

Day 2, Panel 3: New journalistic forms and new journalists

Moderator:

Marguerite Moritz, Professor and UNESCO Chair in International Journalism, University of Colorado, Boulder

Panelists:

Daniel Reimold, Ohio University

Brian Carroll and **Robert Richardson**, Berry College

Cindy Royal and **Deepina Kapila**, Texas State University

Lou Rutigliano, University of Texas at Austin

Alfred Hermida, University of British Columbia (Vancouver, Canada) and **Neil Thurman**, City University (London)

Rosental Calmon Alves: Before starting, I want to, I want to present certificate in recognition of the 2007 Top Rated Paper Award to Alfred Hermida and Neil Thurman. So, Alf, is his first, it is. It is really, it is really wonderful because I think this is the first academic paper he writes and he came to the conference, when was that? In 2005 when he was working for the BBC as a professional journalist. And I want to believe that he came to this wonderful symposium and was so impressed with academic life that he decided to get out of the BBC and come to the, to the wonderful life of the academy. So congratulations. Great. Thank you.

[audience applause]

Marguerite Moritz: I think I'll use this because I had a mic, is my mic working? Hello, hello, hello?

Rosental Calmon Alves: Yeah, I think it is. Have you put?

Marguerite Moritz: Oh, maybe I haven't put it on.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Put it on. It's in the back here. Here. Okay, wait a moment. And now?

Marguerite Moritz: Okay. Good! Alright. Well, good afternoon. Welcome back from lunch. My name is Meg Moritz. I'm the UNESCO Chair in International Journalism Education at The University of Colorado in Boulder. Thank you very much for Rosental for inviting me. It's been a great couple of days. And hello to our millions of viewers who are out there in the global audience. It's great to have you all back.

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So the panel right now, this afternoon, is titled “New Journalistic Forms and New Journalists”. The presenters are again from the academic side and the research links many of the themes that have been raised earlier by our colleagues from the professional side. Among them, training of journalism students, which is huge issue in schools, certainly in the United States and undoubtedly all over the world.

Cultural transformations, can the people who have been the traditional print people work with the video people and, in this instance, I’m talking about faculty. That’s a big cultural transformation for a lot of faculty. Issues of story telling, user generated content, audience interaction, accuracy, credibility.

The 5 presenters and their papers are available on the web are taking up various aspects of these topics. So we will go in the order, in the published order, starting with Daniel and hopefully we will have time for Q and A and discussion after the presentations.

Does he need this one?

Rosental Calmon Alves: Yeah, it’s kind of to hang. It has to be very close.

Daniel Reimold: Testing, testing. Okay. Great. And how do I also set this up here with? Just hit click? Okay. Okay, wonderful. I am truly excited to be here, especially to talk about campus media and literature that I’m incredibly passionate about and I would absolutely travel around the world to talk about, especially when my school is nice enough to pay for most of my travel funding. I want to get that on the webcast.

One fun, interesting fact to throw out there right away, of course the stereotypes exist that young people are not interested in the news and students particularly are not reading print news. Interestingly enough, both of those things could not be further from the truth. And if I leave you with anything in this presentation today it would be that subtle fact. Regular surveys have shown over the past few decades and as recently a mid-2006 that more than 76% of current college students at least occasionally pick up a copy of their campus newspaper, at least twice or more per week. And almost 50% do it 3 times or more, basically regular readers. You know, so they’re not reading Le Monde necessarily, which I only single out because it’s very fun to say. And they may not be reading the \$90 mass communication textbook that we’re saddling them with but they’re absolutely reading and they’re reading the news that is relevant to them on the campus scene.

As a story reported in November in the Baltimore Sun noted in their lead, “Mainstream newspapers may be up against dwindling circulations and shrinking advertising revenues but college papers have become hot commodities.” And, of course, I’m not here today to talk about print news or the classic car show that I saw last night on South Congress Street, but I wonder if anybody else got to head out to. Definitely got a little bit of flavor of Austin. I’d never seen so many cars in one spot that had so many exposed engines with just everything kind of shown for their inner workings.

And as I was walking back later that night and so I bring it up, I realized that there was a wonderful synchronicity there with what I’d been attempting to do for the past year or so, looking at these online only publications that I really been attempting to just lay bare their guts and expose the nuts and bolts of what they’re all about. And

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really more than anything else, to get at the manner in which today's student journalist, you know hard core first tier members of our internet generation, are really embracing the new media to do the three things that student media outlets have always attempted to do; gain experience, report the news, and get their voices heard within the college media landscape.

What has intrigued me most about the current online journalism craze, especially among student journalists, is how ground level they are in their use of new media. You know, for them and the students I've spoken with and observed, deciding how best to utilize the new tools and, you know, navigate the online universe has very little to do with what has come before. You know, for them it's not about how much has changed since the early days in the newsroom. It's not about how much and how to handle, well one student said to me in rhyme, is the emergency of convergence. For them, for those who have basically spent most if not all of their formative years with some version of a computer and internet and not really think about it as new media. It's truly their media.

And so over the past year or so, under the direction of Mark Prendergast who was one of the first members of the New York Times continuous news desk and he's currently a Scripps Visiting Professional at OU, I've been observing and interviewing to get a sense of the behind the scenes staff structure and news production processes at approximately 10 online only news outlets run at colleges and universities throughout the U.S. and Canada. I have a brief listing here but even more than that, to add a visual component here, I just thought I'd show very briefly a few of the sites that we're talking about. Do I ESC again?

First we've got SpartanEdge.com, which is an online only news outlet run from students at Michigan State University. Let's see if we can get the entire, there we go. More than anything, and you can read the tagline there at the top to get a sense of the kind of nonconformist spirit that they're going for, more than anything they're attempting with the students I talked to, to get a real visual and very, very sort of viral video feel to everything that they're covering. Interestingly enough, the blogs that they offer here on the side are among the most popular portions of the site. They have really focused on getting bloggers who have specific characteristics or topics that really appeal to niche audiences and someone like, you know, we have Ask Dr. Sex but someone like Spartan Ed, who is also the managing editor of this operation, has become a very popular face on campus due to this blog. And I have one example that, I believe the sound is turned down a little bit, has become one of the most popular blogs on the site.

[prerecorded audio audible in background]

Now the first time I saw that I laughed very hard. It just seems very sort of funny and out there. That has become one of the top, I think he's now graduated, but that had become one of the top blogs on campus and from what I hear he's quite the ladies man as well. He became a popular figure, focusing just on the weather, his take on it, giving people a daily read.

[audience laughter]

Another site we have here is Rampway, which is an online only student run outlet run from Georgia State University. And in this sense they're going for what I was told was called a Drudgish look, so it's now a verb apparently, in that they are, excuse

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me, an adjective apparently. They are not literally attempting to in some cases dumb it down is the word I use and in others they told me to make it as informal as possible and so it truly looks like a bunch of kind of the guys in socks models as we heard earlier today. There's just kind of putting things out, starting a conversation, seeing if you want to comment and going from there.

Let's see if I can get to it. Yeah, go here. This is the Echo, a site run by students at St. Michael's College, a small liberal arts school in Vermont. This is one that I'm currently looking into. Didn't include any specific study here but just to give you another example. This gets 115,000 hits per month. The school has an enrollment of 2,800 undergrad and grad. It's become a very popular part of campus, especially the Naked Opinion part, which is another blog style entry.

Now the absolute centerpiece for the continuing study, I have to double click here, excuse me. I'll see if we can get it up in a second. I'll try refreshing. Okay, there we go. And it does look like that for a reason, I'll explain. It's thanks to both the access that I'm able to have and also due to its absolutely cutting edge representative nature is Speak Easy magazine, which is a daily updated online news and culture webzine run from Ohio University by more than 100 or so Scripps School of Journalism students. In part was funded through a Scripps Howard Foundation grant. Literally this week over the Spring Break, to the 1st week of our new quarter, they are doing an entire redesign, which is why it looks like this. They've been working overnight to try to get something akin to the visual that you can see here. But it normally is very cutting edge and is among the most formal and sharp and succinct sites that I've worked with.

The goal of the study overall, in both the ethnographic portion of the literally participant observation with Speak Easy and in the directed interviews that I did with staffers at the 9 other outlets was mainly to extend past landmark research on news production and newsroom socialization. You know, from the earliest days of researchers such as Gans and Tuchman to the more recent converged newsroom models by scholars such as James Singer. You know, we've determined that as much as we'd like to believe we are objectively reflecting reality in our news media, you know, of course it is constructed or created made and it's a consequence of the business, of course, in the sense that, you know, we need to have certain routines in place enabling us to identify, select, pull out, flesh out, break down and finally present all the, you know, individuals issues and events beating down our newsroom doors and place them in some orderly fashion for consumption by the public.

