<u>**2009: International Symposium on Online Journalism**</u>

Day 1, Panel 2: Using New Platforms and Social Networks to Enhance Interactivity and Journalism Outreach. Are Journalists Engaging in the Conversation?

Moderator/Chair:
Bob Rivard, Editor, *San Antonio Express News*

Panelists:
Paul Brannan, Emerging Platforms Editor, *BBC News* (United Kingdom)

Rachel Nixon, News Director, NowPublic.com (Canada)

Robert Quigley, Internet Editor and Social Media Coordinator, Statesman.com and Austin360.com

Dwight Silverman, Interactive Journalism Editor, *Houston Chronicle*

Bob Rivard: Good morning.

Audience: Good morning.

Bob Rivard: You hear that? Come on, sit down. [claps hands] No extra credit if you don't get in here at the very start of my very scintillating presentation. I'm Bob Rivard. I'm the editor of *The San Antonio Express News* about two hours down the road in the rain on I-35, but I'm really glad to be here with you. I made it in my little Scion xB through all the trucks. And there is nothing like Rosental Alves's annual new media symposium. And the great thing is every year he makes room for a select group of individuals who know little or nothing about new media. And that brings me to me. [laughter]

We have a great panel of four experts. I know it says five in your book. Unfortunately, for us, Andy Carvin, the Senior Strategic Editor for Social Media for NPR had a family matter. He won't be here with us today, but we've got four great presenters; two from afar and two from near. In all seriousness, I do think Rosental asked me to be the moderator today because I probably more closely resemble some of the older demographic in the audience here, which is: I am embracing social media, but I oftentimes don't know what I am doing. I've been on Facebook for about a year. I'm EditorRivard if you tweet. And I am 614,500 followers behind Lance Armstrong this morning. [laughter] So, which means I'm gaining, by the way, so I need all the help I can get. And I guess we start today with one

simple question, what are you doing? In all seriousness, you follow me, I'll follow you. That's the code, right? So get busy. By the time I sit down, I should have lots and lots of new friends.

I am not, because I am not an expert, going to take very much of our time. We're a little bit behind. I'm not going to do long introductions of our experts. We're just going to get right into it. But let me say that Paul Brannan, who is going to be our first presenter, and Rachel Nixon both worked together for any number of years for BBC.com in London. I think you were the Deputy World Editor and you were the Deputy Editor of the whole site. Paul is still in London. Rachel is now in Vancouver, and she is the editor… I'm going to sort of present people in twos, because we have two from Texas and two from England, one by way of Canada now. Paul is the Emerging Platforms Editor for BBC News and has a long background in BBC's great news tradition and also their great website. If you don't use BBC.com, get on it while we're talking and look. It's the antithesis really of an American news site, because it's not cluttered with crappy banner ads and pop-ups and –

Paul Brannan: It will be.

Bob Rivard: – you know, channels that nobody cares about except corporate, and it's just a really great site. And you probably listen to the Beeb on NPR here in Austin or wherever you are, but their website is just terrific and they still cover the globe, which is becoming a rapidly vanishing process. Rachel now is no longer with the BBC. She's in Vancouver as I said. She will present second. And she's the Global News Editor of Canada-based NowPublic.com, which I was not familiar with until I started to prepare myself for this. But you can get on it again while we're talking, and I'm sure she'll probably be on it, but they call themselves the world's largest participatory news network. So it's a really neat thing and something very new in what we do. With that, and I'll introduce our other two panelists when we get closer to your time up here, let's get right into it. We're going to catch up on the clock for you, Rosental, and we're going to have some great presentations. And I did ask you what you were doing and I expect to hear from you while I'm sitting down. So let's go. Paul. Please welcome Paul Brannan all the way from London.

[Applause.]

Paul Brannan: [Gets presentation set up.] As you see, I wrote a fabulous presentation. I spent ages on this. Been a journalist for 33 years, so I'm one of the elder statesmen, and that's hard to believe, land in that senior group over 50. And I think this is probably in all those 33 years the most exciting time to be a journalist. It's an extraordinary period. It's completely Wild West. I know it's terrifying, but there are amazing opportunities out there as well. So I think, yes, journalism is going through a really profound change and it's really uncomfortable at the moment, but we'll come out at the other

side and I think it will be a lot stronger. So my key points really today are exactly that and that social media is going to be at the heart of society and it's also going to be at the heart of the new journalism that's going to emerge. I think it's still in its infancy. It's fantastically hard to pull off. And I think there's a lot of effort required to actually marry what we think of as current standards of journalism to social media practices. But when you get it right, the rewards are absolutely huge. Also thinking you're all PowerPointed out by now. It's hard work being talked at, so I'm going to scamper through at a bit of a pace.

