.

Jan Schaffer: Dean, is it a problem for you?

Dean Betz: You have to build in enforcement mechanisms, like you say clearly articulated rules and you have to hold people to it. And the community is an important part of that. You know, in a previous job I managed a user group of about a million forum users and we had a steady stream of reports coming in about inappropriate posts. There's a very effective enforcement mechanism and it's a very important part of any social media is finding ways not just for users to, on the plus size submit great content or upload great photos but let us know when there's something there that doesn't belong.

Jan Schaffer: Okay, the two of you back to back so can you hand it back after you?

Audience Member: I'm overseeing a project in Canada for a newspaper chain to I guess basically repatriate our web sites and create a web first culture and obviously one of the things we're contending with is network journalism or citizen generated journalism and I certainly hear Lisa about the issue of the exclusion of a lot of female voices in this. I'm sort of surprised that our buildings haven't been burned already on all of this. So we're kind of coming to grips with this around how much content we also drive back into our newspapers. The equation that's facing all of us, though, is that we're going to have to drive things out of papers to make room for the citizen generated content that goes in. So, in your view, what should go? What should newspapers stop doing?

Lisa Stone: Why don't you ask your readers? I would put it, I would print a poll in the paper and I would get them to make a recommendation based on that.

Kyle Poplin: Another option is to draw the circle tighter. You know, I think we, the model that we have for *Bluffton Today* as Bluffton grows, I think we may outgrow that. We may be a newspaper that is best suited for one high school. The way we cover high school, that high school is like most people cover a college. And it may be that, you know, as we get to be a bigger newspaper, the news hole shrinks with the amount of news in the community so maybe it's an option to draw the circle tighter and cover a smaller community.

Kate Marymont: When Jeff Jarvis was talking this morning about we feed our egos by sending 15,000 of us to the political conventions, I wanted to jump up and shout, "Amen," because I couldn't agree more. And in our local communities we do the same thing. We, in the state of Florida, we all cover the Gators. Do we all have to cover the Gators? Why don't we pool our efforts somewhat and actually within Gannett family, we're doing just that. We're doing more pooled coverage. But I think we should do more and more of that and then reserve our time, our local time for the digging and the investigative journalism that we need to be doing. And then I think we can also start to contract some the national and international news because there's so many other sources for that. Our franchise is local news. So when we start having to pair, that's where we're looking. And we're doing that after having consulted readers.

Jan Schaffer: Okay, more questions and then [inaudible].

Audience Member: Well this is more of a comment or sort of a question. But going back to the very, the next to last thing we were talking about, the cyber bullying. I guess I'm revealing myself as a dinosaur but I've been involved in internet communities, list serves since about 1991 and it seemed like in every, politics, religion, the number of things that I'm kind of interested in, every community I died. Not by my hand but usually by just flame wars and people sort of castigating each other to such a degree that people went away. And it's interesting that although we need to be at a new turning point on that. And with the kind of institutional mediation that you all are doing, you know like Lisa's comment about posting rules and others where, you know, you're sort of patrolling the site. And I do find it interesting that kind of one of the values that you all are adding and maybe to sort of reflect on it this way, is providing a forum where people can be participants without flaming each other away. And it's sort of, as I said, you know, I just kind of wanted to raise the historical analogy and ask maybe to think about that again because I think that's this, if we're inviting a lot more participation, how you mediate that? How you handle that is maybe one of our more crucial problems.

Lisa Stone: You've clearly seen it all then. I think it comes down to civil disagreement. Right? Disagree yes but civilly, please.

Kate Marymont: Yeah, I agree. We take a slightly different approach in that we do not edit up front. We still let people converse on our web site without interference from us. We think that creates the best forum for free speech. And over time we've weeded out some of the bad apples. It's been tempered somewhat but we're not willing to say, "We're going to decide which of your comments we will and won't post." We still think it has to be an open forum and we only edit after the fact.

Kyle Poplin: I'm convinced a lot of people when they blog in a real harsh manner, they're not really aware of how harsh that comes out. It, there are people who don't understand how things read when they're typing it in. And I think when we have our blog wrangler set the tone, if someone is really harsh on a blog and we come back with the comment like, "Wow, that's harsh. You need more sleep." Just have fun with it, it does help kind of guide the conversation.

Audience Member: What are the guidelines you guys have?

Kate Marymont: We leave an open forum. We come on, we'll after the fact we will remove something that is threatening or libelous. But we let it get pretty raw.

Kyle Poplin: We ask people to keep it civilized and if it gets over the edge, we'll take them down but not often.

Lisa Stone: We have a really clearly stated community guidelines at BlogHer.org/community-guidelines and what it makes very clear is that you're not allowed to harass or stalk anyone on our site. And we also have other particular rules with regard to not plagiarizing and also following the EFF.org guidelines. But we do allow people to post freely, just that we make very clear what will not stay on the site. So.

Jan Schaffer: So that's it from the front lines. Thank you.