And will other factors such as looming deadlines, competition pressures, and even the medium in which the news is being presented, it's been proven that on a personal level, mostly on the staff level, that the organizational culture of the newsroom plays an incredibly definitive part in the final version of reality that the journalist create for each story that they put online in print or on air. The most simplified example I've come across repeatedly in research, you know, for rookie reporter writes up a story, hands it in the to the editor and gets it back with a ton of red marks. You better believe she's going to be writing it up differently the next time around. It's common sense and it's also called newsroom socialization.

You do what you can or mas to please the boss. Get ahead. Get the byline or just, you know, on a base level, to keep your sanity or keep your job. And what I was interested in with this research was to see how journalists dealt with new media before the onset of socialization in the newsroom and with online only outlets as

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opposed to the converged models that have been the focus of the Singer and other studies. And I was less interested in how successful that the student sites were and, obviously, we can see literally that some are very much works in progress in their second or third years of operation.

And I was more interested in simply seeing how they were put together and being run. Most are zero, some gains. These are not adaptations or online versions of the campus newspaper. They are startups. In most cases, from scratch, in which students have had full or majority say in everything that they put onto the site and also how they structure their staffs and interact. And while these students, of course, are not babes in the woods in terms of most have had internships, worked with a journalism professor in some form to bring these to light and also maybe potentially are holdovers from the student newspaper themselves.

It was fascinating for me at least to gain some sense of an inside glimpse into how students would put together a journalism outlet of their own, not to please a boss but to do anything more than just what they think would be best for their student audience. And how they think they would be best and most conveniently be able to pull it off. As a Speak Easy staff writer told me:

It's sort of frustrating and exciting at the same time with being a startup in a still new medium. Because we have to literally come up with solutions and ways of doing things as we go along. We don't have the problem of being an established outlet where it's just been done one set way for so long, that questioning it as seen to tantamount to starting a rebellion. At Speak Easy we confer and figure out the best way to do something and because we aren't in a set pattern, we can literally figure out the best way and not simply refer to the way it has been forever, good or not.

And what I found is that a majority of these new journalism ventures are absolutely structured and operating with very specific and at times very different routines than the ones that have long been carried out in the student and professional medial spheres. In some cases, they do seem to be following pretty basically the converged newsroom models, whether they know it or not. But definitely in a few respects they actually do appear to be breaking new ground or breaking off new paths of their own. Whether they are successful or not yet in these paths, you know, is still too be determined.

Two main related areas that I wanted to touch upon very briefly today, just transformations in work routines related to time and place and the interaction among staff. And first in respect to work routines, interestingly, basically there are none. Overall, besides weekly or biweekly prearranged staff meetings, students reported that they follow no real set schedules or shifts in the newsroom that still might be adhered to on a nightly basis at the traditional campus newspaper. Instead staff writers and editors and even copy eds all seem to complete their work when the mood strikes them or in between the myriad of other things that they have that pop up during their day related to other organizations or family or school-related work. Section editor at Speak Easy told me:

I guess a typical week would be, well I don't really know. There really is no typical week. Every week is just so different. Schedule-wise, it changes, even from day to day and article to article. I really fit that

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part of my life around when a person can meet with me and when I have time in between classes and other stuff I have to get done.

Majority of students said they worked on at least some of their work for the news outlets every day, whenever they came up, for no more than an hour or two tops. Staff work in this vein appears to get done at the spur of the moment or in a time period that one student called me, said to me, "In the post-dinner, pre-homework lull." That appears to be especially sort of sacred time that students are actually active. Or, especially late at night, when the late night talk shows are on and when students creative juices are apparently in higher gear. Speak Easy writer said to me, "It's just nice that I can write or edit a story, find the picture for it, and send it all out in between the 50 million other things I'm doing. Students do work when they can fit it in, as long as we make our deadlines, of course, no one cares."

Students seem to be most passionate about this method of sort of what I'm determining is short spurts of work because it seems to fit in with what they see as the larger multitasking culture. You know, and how busy, of course, all of our lives are now with more information than ever to handle. And we see it even at a conference such as this in that even as I'm talking now there are people checking their email or doing a few different things on their laptops. And as a colleague said to me as we were sitting in the back earlier today, "And that's great. Yeah, because we are the type of people that can handle that type of multitasking. We can do two things at once and that is the world we live in today." And students are also stepping up and embracing that passionately and making it part of their news media routines, as well.

What's been interesting also is that it's been this flexibility of the work schedule that seems to be creating the most trouble for the traditional campus newspaper in retaining staff. And that was Speak Easy, even more than students you would think wanting to get involved in new media and being on the cutting edge of things. The brief story I like to share with Speak Easy and the student newspaper at Ohio University, The Post, which I'll put up very quickly, is that initially when Speak Easy started up, The Post decided not to adopt a non-compete clause in limiting students from writing for either one or the other. And it was kind of seen as a slight in that they weren't even recognizing Speak Easy to be anything more than almost like a student project, you know, nothing that people were going to be interested in reading. As students determined that they could fit in their work with Speak Easy among the million other things they had to do, enrollment in the staff rose considerably to the point that The Post decided to eventually decide adopt a non-compete clause and that you could not write for both at the same time and that was seen as a very big pizza party celebration day. It was kind of heralding the arrival of Speak Easy as an actual outlet.

What's been interesting is now the situations have reversed. The Post is currently, I wouldn't say crisis level but is having a hard time recruiting and maintaining staff. Speak Easy is well over a hundred students and they are now having a problem with having more content than they really have room on the site to put up. They have now, Speak Easy has adopted a non-compete clause with The Post in the same week or two that The Post decided to drop theirs. And so it's truly come full circle in only a few years. This was, Speak Easy was originally started after the 2005 ONA conference in Hollywood.

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In conclusion, along with not working on any set schedule, a majority of the outlets do not have newsrooms and staffers instead are happy to be able to do their work from the comfort of their dorms or apartments or favorite spot in the school library or public computer lab. Speak Easy staff writer told me:

I like working on stories wherever I want. It would be a pain to know I have to get ready, get everything together, and walk or drive to a place where I suddenly have to be creative. Another nice thing of being at home is you can work on a machine or with internet that you're familiar with and you don't have to learn any new programs or equipment.

In some cases the students see this type of freedom as the affirmation of what their online journalistic endeavors are all about. One of my favorite quotes from a top Speak Easy editor, she was saying this as she was holding a lollipop in her hand and when she got to the close she put it in her mouth and just sort of looked at me as if this sums it up:

Why walk 20 minutes to a newsroom when you can just stay in your room and get the same things done right away? That's what an internet source is all about. If you have a laptop and wireless, you're ready to work wherever and whenever you want. No more getting your hands dirty in some newsroom. Like our motto says, "Ink stains are so 20th century."

To close, as I know I'm close to running over time, with this lack of a central meeting place, what appears to be a second main difference from the traditional at least print campus newspaper outlets is how the staff interacts with one another. Instead of face to face interaction, the culture of communication among student staffers at these online only outlets is almost entirely electronic. With email, instant messaging, and listservs and whole bunch of other things sited as the main forms of communication between the staff. As a student told me, "It's just emails. It's emailing, emailing, emailing. I spend hours upon hours sending emails for Speak Easy. Even as I'm talking to you now, I'm thinking about the next round of them that I have to send out." She then ran out.

Most of the sites use listservs or message boards or, interestingly enough, what I found interesting, gmail accounts in which they give the entire staff the password. I see some people nodding here. And so the entire staff can go on, see the story budget for the week, make comments on first and final drafts of all the stories that are put on and debate some of the larger controversies and issues that the top eds are weighing in on. And what seemed to be interesting is that most students did not follow up on that freedom but they liked that it was there. And a few people made reference to the Facebook/MySpace culture of just knowing what was going on with everyone else and in this case the news outlet in general. So you could chime in and you felt like you were a part of the decision making process, although it was not something that most students took up on.

And finally, on the flip side so that it doesn't look all rosy, the email dependent nature of staff interaction also appears to be the root cause of what I found to be the most shared and pronounced frustration among the student staffers and that was what was termed to me a few times as the face to face disconnect. Specifically most students have jokingly shared during their interviews that while they constantly

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virtually communicate with their other staffers, they wouldn't be able to pick most of them out of an in person lineup. According to an editor at Dawgnet, which is an independent student run news outlet at Butler University in Indiana, "Honestly don't really know most of the writers' faces. I know their name, their beat, their writing style, their email address, IM name, things like that but I wouldn't know to say hi to them if I passed them on the street."

People bonding and feeling like a part of the team is still a real issue. Overall, you know, as they're putting now together and what I'm interested now in looking at is their overall content goals, which tend to be at this point seen as trying to be alternative in any way possible to the traditional campus print newspaper. Almost, I'm still determining whether it's the reason for that is because they simply need to be different to stand out in the media marketplace or because they truly are trying to embody that in their new kind of online endeavors.