Just on this number of shots, all of these have actually been user-generated content. So there's the Buncefield, the biggest oil depot fire in Europe since the second world war, London bombings, the New Orleans flooding, Hudson River, and so on and so on. And the middle shot is actually from the G-20 Meeting which happened in London on April 1st. Wait a minute. All the various devices. [Laughter. Empties his pockets of electronic devices causing noises.] Sorry about that. Okay. All quiet now. So the G-20 was held in London just a couple of weeks ago. Thousands of protesters took to the streets of London. It started peacefully, but across the day tensions rose and trouble did eventually flare up. On the website, the BBC News website, we were in what we call live event mode, live update mode, so we have a specific page where we pile in with just really brisk breaking news from a variety of people at the event. We also call in Twitter feeds. We pull in expert analysis. We pull in comments from radio analysts, TV people. And it's run in sort of a chronology, so the new stuff constantly goes at the top and it pushes everything else down. Twitter was being used by our people on the ground as well as a lot of people actually taking part in this demonstration.

So what I've got is just a little bit of video. I hope it's going to work. It's a package that was prepared after the demonstration. And the reason I want to show it is that during the course of this day a man died of an apparent heart attack – there's an update on that story this morning – after he was pushed to the ground by a policeman. And a woman appeared to be slapped in the face by a policeman and afterwards hitting her leg with a baton after she apparently swore at him. And in both those instances, officers have been suspended. They are currently the subject of inquiries by the Independent Police Investigation Commission. So I'll just run this bit of video.

[Video plays…]

Officer: Move back.

Reporter: It has been the images of police violence from the G-20 demonstrations that have kept them in the headlines and the death of Ian Tomlinson after being pushed over by an officer that will keep them there. Today with his force's reputation hemorrhaging, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul

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Stephenson stepped in and asked the Inspectorate of Constabulary for a review of public order policing.

Man: The Commissioner has asked us to look at the tactics that are used around peaceful protests. And he has some concerns about whether those tactics are right, I think, for the time we are in.

Reporter: One area the inspectors are looking at is the corralling or "kettling" of protestors seen at the May Day demos of 2001 and repeated at the G-20 protest in the city two weeks ago.

It was here where six of the City of London's mains streets converge outside the Bank of England that the police created their controversial kettle. They held a few thousand people here for several hours to prevent them causing trouble, but no one was allowed to leave and they had no access to food or water.

Sir Paul says he's also concerned by the disturbing images still emerging like this woman being hit by a police sergeant.

Officer: Go away.

Man: All right.

Reporter: When she taunted him further, he drew his baton and hit her again. The Independent Police Complaints Commission are now investigating. In these still pictures, you can see the baton striking her legs, and it's clear the officer is not wearing his police number on his shoulder as he should.

[End of video.]

So the point of that is a lot of that content, which was in one of the main BBC reports, it was the top news story of the day, came from people inside the demonstration. That's the key message. The audience were actually making their own content. They don't need masts and towers that we own anymore. They don't need presses. The whole business has become completely democratized. And I think that's a forced fantastic good actually; although, that makes a very uncomfortable ride for journalists. Here are some of the…

Well, actually, just before we go onto the next slide, who of you have heard about the Domino's Pizza story that was going around a couple of days ago? I think most people. So a couple of employees in a back room horsing around make a prank video, so they say, of adulterating food which is apparently

going to go out to customers. And it's put on YouTube. A million page or a million views of that piece of video within a very short time. And then suddenly, Domino's reputation is devastated. And if you're looking for an illustration of the power of social media, that's a fantastic example of how quickly something like that can go around the world and it can really damage a brand and reputation in an instant, and it's very, very difficult to stop in its tracks. (So…oh, that seems to be going on.)