But what they're attempting to do I found very synchronic with the Blufton Today model that we heard the person speak about yesterday in that it's less of a news site and more of an entire social network. A lot of the sites adopt mottos something along the lines of, "Think dialogue, not monologue," or, "Where the dialogue never runs dry." And certain student sites they even provide their AOL instant messaging screen names so they can converse in real time with readers reading their stories. Maybe the next evolution of the comment boxes, I don't know.

Have the student sites fully succeeded so far? Absolutely not. They are still absolutely works in progress but are the possibly serving as the models for what future student journalists or even professional journalists could adapt to and hopefully become successful with in the future? I believe so. And I think it's something of course only time and new technology and initiatives will tell.

So thank you very much.

[audience applause]

Brian Carroll: Good to go? Alright, I'm Brian Carroll and my colleague, Randy Richardson, we come from Berry College in northwest Georgia. Looked at credibility and how it's changing. It is negotiated, after all. How it's changing online. And I applaud the symposium organizers for the format of our time together. I imagined yesterday as all of us on an open top, double-decker tour bus, you know, those ones in England, and we were whisked around some of the really cool sites in online journalism. And stopped only for enough time to take a snapshot. In fact, many of us literally took snapshots, are taking snapshots. And then today it's left to us on the academic side to try to get at the why and what is going on and why is it going on.

So our little piece of that why is credibility. And so we did some research and for our own credibility, you need to know that we did do the research and the literature to get at what's been done so far. What, how is credibility even defined or operationalize for traditional journalism? We took that and tried to find out what is emergent in terms of credibility online and specifically in the blogosphere. These are the traditional dimensions of credibility in that literature. This is how credibility has traditionally been operationalized by news media.

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We found in our research strong suggestion that there are some new dimensions to credibility and you've heard, my goodness, with our presentations we've had, we were actually afraid coming into this that we would, there would be this sea of skepticism and now we're even afraid of redundancy. Now we're, I mean the terms that you've been hearing are these. At least in terms of transparency, the revoicing of journalism, interactivity, passion. We just heard from Dan naked opinion, this notion of transparency. You just heard about what was it, the reflection of St. Michael's reflecting some reality, some authentic experience that's there, that's been there all along. And then maybe a new notion for some of us, identification. Which is why in a small college we don't have the silo fortress approach. Not to disparage that. I come out of that tradition in graduate school but we're interdisciplinary so we have taken a thoroughly interdisciplinary approach to this.

We had these research questions going on: Why do readers loyally read the blogs of their choice? They did choose them. And what does this say about the values or qualities, what does it say about credibility of these news sources? And our 2nd one was, okay, let's get right at credibility and ask why do you trust those voices, those mostly individual human voices?

We looked at two blogs, two A-list blogs, A-list in terms of traffic, very highly trafficked. The metrics on them are in the paper. And I just recent, I just read, not recently but like this morning, read CJR, a CJR term for these blogs "clogs". I don't predict that will catch on but it's supposed to suggest commentary and research by bloggers. So something a little bit outside the norm of blogging but not something we would call journalism in its traditional since. Pharyngula is one written by PZ Myers who is an evolution biologist and Informed Comment by Juan Cole at Michigan who writes about Middle Eastern affairs and politics and their affect on us here at home. Those were our research questions.

Our methodology, I just went right over, didn't I? I'm sorry. I just talked about his slide. Our methodology was brutally simple. We appended surveys to those blogs and so we ended up with a self selected sample of mostly anonymous readers. You have the numbers there. Yes, there are limitations to this methodology and so we could not cal these results scientific but we're looking for insight and to inform the process of, as journalism embraces these new forms.

So when answering the question "why do you read Informed Comment" expertise, that old favorite from traditional journalism was, by far, the #1 dimension or criterion that was cited by readers, 48%. Here's a quote by one of the readers, "I feel he can be trusted to be objective in his presentation." One poster wrote, "Cole thinks for himself. He's not influenced by any one or any thing." And then another comment, "I recognize that the mainstream media sources were not reporting accurately about the region in the run up to the war and I realized I was going to need alternate sources of information if I wanted to clearly understand what was going on." So you have traditional dimensions but they don't seem to be operationalized in the same ways as for traditional sources of journalism. "I trust him to be objective," when he says clearly every day that he is not objective. That he is coming from a specific point of view and yet it's that transparency that produces the sense that he is being fair, objective and accurate. Fairness, these are dimensions for Juan's blog.

Why do you trust Informed Comment? There were these criteria mentioned and, again, expertise by far the most important dimension for this brand or type of blog.

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And then I'll mention out of these, fairness came up. Again, it really asks the question about how we operationalize this term we're familiar with in this new medium or medium format. Because fairness was mentioned so often, here's a direct quote from one of the readers. "Dr. Cole tends to represent arguments fairly, even ones he disagrees with. Cole makes his opinions clear and keeps them largely separate from his analysis of the facts." So, again, something new in the way that these terms are being operationalized.

As we switch then to Pharyngula, much lower percentages of people citing the traditional dimensions of criteria. Nothing on some of those that appeared, surprisingly often on informed comments, so Dr. Richardson is going to help us understand that because his blog is, Pharyngula's blog is especially appropriate to use these emergent operationalizations. Why do you trust Pharyngula? Again, there's expertise again as the most frequently cited one but then Os across the board on the others that we have traditionally used to talk about what makes something credible. So I'll turn it over to Dr. Richardson.

Robert Richardson: I'm a rhetorician so I'm not exactly sure what I'm doing at this particular table, except to say that we need to make room at this table for rhetoricians. And for people who know how to use microphones.

[audience laughing]

Okay, so really and I'll borrow a page from our current president, I blame the Democrats for actually my being here because when I was analyzing the 2000 Democratic National Convention and the 2004 Democratic National Convention, it struck me that the main strategies of the campaign, they were spending millions of dollars to personify persons. To try to bring humanity to people. There is a great disconnect there and in terms of what the system, the political system, but I think also the media system was, we're doing to people. As I spoke with Brian several occasions, it began to resonate that some of these rhetoricians who are talking about things like Kenneth Burke, Kenneth Burke's notion of identification, that we are all separate individual people but when our interests are joined or we perceive that our interests are joined and we identify with each other and as I talked to Brian about what was going on in the blogosphere, it just became so obvious to me.

So when we look at our results and it's difficult to tease out that concept of identification. The first results you see there were so many people who overtly stated his politics agree with mine. In fact, the very first respondent, after 4 sentences, this is on the Informed Comment, that after 4 sentences of explaining, finally the person said at the very end, "Honestly, I must admit, the politics agree with mine." So it's not always something that we want to admit up front, that the reason that we find somebody credible is because we agree with them and yet that seems to be the case for many people.

So in Informed Comment we had 27 overt mentions. That's over 10%. And when you get over to Pharyngula, it's almost all, just little short of 20% of people who admitted a reason that they were drawn to that or that they trusted that, in question two, was because of, they identified with that person, with that person's politics or whatever.

Another source of identification is to be seen in the idea of the common enemy. Now what's interesting is the informed comment readers, about 10 or mention the Bush

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Administration as a common enemy but what's really interesting and probably the language common enemy is a little strong, but 44 readers out of 222 responses on Informed Comment mentioned the mainstream media in negative terms and in negative light as being something as contrasting with Professor Cole and his advice. And what he was saying on there. So that's interesting that we have this identification through the rejection of the mainstream media. The quotation that we have up there, the rest of the quotation goes something along the lines of, "He really tells it like it is. I like the way he calls the bastards, bastards." And I, that really doesn't represent anything, I just wanted to say that.

[audience laughing]

But when we turn over to our next slide, we see that different aspects of humanity and authenticity and genuineness can also be teased out in a number of the responses. Twelve respondents spoke of his humanity and actually, we'll return to that again on the next slide. The next, when we look at Pharyngula, one of those human qualities that really stands out and it's been mentioned here before is humor. And what are the numbers there? 17, almost 1 in 4 mentioned that humor was one of the reasons why they were drawn to that and what's interesting in Pharyngula case, you see them laughing with PZ Myers and then laughing at that common enemy, which are the creationists that, who are often the target of his humor.

And so then ideas that we've talked about over the past few days also showed up in a little bit less but in kind of an interesting way. They talk about interactivity. One of the, one of Professor Cole's, many of them talked about his willingness to respond to them. One of them talked about having dinner with him on two occasions. And there's this idea that these are real people, that there's a conversation happening here, that this isn't some larger mediated reality. and what's interesting is that as you step back and look at the language, it's a he/they dichotomy. It's he does this, speaking of Juan Cole or of PZ Myers, versus the they of this vested interest mainstream media. And those themes come up very strong in the language.

Things like transparency come out. Many, in fact in double digits, mentioned that they like the fact that Cole was willing to admit that he was wrong and was willing to change his opinions. So those were 2 things that had come out. The other aspect of humanity that I didn't touch on earlier was not just Cole's humanity in that he would talk to other people and not just the humanity in his own care and concern but also in the way that he reported on his subjects. It talked about him as opposed to the mainstream media. Many people mentioned that he made those people real, those people being Middle Eastern people that he brought them to life. That they weren't portrayed in the horrible stereotypical ways came out as well.