Here's another example. This picture went around, actually, it was broadcast in the UK by a TV station and it purports to show a fire in the west country of England. If you look at the two animals that are sheltering in the river there, I think they're elk, we don't have elk in the UK, so a cursory examination would have made people realize that that's actually not the southwest of England. [laughter] In fact, the picture comes from the cover of this book. It was just lifted and pushed on. And there are plenty of people out there who want to make mainstream media look silly. So, you know, one of the perils of actually engaging with social media and content that's created outside your own organization [is] you can come unstuck. So you have to treat all of this stuff like anything else, like a tip off into the newsroom. You've got to check and check and recheck.

Here's another one. A pretty crappy picture. It appeared on a website, and it had a ring of authenticity, because at the time I think there were soldiers who were being held hostage and threatened with all kinds of terrible things. And actually, you can see it's an elaborate hoax. So that's a couple of the issues. Verification.

Steve Jobs heart attack. You know, was it Mark Twain [who said], "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth gets its shoes on"? You know, it was quickly knocked back, but I think Apple's share price dropped very sharply on this report that we covered later. Just shows how quickly people react to this stuff and how damaging it can be. You have to… CNN, have got their I-Report UGC areas, a sort of off-shore island away from the main CNN website, and yet, you know, they were around to be criticized for this. So, you know, whether they escape the brand damage or not, I don't know.

This is a problem peculiar to the BBC, I suspect, but it snowed in England in winter. Apparently this is big news for our audience, because they sent us 35,000 pictures in a single week. [laughter] These are some of them. Which brings to, you know, how the hell do you cope with that kind of volume? Who's got the resources to cope with that? Is it sensible? Is it sustainable? And, you know, we probably published less than one percent of the pictures we received. So, you know, it was a piss-off for the 34,500 others who didn't get their picture used.

There is still a queue also in getting your content through to a mainstream broadcaster or media outlet. And I think when you get this stuff right, it can be spectacularly successful. So we've actually now got an interactive reporter

whose job it is to help sift and sort the best of the content that's coming from all these sort of social media sites. We have a weekly TV show. This lady Chivonne[sp?] ?? also does inserts into our rolling news channel, depending on what the story is on a particular day. We've got a "Have Your Say" section of our website, where we're corralling and curating some of the best of the content that's coming in.

Can't go through a presentation without mentioning Twitter. I know pretty much everybody on the panel is going to mention Twitter, but this was one of the occasions when the penny dropped for me. It's not just about "Now I'm buttering my toast, and now I'm putting marmalade on it." So there's a plane that crashed on the runway at Heathrow last year. And actually BBC put up a helicopter and [they] were filming it. I was watching on a live news channel, and I was also able to have the world's wise pouring into my desk, and I had the radio on, all kinds of stuff. So I was at the kind of eye of the storm. I was able to Twitter this stuff very quickly. I got a message from the head of the Global News Division, Richard Sambrook, who's actually at Heathrow at the time, saying, "Well the hell are you getting all this information from? I'm down here, and I don't know any of this." And that just shows the power of Twitter. One of my colleagues put it quite nice. He said, "Micro blogging so usefully is becoming indispensable. It's just right for managing loose networks of relationships. Just the sort of thing journalists need to do constantly. And ubiquitous mobile computing in the world and the world turns into a navigable social information field." So that's sort of Twitter.

I'll just mention one other thing, because somebody else will bring it up for sure. We were doing live updates from Mumbai when those terrorists actions were going on in the heart of that, heart of the city there. And again, one of these live update pages. We pulled in a tweet that said, "The security forces ask that people stop Twittering about what was going on, on the ground." Because it was giving information to the people who were perpetrating these acts. We put that into our live update feed. We actually said, "This came from Twitter." We didn't check it out. We passed it on, on the basis of, "This is what we're hearing. We're telling you what we know as soon as we know." But actually, there was a huge pushback from the audience that said, "Why the hell are you doing this? I come to you for properly sourced, verifiable news. I don't want just the noise that's out there. And you shouldn't be doing it." So I think we probably need to revisit that. We don't have a kind of hard and fast policy about how we're going to deal with this in the future, but certainly Twitter is blisteringly quick. And either we're always going to be second to the races or we have to figure out a way of incorporating it into our content where we're actually flagging it up and signposting it as, "This is unverified. This is unchecked." And sometimes it's very difficult to check.

Lots of tools out there. I'm sure you're familiar with lots of them. SpinBox is sort of gaining ground. There's a little trial going on inside the BBC with the news gathering. It's a speech to text app, for want of a better word, so you talk into your phone, it comes out as text in your blog or wherever the hell

you want it to come out. So that's one of them. AudioBoo is another one. So it's an iPhone app where you can actually be in the middle of the G-20 demonstrations and you can actually in effect become a radio reporter in the heart of the demonstration. Flickr, ShoZu, Fred, Seesmic — BBC is dipping a toe in the water in all these places. Seesmic, I'm sure a lot of you are familiar with. It's kind of video led conversations with video blogging. Don't want to dwell too much on that.

This is interesting. This is not a BBC site. It's actually come from Channel 4. But I've put it up here because I think it's really interesting. It's a sort of social media, big media thing coming together, but it's actually happening inside Bebo. So what is Battlefront? It's a friendly army of 20 young campaigners who've got causes instead of cannons and big ideas instead of bombs and they are out to change the world. And what they've actually done with this is team up these 20 young people who have all got issues that they care passionately about, and they are supported by mentors, 20 mentors, who are experts in all kinds of fields, like PR and communication and video making. And they actually boast to have these young [who] can people push through and actually try and change the world they're in. The reason I like it is it's actually happening inside their space. It's where these kind of young tribes gather to converse and talk to each other and share things. And I think in a way maybe, you know, the fortress BBC has to start detaching some of its content and moving out more and start going inside social networks and actually connect with people where they choose to be rather than expecting them to come to us. And they're also linking out on this site. I don't know if you can see at the bottom there, the little Post-It notes, but little social network site meets lots of other social network sites. So things like PledgeBank.com. This is about getting people who are passionate about something finding 10 others, 20 others, 100 others to actually help take on a cause. "I'll do something if somebody else will help. If 10 people sign up, I'll do this; otherwise, I won't." And it's that sense of you're not alone, you can achieve things, that there's common interests.

Blyk. I don't know how many people are familiar with Blyk. It is… I think it's interesting as well. It's free as a business model, if you are 16 to 24, that is. You get free minutes and texts to a value of about 15 quid on your mobile, as long as you agree to receive ads on your mobile. I think you get six messages a day. They are either SMS or MMS. And they've changed the terms recently. There's been a bit of kickback from the audience. But it's still essentially free and it's a group that's a tribe and you have to prove your age to get into Blyk. You can't just sign up. Firstly, you need a passport or whatever. But once you're in, you get these messages. It's fabulously attractive to advertisers, because they're hitting a demographic that, you know, traditionally they really want to get to. And actually, I think, if you are a young person, potentially, you know, if you're getting information about new games or music or flash in the kind of things you're interested in, then maybe it's advertising you are receptive to as opposed to antagonistic about.

The former Nokia president is one of the founders of Blyk, so I think there's some sort of smart people behind it. And it's not just free minutes on your mobile and you get some messages. They are also creating content, so they've got a Blyk blog. And it's the kind of stuff you might have seen in traditional journalism terms in Showbiz pages, so put your questions to Lily Allen. For the older members of the audience, she's a popular young person singer in the UK. 30 Blyk members are hoping to film and star in a music video for a new grime star – I don't know what that is – called Ice Kid. And the video is going to be shot on member's camera phones. MTV is going to screen the footage around. They're making the video. So suddenly you're starting to see what might have been designated journalism content, you know, now or a couple of years ago is actually starting to be made inside a social network which is based around young people.

I'm getting that hurry up thing. BBC Backstage, I'm going to just mention. Backstage is a liaison between a sort of wider developer network. So there's way more stuff that we'd like to do with our content. We don't have enough developers. We don't have enough time. We actually frankly don't have all the great ideas. So we're actually encouraging people to come and work with us and use our content in ways that they think is interesting, bring it back to us, [and] if we like it, we'll pay them. And that gets that content more widely used.