In many ways, then, we have not only Burkian identifications, something I think to play with there in terms of where credibility goes. I think we need to make room for it in looking at credibility but also think we have perhaps a bridge back to Aristotle in a sense. Yes, Aristotle's notion from 2500 years ago that credibility involves good sense, good will, good moral character. Good sense has been shown greatly. Good moral character comes out as well. And I think we're maybe seeing the individual human voice through goodwill actually becoming important again. And I'll turn it back over to Brian.

Brian Carroll: Yeah, that's a real headline, too. And we've seen that even in the presentations today. How many of us were kind of amazed when Blufton Today said,

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“We screwed up on that. We admit it. Thanks for pointing that out. We’re going to do better now.” And what that added to the credibility. Lots of limitations.

And so, with the time remaining, I did want to mention where does this leave us? The Philadelphia Inquirer did a story recently, very recently, on the indictment of State Senator Vincent J. Fumo and I may be mispronouncing that. Within hours of the indictment that was handed out, the coverage at the Philadelphia Inquirer included a .pdf of the indictment, the dueling press releases from the various litigants, video of Fumo’s floor speech, audio of the U.S. Attorney’s press conference, a reporter’s blog, actually several reporters blogged on this story from Harrisburg, an archive coverage, related coverage. This is what we’re talking about. This is learning from the emergent dimensions of credibility to inform and add a layer of understanding and connection and interactivity the traditional norms of credibility. Thank you for your time.

[audience applause]

Cindy Royal: I hope this is on. Is this working? I’m Cindy Royal. I’m an assistant professor at Texas State University in San Marcos, which is just 35 miles down I-35. And Dee Kapila is the graduate student in our program and we worked on this project together and I just wanted to give a brief introduction about some of the inspiration for this project and then I’ll turn it over to Dee.

I got my PhD. here at UT. I finished in 2005 and while I was here I was fortunate to be able to work with a renowned scholar that many of you may have heard of, Dr. James Tankard. And in working with him, he gave me several opportunities to collaborate with him on research and he gave me a lot of opportunities to present the results of our research at symposiums and conferences like this one. I worked on a project with him that was published in 2005. It was actually the last thing that was published before he passed away and it was a project called “What’s on the Web and What’s Not?” It was published in Social Science Computer Review. And we did some systematic web searches of topics to kind of assess how comprehensive and how much coverage, how complete coverage on the web was. This was sort of a pre-Wikipedia time frame. We actually we published in 2005 but we were doing our research in 2002 and 2003.

So basically that was something that I started thinking about in 2006 with Wikipedia becoming a very popular destination on the web and a lot of discussion about the credibility, as our previous presenters had talked about, of Wikipedia. But really not a lot of talk about the completeness of coverage on Wikipedia. Are certain topics covered with more detail than others?

So I started thinking about the project I worked on with Dr. Tankard and I thought it would be appropriate since the method that I learned from him was to engage graduate students as much as possible, that I would look for a graduate student to work with me on this project. And I was really delighted when Dee agreed to do so. And so we basically wanted to use some of the same techniques that we did in that study to apply directly to Wikipedia and, again, using the Tankard method and giving credit to him, I want to pass the reins over to Dee to actually do this presentation for us.

Deepina Kapila: Alright. Well good afternoon everyone. As Cindy said, my name is Dee Kapila and this is my first year as a graduate student at Texas State in the

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College of Mass Comm and Journalism. We're going to or I'm going to rather talk about our paper here, *What's on Wikipedia and What's Not?*, and take a look at the completeness of information on the encyclopedia. I'm going to start off with a brief introduction, kind of talk a little bit about Wikipedia and then I'm going to outline some of our questions, some of the things we wanted to find out with our research and then we're going to take a look at what we found. And move on from there.

Okay, so Wikipedia was launched in 2001 and it was deemed the free encyclopedia and since then it's become the internet's third most popular source for news and information. It uses the Wiki software format, which allows a community of users to develop and monitor the content and it operates under the principle that this community of users is going to act as a policing force, keeping the content current and reliable, current and reliable. [laughing]

We're taking a look at some of the previous research that has been done, previous research has listed the risks that are inherent in the model and that includes accuracy, motives, uncertain expertise, volatility, and the coverage and sources. Research has also stated that coverage in an encyclopedia should be even across all subjects. As Dr. Berger pointed out earlier, Shoemaker and Reese have identified the individual as news influencer and the problem with this, kind of the issue that arises is that the creators on the internet tend to be younger so a lot of the information that is on there, a lot of the content is weighted towards whatever their interests are and what's pertinent to them. Dr. Royal and Dr. Tankard also took a look in their previous research at the inherent biases in web content and that was based on systematic searches, as this paper is, as well.

So this project measures the content of Wikipedia against various indexes and it looks at standards of completeness to identify and uncover potential inherent biases. So we're asking five basic questions, as you can see up there. First is are there some systematic gaps or biases in the overall presentation of information? The second question asks if recency is a predictor of the amount of information on Wikipedia. The third asks if importance of information is a predictor of the amount of the information on Wikipedia? We also look at is population a predictor of the amount of information about particular countries on Wikipedia? And #5, is economic power a predictor of the amount of information about individual corporations on Wikipedia?

So the topics, I'll talk about those in a minute, but what we did was we used the predictors of recency, importance, country, population and economic power and we conducted several searches on Wikipedia. What we did was we visited each article for each topic, highlighted the relevant content and then did a word count on the selections and we used an extension of the browser Firefox to highlight the content, right click and then just simply find out what the word count was for that article. Then we captured the word counts in a spreadsheet and plotted the items on charts by ascending order and also by predictor variable.

The topics that we covered were years from 1900 to 2010. Wikipedia has an article for each year and a basically summarizes all the events that happened in that year. We also looked at Academy Award-winning films, Time Magazine's person of the year, leaving out sometimes they had like 2002 they had the whistle blowers. So we did leave those situations out. We looked at the #1 song on the Billboard top 100 from 1940 to 2006 and we took a look at encyclopedia terms on Encyclopedia Britannica and we compared that to the terms on Wikipedia. We looked at the countries in the United Nations and we looked at the Fortune 1000 companies.

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So we'll dive right into the results. What we found for years is you can see there's a backward L-shaped curve. There's a clear progression that's apparent of the length of the article with the year and there's a dramatic increase that we found in years after 2001. Again, the recency variable at work there. The years in the future, as you can see the dip down on that second chart over there. That's because some of those years have not happened yet. It is 'til 2010. So then we calculated the Spearman correlation and in this case it was .79, showing the relationship between those variables.

For the Academy Award-winning films, again you see the backward L-shape curve. There were a couple of exceptions, movies like *Gone with the Wind* and *Casablanca*, they were sort of the outliers because just, not including those, it showed a progression favoring the more current films. And this shows that recency is very important but there are certain films that transcend time and are deemed important by the public for other reasons.

The average word count, we found for the films since 2001, this is really interesting, was 80% higher than the word count for before the year 2001. And the correlation increased from .49 to .62 just by removing *Gone with the Wind* and *Casablanca*.

For Time Magazine's person of the year, again there is an L-shaped curve but it is much softer. There is an even distribution and so it does show that while the bias is unrelated to recency, there is another variable at work there. And, of course, the Spearman correlation in this case was 0 because there really wasn't a relationship with time that we found.

For the Billboard top 100, again there's that curve, backward L-shaped curve, we found that although the average word count was 32% higher since 1990 for artists, it was the same in, you know, the movies that we talked about earlier is that certain artists transcend time and are kind of outliers. Like we all have a Prince album, I'm sure. So he would be one of those. And then in this case we found the Spearman correlation to be .40, again by eliminating those outliers like we did with the movies, as well.

What we did for the encyclopedia terms was we looked at Encyclopedia Britannica and we compared the inches of content to the word count in Wikipedia. And, again, there's an L-shaped distribution, backward L-shape, and the Spearman correlation in this case was .26. Something interesting we found was that out of 100 terms that we selected in Encyclopedia Britannica, 14 of them were not represented in Wikipedia at all.

[audience member's comment inaudible]

Cindy, do you remember?

[audience member's comment inaudible]

Yeah, it was random selection but yeah, so, there 14 that we'll email out. And for the U.N. countries we found another backward L-shaped curve and although it was fairly evenly distributed, you can see that there's a sharp increase and that appeared for the top 22 countries. You could see on the second chart there was a gradual upward curve and that shows the clear relationship between the increase in

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population and the increase in the number of words that were counted. The average word count for top 10% of countries was 63% higher than the rest on the list and this Spearman correlation between the variables in this case was .55.