This is one of the newest things that's come out of this sort of Backstage area, BBC R&D TV. And it's completely contrary to what the BBC has been doing, which is, "Here's some BBC content." We actively want you to take it away and share it and distribute it. Mash it up. Build it into your own content. Sign, post it. So anyway, you know, verily push it around. As long as the BBC branding goes with [it], we're very happy. Is that okay. Fine.

Robert Rivard: Thank you very much, Paul.

[Applause.]

Robert Rivard: And now we'll go right to Rachel. I'm sorry there's so little time. You've come so far. But this is going to be a continuing conversation throughout the next hour and then later today. So we'll hear more from you, I hope, too, when we get into a conversation with the audience.

By the way, while Rachel is setting up, let me ask, how many here are student journalists? You know, something very interesting is happening with social media that young journalists were doing on their own, and it took a long time for aging editors to catch up with them and realize what was happening and parse out the good from the bad and the ugly. But almost everyone coming out of school now and young, enterprising journalists in the newsroom maintain their own web pages. And they use that to promote themselves and their work, because they know that in a sense they are a brand. And there is no such thing as job security anymore, but there is

unprecedented opportunities. So you are only as good as your own work, and you need to market it and do that effectively. And they are using social media oftentimes without the senior editors in the newsroom, who are not connected the way they should be in this world, even knowing what they are doing. And they are outside the websites of their newspaper using social media tools to really broaden their readership, go outside their markets, and get people who follow their work intensely, particularly for people that do enterprise journalism, investigative journalism, or special beat journalism. They are using these tools to in effect create a parallel newsroom that is doing great things for them and good things for the paper, too, I would argue. Rachel, please.

Rachel Nixon: All right. Thank you. Good afternoon. I think we are now… Can everyone hear me?

Rosental Calmon Alves: Yeah.

Rachel Nixon: Okay, great. Thanks, Rosental, for inviting me to speak today. I'm going to be coming at this topic from a bit of a different perspective, I guess, from many of the other panelists, in that all of the content that NowPublic gets in is actually user-generated content as opposed to integrating user-generated content into traditional media models. So here's what I'm going to talk about. I'm going to look a bit at some what NowPublic is and the approach that it's taken to user-generated news since it was founded four years ago. I'm also going to look at the supply chain of news, what we've learned about the impact that all this content that's coming in has on the so-called supply chain, and how consumers are creating it and interacting with it. There's a few myths and misconceptions around Cecily Jones, and I think it's fair to say, so I'm going to tackle those. And also how news organizations can make sense of this confusing array of content that comes in and actually helps to exploit this vast array of conversations that are happening in real time.

So at NowPublic, we're really at the epicenter of the shift away from news and information as it's traditionally filtered and processed by mainstream media towards content generated by audience, by ordinary citizens. The idea behind NowPublic is that we wanted to create the largest news organization in the world. We currently have 170,000 contributing reporters in 6,000 cities, and the company has raised just under $13-million in venture capital. So the idea is that we wanted to crowd source the news, so if something happened, there would be someone there to record it. And our job really is to make it easy for people to contribute material and to also collect and organize and then distribute the material that comes in. But what's happening as a consequence–(don't like that very much)–what's happening now is that we really have this whole new news cycle. So basically when an event happens, someone witnesses it obviously, and they report it back to their network, which could be Facebook or it could be Twitter. The crowd sees it, looks for more information, and provides further input to the people

who are actually there on the scene. This can actually go on to affect the event as it's unfolding. To explain what I'm talking about, I think it's best to show how this has happened in practice.

So as you may remember, there were protests at the Republican National Conventional back in September last year. Sorry, August last year. And we at NowPublic were alerted to video coverage, live streaming video coverage of the protests on Qik via a voice report which was phoned into our site. And I won't play the video now, but this – the people on this video were actually saying, "Well, the police are fencing us in. Can you tell us where to go?" And because Qik has a feedback mechanism, you can send a text message to the people who are there streaming the video. So what happened was that people were sending directions to people who were monitoring — to the people on the ground. So people on Twitter were basically conversing amongst themselves and then sending directions to the people at the protest. And then the people at the protest were themselves then moving around because of the directions that were being sent by the people through Twitter. So essentially what this means is that it's transforming the story in real time as it happened. And this is a phenomenon that I think we're starting to see more often. And what this also means is that the supply chain of news, as I said, is changing.