Similar things happen here in Fortune 1000 when we take a look at the companies. There's the backward L-shaped curve and there's a much sharper increase here, as well. And it was for the top 10% of the countries according to revenue and that, those top 10% of companies accounted for 30% of the total word count on all the companies that we looked at. And the correlation here was .49.

So to conclude, you know, we looked at all these and performed all the searches for each dimension and we found strong biases and we found strong correlations. Taking a look at currency and recency, we found that the more current the topic, the higher the word count and was covered the most. With the encyclopedia articles and random selection, we show that there was a clear bias towards the more common or popular terms. And terms of relevancy, Wikipedia's word count was correlated to the inches in Encyclopedia Britannica and it showed that each publication had a strong agenda.

In population, we found that the larger the country and the larger its population, the higher the word count. And for the revenue, we found that the larger revenue, the higher the word count.

So for, you know, Wikipedia, the nature of Wikipedia is that the information is very volatile. It's constantly changes as time progresses and it's very dynamic. And while Wikipedia's purpose is to serve as a general reference source, we found that the content is weighted and that is again due to the contributors as demographics.

And that's that.

[audience applause]

Lou Rutigliano: You guys going to leave me on my own to get this up? Alright, can you guys hear me? Alright, great. Well, thanks a lot for coming out today. I know we're competing with a spring day in Austin. So just forget about that for now. Pretend it's raining outside.

[audience laughter]

Well, so my name is Lou Rutigliano and I'm a doctoral student here at UT and for the past two semesters I've been teaching a course called The Future of Journalism. Actually, the official name is Writing for Online Publication but I blatantly sensationalized so that it'd get people to register. But I want to talk a bit about my experiences teaching that class. And how I try to address a lot of these issues that we've talked about for the past two days.

Now, the future of journalism, what exactly do I do in that class? If you're wondering that, you know, my parents have been wondering that, too. So you're not alone. Basically what I tell people is, short answer, is that I teach blogging. I teach people how to blog. But that's only 10% of what we do in this class. We cover all kinds of trends, outside the media, inside the media that have been changing the ways that the students of today are going to be working. We look at some of the challenges and opportunities of the new industry and how outside the industry

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there's going to be higher odds for students to be working for things, doing journalism for people that aren't even news organizations and possibly on their own.

We cover all kinds of issues, as well. Dealing with ethics and the responsibilities that comes with being an independent journalist.

Now before I get into that slide, UT has a multimedia sequence and we have skills courses in online that involve web publishing and video production but a lot of times you hear people saying, you know, "We have to teach the mindset that goes along with the tools." There's a lot of intangible qualities that are going to be required by journalists in the future and, you know, I'm a former reporter, newspaper reporter. I did that for about five years and then I got involved in running a blog once I was in grad school and had a lot of time on my hands. I would, I ran this community site, a group blog for people that didn't have any money and we got it up to about 300 members at its peak. Mostly grad students, reporters, you know, those types of poor people.

So I wanted to see how we could combine the best qualities of both traditional reporting and blogging to create something that would help us cover the world more effectively. And also try to keep students from doing some crazy like, you know, switching to PR or something because...

[audience laughter]

... so many students now when I ask them what they want to do, you'll hear PR. They're going into PR because they're scared of what's going to happen out there. Is the whole industry going to disappear? So we address that issue head on. Also you see sometimes in the job ads, lines like this. This is from the Sarasota Herald-Tribune. They were looking for something called a community interaction coordinator for their online division. And they wanted them to do things like this, make the Herald-Tribune.com a place where people could hang out, serve emerging communities, manage partnerships with members of the community. Now when I graduated from undergrad in '97, there was nothing like this and I'm sure a lot of students now wouldn't even know what to do with this. And then Jay Rosen, when he was looking for editors for NewAssignment.net, that's only us academics can, we'd put it in terms like this, you know, editing horizontally, drawing smart crowds, configuring networks.

Now what does that mean? How do we teach that? Can we even teach that? And actually the person who we hired to configure the networks wasn't even a journalist. It was someone who worked for the Howard Dean campaign. Although maybe they had some journalism background. I'll probably hear about that.

So my argument is that you can teach this and the way that you teach it is by combining the fundamentals of journalism, which as we heard on a lot of panels so far, are as important today as they've always been, in addition to the skills, but also there are some very new skills that we have to address. Now, I've got to look at my notes. One of the things that I do as an exercise is to take the daily routine of a reporter and break it down into the small steps. Everything from when you get that coffee in the morning to when you publish the story and approaching it in a way like, you know, seeing how when you break it down, what could a group of citizens help with? And thinking about citizens not as citizen journalists but as citizen research assistants. You know, if I'm going to be going through documents, can I

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get the help of people as we saw with the Fort Myers project so understand these documents. How could I use 10,000 research assistants?

Well look at it in those terms. You try to demystify pro/am and a lot of the lingo that we hear nowadays, which is really something that we've been doing all along, dealing with sources. That's pro/am but now doing it on a level of magnitude and with a level of transparency, it's much different. Also just making people understand that to come up with story ideas and finding sources is something that is never going to go out of style. And developing those skills, continuing to reinforce that you have to be able to do that.

There was a mention about the conversation with a cab driver on the way back from the airport from Ethiopia and all I could think about was what a great piece of video that would be. Like to have video interviews with all the cab drivers in Austin. Actually there's a lot from Sao Paulo. They're driving the Super Shuttles.

[audience laughter]

And getting their analysis. Combining hyper local with global. Also the ability to observe things and use detail in your reporting and do it in pieces that are more reflective and engaging. I'm going to introduce the class to one of my favorite reporters, Charlie LeDuff, who writes for the New York Times and when he was assigned to tell the story of New York after 9/11, he did it by going to bars. He called it "Hanging Out" journalism. This is the sort of thing that we can use the blog format to do. And that is fundamental reporting.

But then there's other challenges. As we heard, and I love it when on the panel, you know, someone backs up my wild claims and generalizations that I just make with good data. Now transparency, I mean people are going to have to, reporters are going to have to face some conflicts with the traditional characteristics of reporting. For 1, openness. Fort Myers having to disclose what it was working on, its investigation from the beginning and share it with the public and other papers. This is something that goes against what we've always been taught. Being open with your personality kind of breaking down this wall between the personal and the professional side of a reporter. You know, this is something that is very new, especially if you're blogging. You really can't hide your personal life. It's out there all the time. You're constantly talking about what you're doing. This sort of thing is going to be new to people.

Availability, one of my students, we talked about Rob Curley who is now a VP at the Washington Post. The hyper local journalism guru. And he has a blog. One of my students read something and said, "You know, I disagree with you." And emailed him and Curley wrote him back in 2 days and invited him out to have lunch in D.C. next time he was in D.C. Now that's something that is just like in Curley's blood. And the fact that he did that goes a lot, you know, goes very far to prove like how we have to treasure these sources, these people because, you know, the same person that donates a photo of their dog could be the person that contributes the unreleased city audit. Understanding that those sources, you know, sometimes you're going to get things that are fluff. Sometimes you get something that breaks the story. Being patient with that sort of source development.

Also, this idea of playful engagement. Henry Jenkins from MIT talks about the need on a cultural level for us to talk about politics in different terms because people are

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so disenfranchised about the way we talk about politics in this country. But, meanwhile, there's this whole playful participatory culture happening along side that sort of disenfranchisement. This sort of thing is what we also need to bring to journalism. And we saw a lot of examples of this on the college newspaper sites with the international sites yesterday. The need to have a little fun with the reporting, be more open, be more opinionated. These sorts of things conflict with what we've always done as reporters.

So, we have to merge the skills set and the mindsets of the bloggers and the journalists together. But also realizing that there's some new ethical challenges, some new responsibilities. We were just talking about this the other day. Would you go to jail to protect the identify of an anonymous commenter? I mean this is your source. We have to think about these things. If you're going to be running your own site, you not only have to have the ability to run it technically and do the writing/reporting but you have to have a sense of law. A lot of these things that we take 1 course on and then kind of forget about when we go down the road in our career is something that is a day to day reality of a blogger.

So bringing those 2 together. And I just want to go through this. I want to show you some quotes from the student. First thing, one thing I've realized is that the students that come into this class are very scared of sort of what's going to happen to their jobs. But not only that, they're sort of bored by journalism. And when they see that there's this level of experimentation happening online, there's new ways to do this, this work, they get interested in it again. But also reinforcing this value of journalism in the midst of this media saturation. We spend a week talking about imagining what could happen 10 years down the line. From now if you have mobile as the platform, if you have geotagged information everywhere, if people are using RFID chips to send information out. You heard that here first so if that, if the panel in five years is talking about RFID, just remember.

[audience laughter]

Now if you logically follow that sort of information overload, what do you need to respond to that? Someone that you can trust to filter that information. And what is that if not one of the fundamental requirements of a reporter. So talking about these things shows the students, hopefully, that their jobs are going to be necessary. And also this idea that the attitude, wanting to cover your city, being interested in issues, wanting to talk to cab driver that is driving you from the airport, find the source, and coming up with ideas of new ways to use the technology to cover things is going to be as important as the technical skills.