So let's go back to the 1970's. And what used to happen in the 1970's with news is an event would happen and people would witness it. And they'd each have their own piece of the pie. They'd each have their own impression of what was happening. And then a reporter would come along and collect all that information. And they would use all the skills they have to make sure that the story is complete and balanced and informed and makes sense. And then they would go away and the audience would go away, and the reporter would turn that information into a piece of media that gets distributed, as you know. And then the audience returns, and that event is now transferred to the audience, and that's pretty much where it ends.

But fast forward to 2010 or thereabouts and it's a bit of a different story. So we still have people witnessing events, but what's changed now is that people can interact directly with the network and essentially bypassing the whole supply chain of news. So the information is already out there, but the challenge now is for people to actually make sense of that. It's not just institutions that are forming in that work, it's actually people who themselves now are part of the network.

The key thing to remember though is that most of the time the people who are collecting this information and sharing it aren't journalists. Only about 10% of the people who actually use and contribute to NowPublic are journalists. So what we have on our site is user generated news, but I'd say it's different from journalist—journalism in its traditional sense. What people are doing really is sharing content. It's an ecological thing, rather than a practice. It's what people do in their daily behavior. It's people using their

phones in the way that they would normally use them. It just happens to be newsworthy.

So you may be familiar with these people. [laughter] I think there's a misconception among traditional journalists like these — although, I don't see them very often anymore — that there would be, among citizen journalism, there would be this army of reporters who would come along and do exactly the same job that they were doing, only more cheaply. But really for NowPublic and for sites like NowPublic, the big opportunity for us is in the millions of people who are in the world who are seeing things where reporters aren't. We're not really looking for people who are motivated to become journalists. People who come to NowPublic are coming from many different backgrounds. Some of them are journalists, as I say, but most of them come to learn from others, to discuss the news, and to participate in the community because they are interested in similar things.

So as I said, I was going to address this myth of citizen or participatory journalism. I think it's fair to say that citizen journalism, as people traditionally think of it, is a concept that came out of journalism schools and out of the news industry, who say something happening that looked like journalism. There were people with camera phones taking pictures and along with that came the fear that, you know, they would essentially replace journalists for a much lower cost. But the reality is that there isn't this army, as I say, of people out there waiting to be deployed at the drop of a hat into war zones and other dangerous situations. What the reality is, is there's a lot of people out there who are talking about and witnessing any number of subjects and events on any variety of social networks: MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, the sites that Paul talked about. The thing is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and so the challenge really I think for journalists, whether you're working a traditional model or whether you're working online or in a participatory way, is to really understand each of these networks.

Essentially the social network has replaced the news network for attention and people are interested in the idea of "Tell me something new about something that's important to me" and getting it from someone that they trust. So this slide here is a Twitter feed. You knew I'd get to Twitter eventually. It's a Twitter feed of someone called LaughingSquid. He's a blogger in San Francisco. And for instance, when the Olympic torch relays passed through San Francisco last year, content was being created and shared across a wide variety of networks by many, many people. So this person, for instance, was, as well as tweeting, he was streaming live video on Qik. He was also posting his photos to Flickr. He was uploading content to his own blog, and he was also uploading it to NowPublic. And here's the — here's a Qik slide. So the reality is that when an event happens, any number of sources come into play, and on NowPublic as well, we also have a vast array of previously crowd sourced content in the NowPublic library, so you not only have the content that's being created now, but you have the content from before which happens to take on *newsiness*, as it were, in becoming

relevant to a current event. So we have all of that material, but we also look to other sources to provide relevant content. And each of these feed into NowPublic where we have a combination of editors, staff editors and voluntary editors, and all of these people are curating content and working with people who are witnessing events as they are happening.

What we also have is a powerful set of tools to make sense of it. Among them are our listening engine, which I'll talk a little bit about later. So the end result is content that comes in various shapes and forms; although, it doesn't stop there. We're also developing enterprise solutions so that content can be made available to news partners on their own sites.

So essentially we're thinking of so-called citizen journalism as a global intelligence network. There are many parts of information that are being shared at once. People aren't dispatched to the scene as people originally thought citizen journalism would be, but happen to be accidental bystanders. The information is really already out there. So the solution, we think, to citizen journalism is to think of it as information that can be used to make journalism better.