These are some comments from our class blog. And you'll see that, you know, we spend a lot of time just talking about these issues. And the students all have a wide range of opinions about what's going on. They're paying attention to it but a lot of times in their classes they're really very busy concentrating on the fundamentals of learning how to do reporting that they don't really get a chance to talk about these things. And they have some very good critical thinking about this. A couple of issues that we haven't really talked about, you know, conflicts between content and advertising, especially on independent websites. I mean we talked about the wall between advertising and editorial in the newsrooms but what if that editorial and advertising is the same person? But also the digital divide. You know, this raises ethical issues as well. I mean what's the ethics behind Clear Channel TV station that decides to just have citizens telling the story to the city when a lot of the people in

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that city don't even have internet access. Who tells their stories? And this is students talking about this. Also this idea, you know, that from these conversations they're able to think about some new possibilities. You know, I don't know when the last time I heard someone say frickin' awesome in a journalism class was. But, you know, their imaginations are coming back and you see here that they want to combine citizens and reporters, citizens and pros in ways that help the pros do their jobs. They realize the value of the sort of thing. You know, having citizens cover local things, if they can do it, let them do it. Let the pros that are trained in investigative reporting deal with corporations and the NSA.

So, you know, I realize I didn't even talk about what we, some of the projects we do. And I've got 1 minute so maybe I won't. But you can ask me in the Q and A. Because I just want to wrap this up. But, you know, I'm not just saying this because I'm going on the job market ...

[audience laughter]

... you know? But I think that J. schools have to start introducing these ideas early on, showing the students, you know, the possibilities are out there before they split off into different sequences and some ways, you know, maybe that's a thing of the past and they won't be doing that for very long but addressing these issues, realizing the value of their work and institutionalizing this sort of thing so that it's required so that everyone goes through it because right now it's an elective. But, anyway, if you do want to contact me to find out more about this stuff, you can reach me there. Alright.

[audience applause]

Alfred Hermida: As Rosental said, I just made the switch this summer from journalism to the academy. And yes, the symposium a couple of years ago was part of that because one of the things that struck me with him is how it brings together both professional and academics 'cause very often you go to a conference and it's just professionals talking or you go to another conference and it's just academics talking and what struck me is you really need to get them in the same room and share their insights and that's incredibly valuable.

So I joined the University of British Columbia in the summer coming after 16 years in the BBC. The last 9 in the BBC news website. And what I do at UBC is multiplatform journalism. We don't have sequences. We just teach journalism and teach the students to tell stories in different media and tell them which is the most appropriate media to do that.

For this paper that I worked on with my colleague, Neil Thurman from City University, what we wanted to do here is try to understand what was happening in the minds of the editors of newspaper websites in the UK with the consult of user generated content. And I know it's late, it's sunny outside but there should be coffee after this so you just need to hang on for another 10 minutes or so and we'll get there.

[audience laughter]

But this is a story of traditional media struggling to adapt to a new world. I found this picture on flicker the other day and I kind of thought it summed up where

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newspapers are at today. You know, they're under siege, they're struggling, there's those people over there, there's you trying to do something different. You know, the people formerly known as the audience, as we've heard here. Yeah, the free paper is the only one standing.

[audience laughter]

Yes, I didn't plant this, by the way. I didn't pay somebody to do this. But, yeah, as we've seen from the discussions yesterday and the discussions today, you know, newspaper are finding it tough. There's all these people out there. There's you, who being active participants in the creation, the dissemination of news. And this idea fundamentally challenges how journalists work. You know, as a journalist, you know, I own the story. You know, I collect the information, I shape it, I package it and then I sell it. Well, not if you work for the BBC but everybody else sells it. So, you know, suddenly we're into a world where, oh, you know, us journalists, we're not in control anymore. There's all these other people doing things that we before used to do that we owned and we don't anymore.

For this study, we looked at user generated content in the context of participatory journalism. And how these newspaper websites were giving their readers, their audience a member to participate. And what we really wanted to find out is how are they managing to integrate this content from their audience with the professional content that they produce as well established newspapers? And for that we did interviews with these senior executives of the websites and tried to get a sense of where they were at in terms of their user generated content initiatives. And this builds on the work that Neil did a couple of years back looking at the same issue that he actually presented at this symposium a couple of years ago. And his paper is coming out shortly in *New Media and Society* so keep an eye out for that.

Broadly what we found, and this is all I'm going to go into more detail in the next few minutes, is that the news media in the U.K. is offering more opportunities for their readers, their users, their audience to take part. But when you ask editors why they're doing this, there's a real mix of motivation. And a lot of it is fear and self interest. And when it comes to thinking in terms of how they're going to manage this, there does seem to be this shift towards moderation, towards filtering how that material is integrating into their sites.

And when it comes to the idea of is this valuable, is this good for us, can we monetize this, does this improve our journalism, there's a real ambivalence that comes out there and a real sense that these editors are not convinced either of the fact that this is going to make them money or that this actually improves their journalism.

When we looked at the websites, we found there were broadly these 8 formats and everybody called them something else; Q and As or live chats or message boards or forums but broadly they fit into these categories. And then what we wanted to look at is say, well, what's happened within the U.K. newspaper online seen from the last time Neil looked at this, which was in April, 2005 to when we looked at this in November, 2006. So in those 18 months, what has happened with these formats? And broadly what we found is that there's been a real shift towards offering more opportunities for readers to participate. Three that I've highlighted here were the comments and stories allowing readers to submit their own views. 2005 it was 1 newspaper, 2006 there were 6 of them. But most of them used moderation to filter

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the content. So really controlling that conversation. [The have your says] where you pose a question and ask for readers to give their opinions, their responses. Slower growth from three to five. Again, a lot of control there.

But what was remarkable is this last one here with blogs where there were seven blogs across the websites and suddenly 18 months later there's 118 blogs, which is just a remarkable, remarkable rise. And as you can see they were sort of broadly across most of the newspapers that had some blogs. But what was interesting with this is that the two leading the way are perhaps the Telegraph and the Times. These are two of the most established, traditional veteran newspapers in the U.K. So in that sense they're not, you know, they're not exactly known for their progressive news agenda. They're fairly conservative. They're right of center. But in terms of blogging, suddenly the Telegraph went from having none in 2005 to having 37, 18 months later. The Times went up from none to 39. So this was a remarkable adoption of blogging and this is decided by the same editors who in 2005 were describing blogs as "extremely dull", "mediocre", or "a very marginal interest".

So you sort of thing well what's happened? Have they suddenly been converted to blogging? Do they suddenly think wow, this is the new journalism? Well, actually when you talk to them you realize it's not exactly that clear cut. That it's less an idea of blogging is this incredible new format that we can use in our journalism but rather a degree of self interest. You know, there is a broad consensus among editors that user generated content was a phenomenon you can't ignore. That's how one executive described it. And they had this real fear that if they don't do something, they're going to be left behind. They're going to become marginal. So we have to do something. We have to do so this. Well why are we doing it? Well because everybody else is doing it and if we don't do it we'll lose readers. So really this sense of fear motivating the decisions.

When it comes to actual blogging and, you know, you'd ask yourself why in particular blogging? Well, part of the reason behind the rise of all these blogs wasn't that these editors suddenly realized blogs were great but rather that they were concerned that their columnists, their best writers would start their own blogs outside of the newspaper website. That they would lose control. Peter Bails is talking at the Times and the Sunday Times about giving their journalists a stake in the website, giving them their own little bit of the Times Online. And it was similar motivation at the Daily Telegraph. They started with their foreign correspondents because they were largely frustrated not being able to get their stories into the paper. Routinely they would get cut. And, of course, as a foreign correspondent there's so much that you encounter. I used to be in the Middle East for 4 years. That never makes it into your news stories. So at the Telegraph, they saw the blogs as a way of keeping their foreign correspondents happy. You know, giving them an outlet for their journalism.

So, you know, this huge rise in blogging, yeah, it'd be wrong to suggest that suddenly these editors are evangelists for blogging. Because when you ask them about well, so what's the long term future, what are your long term plans? There's still a lot of ambivalence and even at the Telegraph, the editor there still talks about blogs as either massively overrated or the other way he categorized them is "their a bit of fun". So you have this real dichotomy going on. They've got all these blogs they're giving to their journalists, they're really pushing it, but they're still not convinced it actually, this is sort of part of what they should be doing as journalists.

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And in that sense, really across editors, there's this perception that user media was an add on to what they were doing. It wasn't really a fundamental rethinking of their role. And, you know, it was complimentary to the professional work. And this idea that, you know, a good story beats anything else was common across a lot of the editors. So what emerges here is you get, they're doing this. They think they need to do it. They're introducing it. Their reasons are somewhat ambivalent. There's self interest. It's, there's not clear motivations.

But the big issue they're facing is how to actually integrate this within that professional journalistic framework. And really what we found here is that the big concern as has been seen in other studies is, you know, risk. Newspapers by their own nature, are risk averse. And you're asking them to take a leap into largely the unknown, something so new that it's completely virgin territory to them. And the main concern from these editors and these editors, these are the main news, national newspapers in the U.K., the top circulation for one of them is 4 million readers so they have an established identity and a brand. The Times has been around for 200 years. For them it's very difficult to step out of that into this new world. And for them it was all about moderation. You know, the idea of having comments there without being checked first, they just thought that was very dangerous. And the strategy, really across the board, has been to mitigate risk in some way, through registration, through moderation. And some ways retaining that traditional gatekeeper role of journalists, part of it here is also the legal framework is very grey. In the U.K. there hasn't any case law in terms of who is liable for a comment posted on a story on a blog like this so there's a real perception of being risk averse and trying to control that risk as much as possible.

But, at the same time, there are perceptions among editors that actually controlling that conversation was something that was beneficial to the brand. But actually there was something to be gained for retaining this traditional gatekeeper role in journalist, in sifting through and organizing this conversation. You know, one editor said, "Who has time to read 15,000 comments?" So what can you do as a brand? You know, if there's too much information, you know, what value can you bring? And certainly for some of the quality board sheets, like the FT, the Telegraph, the Times, they really saw value in saying, "Well, our readers are quite knowledgeable. They know about this stuff. But what we want to do is offer you the best of the comments." So, in a sense, moderating it, controlling that conversation but adding a layer of value where the journalist is filtering that to give you, "Well, we know you're time poor. We'll give you the best comments, rather than just give you everything, and let you wade through that."

So there was value there in terms of having user media that fitted in with a brand identity and what it stood for. But moderation has huge costs and resource implications. You know, one editor described it as "a real pain". It's a big issue for them. And there's a price for success. At the Guardian, they have a very popular World Cup soccer blog. And it became so popular that it really stretched the newspaper's resources. And the editor says, "We need to think about traffic combing techniques. Something becomes too popular, we're going to get overwhelmed. We need to stop people putting in comments." Which is kind of contrary to the idea of opening up to readers. But moderation costs time, costs people and they really feel they have to control the conversation.

In the case of one newspaper, the Independent, it basically just shut down everything. It's one of the smaller ones. It just can't afford to moderate comments

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so it just shut down. It basically hasn't got any form of user generated content, simply because of the financial implications.

So it's clear here that there's this dilemma in terms of balancing the resources with the kind of initiatives you want to do. And there's still a perception of "well what is the value?" Largely the value is seen as, well, providing tip offs or stories, giving us ways of getting into a story. But this was described as a journalistic byproduct. It didn't really justify the investment. And this is one of the issues that nobody had an answer of how to make money at this. One of the ideas that came out of the Times and the FT was thinking, "Well, can we develop niche, self-selected audiences who have very niche interests and then sell that to advertising?" So in our travel section people are really interested in Italy and have that group of users who are contributing their comments and then sell that as a blog to advertisers who are selling tours to Italy. But these are still all ideas in terms of how to monetize this.

There is also some disagreement over the actual value of doing this. Not just journalistically but in terms of, well do people want to take part? At the Guardian they get, at most, five percent of people who actually active participants. So really it's a small percentage. But part of it that emerged from these interviews that somehow maybe absolute numbers don't count so much but rather the quality of the comments you get. And that really if a small number take part, it can make it much more interesting for everybody else.

So, to wrap up in the last minute, as I've just been told, it's clear that this idea of user generated content challenges the way the news industry works. You know, it undermines this "we write, you read" dogma. And what this research showed is there's a great deal of ambivalence towards participatory journalism. The news, established news organizations are struggling to integrate this within their culture. They're struggling in terms of what role they should play. They're struggling to determine its value. But yet they're doing this. And they're stepping into this, retaining their traditional gatekeeper role. And in a sense they have too much to lose by just opening their doors. They have a brand and they have an identity that defines. And now the thinking seems to be that using that brand and identity to define the content as opposed to the other way around. So perhaps there's a role here for established news organizations to have this kind of hybrid role where they say, "Yes, we want a conversation but we're going to control that conversation. We're going to have something that fits in with our brand. We're going to have something that we will act as a gatekeeper and mediator and we will add this layer of value by sifting through these comments and giving you the best of what the other readers have to say, as opposed to just opening up to everybody." Thank you.

[audience applause]

Marguerite Moritz: Okay, anyone, open it up to the audience and if you could either go to a mic or if you're on that side I think that mic over there works. And if you're on this side, I can hand you this one. Okay, go ahead.

Audience Member: Yeah, I had a question for you, I'm always curious if people want to read these user generated content or it's only like the ones who produce it who like to read themselves? But, you know, like I'm sure that people like to write but do they like to read what others write or do you have an idea of that?

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Alfred Hermida: That's an area that we didn't look at this. But I know suddenly from talking to my students, this is purely anecdotal evidence, not scientific in any way or form, that they like to read comments. When they go to a news story, they almost expect there to be some comments and they like to go through them to get a flavor of what people are saying. Now they don't take part. They say they don't leave a comment but they will actually read it. And I think that's an area that needs to be looked at. You know, do people read through the comments? If there are 200 comments, do people read through that? If there are 10 comments, do they read through that? So, you know, everybody gets very excited about user generated content, having this conversation and there's great value there but I think there's also an issue in terms of, well, does anybody have time to read 200 comments or 300 or 500?

Marguerite Moritz: As long as I have the mic, I'm going to follow up on that question. What's the difference between the 200 comments that come in via email and a very much more traditional letters to the editor? And you know letters to the editor, you might have 200 of them and they might even say, "We got a ton of letters." So you want to comment on that?

Alfred Hermida: Well, I think in a sense that's adopting the same model. The difference is that rather than have one publication with limited space, you can open that up across, horizontally across the newspaper and have far more diverse interests and far more voices taking part. Plus also it does, there's more of a dialogue going on because you can respond to another comment. So the discussion going on might be, and this used to happen at the BBC all the time, you would start a talking point and somebody would make a comment and suddenly the discussion would go 90 degrees to the way you wanted it to go. But you thought, "Okay, well, people want to talk about that, not this that we thought they wanted to talk about." And that makes it fundamentally different so the more static letters to the editor approach.

Marguerite Moritz: Anyone else?

Audience Member: Lou? I was wondering in your class, do you make your students blog and, if so or if not, do you make them blog in public or allow them to do it in private?

Lou Rutigliano: Well, the, can you hear me? I found that a lot of the students already have their individual blogs, right, or at least their MySpace page. So they're, you know, comfortable with some of those things. But what I did in the first semester was have them do group blogs that were public and there were four groups of three students and now they're all working on the same blog to try to do, to build more momentum. A couple of things that come up is that when they're, you know, they do it over the course of two months and trying to build an audience for a blog nowadays is really difficult because of the fact that the audience is spread so thin. Many of them are running their own sites now or already contributing to someone else's site. So introducing something into that arena, that's going to give them the experience of interacting with an audience is tricky. There's another reason why you should have, the departments should have that class. So that they can have sort of a blog that's run by students from semester to semester, to build on the momentum.

Alfred Hermida: If I could jump in there, as part of my course at UBC, all the students have their own blogs and what they have essentially is like a beat blog.

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They choose an area that they are interested in and they have to blog twice a week on that. And for some of them initially they were very skeptical about “well, this isn’t journalism.” And others have embraced it. There’s one student who is writing about the writing in the New Yorker and he’s, you know, he’s come to me, “Can I do more than 2 posts a week?” I’m like, “No, two posts.” “Well can I do more but just tell you not to grade them?” Okay.

[audience laughter]

But what I’ve learned through this there’s a real active blogging community that discusses the writing in the New Yorker. And he’s become a real part of that. And people leave comments on his blogs and vice versa. And I think for a journalist to suddenly have that interaction with your beat is remarkable. And I think it’s something we should be introducing our student journalists to at a very early stage.

Lou Rutigliano: Alright, the students, they come up with niche projects, too. One of the projects last semester was sort of a hyper local coverage of apartment complexes, right down to the units they lived in. See which ones had maintenance problems. So that sort of thing.

Audience Member: On the question for Alfred, are the newspapers you studied, what sort of staffing resources were directed towards managing the flow of user generated content and was it a reassignment of existing resources or was it an aggregating crease in the number of staff and personnel?

Alfred Hermida: I don’t know. I can’t remember off top of my head but it was very, very limited and at one newspaper the had 2 people managing everything. And they said, “Oh, they cope just fine.” But they also worked 12 hour days. So, and others, this is the real issue. What resources do you assign to it and if you assign from resources to it, where do they come from? There certainly wasn’t anything coming out in terms of, “Oh, we’re going to hire lots of new people to do this.” So my impression was very much that they’re trying to do it within the existing resources or, in some cases, reallocating how they do things, taking from one place to put it somewhere else.

Audience Member: Also, as a related question, I think you focused mostly on text content. But are any of these newspapers accepting reader submitted photos, video, audio?

Alfred Hermida: There’s a couple that are taking pictures. The Scotsman is really pursuing the idea of your story quite aggressively because what it’s realized is that there’s lots of people with connections to Scotland or who have experiences there who relate to that sort of personal content. But, again, they try to steer that quite closely so they’ll ask for people’s impressions of the Edinburgh Festival or were you at this event? Tell us your story. As opposed to just, “Tell us anything you want.”

Audience Member: Can I ask one final question, if you don’t mind? Sorry, this is the last one. British papers traditionally have had sort of very strong political identity of course, unlike their American counterparts. Have you found that much of the user generated content and the comments have been towards, directed towards the opinion part of the paper? And are they mostly eliciting like minded opinions, like the Telegraph drawing from the right and the Guardian from the left or are there a lot of contrarian viewpoints?

Alfred Hermida: Well, we didn't look at the content of the comments themselves. I think what you can infer from the fact that the Times and the Telegraph were offering blogs, that a lot of what they're offering, they're offering those blogs to their columnists, to their opinion writers, to people who are known to have a certain take on a story or an issue. And I think that partly reflects why there are so many places like the Times and the Telegraph.

Audience Member: Well, this question is to whoever wants to answer it but I think Lou might be the main interested one. Do you think that the people are losing from sight that a blog is a web publishing tool rather than a way of producing content? By now, I mean it's becoming more a term that is, there is referring to a way of reading the text or creating well a content.

Lou Rutigliano: So often it seems that when blogs are used it's just basically to post comments and that's the format, sort of overrides the whole idea of interaction and some of the crowd sourcing stuff that we're seeing now. You know, blogs are, you know, I'm not saying that you teach people how to blog, that really encompasses so much more than just the standard thing that we've seen. It's almost that blogging has become kind of like old fashioned now that it's set up. It opens the door to so much more. So when the students see that there's more that you can do than just put out material in a different sort of way, that there's more experimentation that's out there. Gets them a little bit more excited because they don't really read the blogs on newspaper sites.

Alfred Hermida: I think from the newspaper sites we looked at, there's still a great deal of ambivalence and, in some ways... well at one newspaper they decided we have to do blogs so the way they editorially chose their bloggers is they had a newsroom meeting and said, "Who wants to blog? Hand's up." Whoever volunteered got a blog. And I'm trying to think what editorial decision would ever be based on just, "Okay, who wants to host the evening news? Okay, off you go."

[audience laughter]

It just in no other context would you just say, "Oh, you want to have a blog? Here you go!" And this is a national newspaper with two million readers and on their website they're just saying, "Go off and do it." I don't know it just showed me that these guys really don't understand what blogging is about or what it can be used for but they're doing it because they feel they ought to because everybody else is.

Audience Member: This is for the two individuals that require your students to do blogs for class. Now from what I've seen, these students have their own blog language. They use symbols for facial expressions and, you know, codes for when they're laughing and what have you, so how do you, do you teach them to write in a traditional journalism style or do you let them freely write in their own language?

Alfred Hermida: Well, the parameters I, we set up for the blogs is that they have to be journalistic in content. They are about an issue. But what I say to them is that this is not a straight news story. And that's perhaps the hardest thing, too, that they have to get out of is they tend to first, the first few entries are kind of straight news, straight reporting. And what I'm saying is the tone can be more conversational. It's more informal. It's commentary, it's reflecting what other people have said, it's trying to put things into context. Use linking as part of that

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editorial process. I'm very, very, I'm really pushing them, I say, "Links are a key part of your blog. Part of that editorial process when you put your entry together." But in terms of style, it's still a journalistic product so no smileys, none of that. The tone can be more informal, more casual, more conversational.

Lou Rutigliano: Yeah, I describe it as post the thing that you'd say, the first thing you'd say when you go back to the newsroom, that you tell your friends at the end of the day when you're sitting in the bar. That's the type of stuff that you want to have on the blog. Alright? But it's really tricky because, you know, this whole spectrum and over here is, you know, when they're having a little too much fun with it and it's like so far outside the boundaries of, you know, journalism that you really don't even know how to grade it.

[audience laughter]

And then, but you know, you can make the argument that that's kind of valid, too, 'cause maybe that's attracting users so maybe that's something that reporters have to do, you know? You can't always be "on", in journalism mode. You have to let your guard down and joke around a bit. And then over here, it's maybe they do it in too stiff a voice and that defeats the whole purpose of blogging in the first place. So you really have to work with that.

Daniel Reimold: And I would only argue, also, that with the student sites that I looked at, breaking the rules is part of the appeal. It's not so much pushing outside the boundaries of journalism but creating new journalism, as it is. Whether it's contractions or cursing or, you know, turning inverted pyramid on its head or whatnot. They seem to really enjoy that as part of the process.

Alfred Hermida: And we found, we had the students cover the student elections and the student body and we basically just said, "Cover it as you want. You organize it, you do the coverage, you do whatever you want." And some of them did a spoof Daily Show type take on the elections, which I don't think any of us on faculty would have ever thought, "Why don't we do a spoof Daily Show to show the ridiculousness of the student elections where you have 1 candidate and a joke candidate and nobody cares."

[audience laughter]

I don't think we would have thought of that as putting that in terms of our news coverage. But they did and it was interesting. It was a really good experiment.

Lou Rutigliano: Yeah, I was telling someone, you know, I refer to them like "the young generation" which I can't believe I don't consider myself that anymore.

[audience laughter]

I've gotten to that point in my life but, you know, they have such a zero tolerance policy for pretension and phoniness that it's gotten to the point now where they don't watch the news, the nightly news, they watch the Daily Show and that's considered honest. Because of the way that they, you know, the voice they have.

Marguerite Moritz: Okay, I think we can take one or two more questions. Last one. Okay.

Audience Member: A question for Cindy and Deepina. Am I getting the names right? I'm sure many of us are familiar with the recent controversy involving the Wikipedia and the New Yorker article and the New Yorker did an extensive article on Wikipedia and they actually talked about this contributor who apparently was, you know, had billed himself as a professor with a PhD. in Theology who was unwilling to disclose his name because he didn't have the permission of the school and it turned out, in fact, it was a 19 year old, I think, without any kind of degree or authority whatsoever and the New Yorker had published an editor's note and then Wikipedia, I believe, said it would change its policies or examine its policies with respect to sort of certifying author's credentials. Do you think this episode sort of reveals like, I mean A) what do you think of this episode but B) you know, does this, do you think it would harm Wikipedia's long term sort of claims to credibility and authority?

Deepina Kapila: I think, you know, Wikipedia is still fairly new. It's, you know, from 2001 and I think that they're kind of at that phase as sort of, you know, the product life cycle you talk about in the introductory phases to where they're going to have these things that are going to come up and they should, I think, because I personally love Wikipedia but I take it with a grain of salt. And I think things like this are going to make people in control of the people that are controlling the information kind of tighten up sort of their restrictions and tighten up some of the things they look for in users that submit content. And things like this is why they're doing this.

And there's been numerous other things that have happened. I know there have been a lot of fake celebrity deaths and things like that, that have been coming out in the newspaper. Actually have some friends in the audience right over there that altered content on Wikipedia as an experiment to see how long it would take and what did it? Like two weeks?

Audience Member: About three weeks.

Deepina Kapila: Three weeks. And that's a long time considering that it's the 3rd most, you know...

Audience Member: And these are journalism students who you had doing this?

Deepina Kapila: Graduate students.

[audience laughter]

And a teacher, actually, as well back there. So, so, but yeah, it has, and it's interesting to see how long the public really takes to sort of jump on that. But I think for Wikipedia to sort of build on its reputation and keep attracting the types of people that it does, it does need to sort of tighten, you know, the types of people that are submitting things. And they are working on doing that.

Marguerite Moritz: Yeah, if you're in graduate school it's considered research. If you're not then it's just a prank. Okay, 1 more question.

Cindy Royal: It's not a question. It's just to complete the question that Sul just had. I think that in regard to our study, which was on the completeness of information. We didn't really even look at credibility. Other people are doing that.

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But as Dee said, as you start putting more controls on it, it's definitely going to change the nature of the discourse. It's not going to be that sort of crowd sourcing, open source theory. There's going to be more controls. It may take longer for things to be approved to be on there and it's going to change the demographics of the people that are posting the content. So our study will definitely change based on things that are changing within Wikipedia. And that's why Dee mentioned that it's sort of a dynamic, changing study that we can only take a snapshot and then continue to compare over time.

Marguerite Moritz: Okay, thank you panel very much. Thank you, audience. Rosental is serving coffee out in the lobby.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Yes, get a dose of caffeine and come back here because we have more for you.