So here's what we've learned. Citizen journalists are citizens. As I say, the content is already out there and you don't necessarily need to get someone to go do something specifically for you. The mainstream media I don't think will become less important, but what's happening is that the relationship and the narrative structures have changed and been realigned. And this is happening right the way across the board. And within this, one of the roles as a reporter now is to wrap themselves around this global intelligence network. Essentially, media that isn't social media in some shape or form won't really exist as media in the future. News organizations have always tried to be social, I think, and in some cases they have had dialogue with their audiences, but I think it's the extent to which they are able to do this successfully will affect how viable they are. The key thing is, though, I think, that if you're a news organization, you don't need to do it all yourself. Obviously, these are challenging times. Money is tight. Jobs are themselves at risk.

So here's the problem, I think, that news organizations are facing to an extent. Cost of spot news coverage is pretty expensive and out of reach for a lot of people. On news sites, companies are seeing a lot less reader engagement on their properties, so how do you keep them there for longer? They are also because of costs having to rely on generic wire content. And it's also a difficult task to navigate the live web and to be everywhere and try and be everything to everybody. One of the things we've done at NowPublic is developed a tool call Scan. As I said before, it's a listening engine which is aimed at monitoring information relating to newsworthy events in real time, as something is seen, as it's experienced. It really leverages the power of all this communication that's happening and identifies breaking news events and emerging topics of interest to readers. It has a variety of qualities. It has

powerful analytics that help you to make decisions on an editorial basis, helps you to locate higher density tweets and upload activity. It allows journalists to see what topics of conversation are trending upwards. You can connect live to the scene and get eye witness accounts from people. You can reach out to eye witnesses. You can allow readers to connect directly to one another on the scene.

And so here's an early prototype that we've been trialing. So far this just monitors Twitter and other micro-blogs for news on subjects which can be filtered via search terms. This is what we have launched so far, but we have something else in the works coming out in the next couple of months. I think it's fair to say that we knew early on that Twitter was going to be big and we've seen it prove its worth as an intelligence gathering machine for breaking news events time and again. Paul mentioned the Mumbai attacks on the one hand, yes, as an issue of verification of information, but at the same time, Twitter was one of the places where information came out the most quickly. This particular scan talks about the protests that have been happening in Thailand lately. The current scan that we have also allows you to see the velocity of comments over time, so you can get an idea of the sort of strength of feeling about a subject, the location they've come from, and the most posted links. And this can often be useful in giving you sources for further original content. One of the places we found the Twit pic of the Hudson River plane crash was actually via scan, because it was something that everyone was suddenly talking about.

As I say, we've learned a lot of useful lessons from this particular prototype and the next version of the tool is going to be rolling out in the next couple of months for the partner organizations. And moving forward, we think that we can apply this particular model to all sorts of content, not just Twitter. This is a mockup of the next version of Scan, which essentially is going to allow you to do all sorts of other things as well, such as accessing photos and video and copy from eye witnesses once it's posted to the web. It has real time analytics and graphics that help to hopefully drive additional page use for news sites. You can monitor on the scene dialogue as it's happening. You can also help to extend the life of news stories on your site by giving them live content as well as updates that only happen every few hours.

So I think what I'd say in conclusion is that the solution to citizen journalism is to think of it as information that can be used to make journalism as a whole better. I don't think it's a question of citizen journalism versus traditional media. I think there will always be a need for professional journalists to verify information and maintain standards. But using the power of the crowd and analytics, that can help to make sense of the vast quantities of information that journalists are confronting on a daily basis now. I think the key to it though is the extent to which journalists can wrap themselves around this vast intelligence network, and that's going to help them hopefully become more viable and more relevant to the audience.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

Robert Rivard: Rachel, let me ask one question now before you sit down, because you have a very restrained presentation on your website of advertisements. It looks like one banner per page max. And you talked about using venture capital. I don't know what your traffic is right now, but is this kind of citizen journalism going to prove to be a viable business that will support you and your newsroom when the venture capital is gone?

Rachel Nixon: I think it's fair to say that advertising is not the main focus in terms of revenue. We are looking to partner organizations to become the main focus of revenue. Advertising will be a part of that, but I don't think it's going to be the large part of it.

Robert Rivard: Okay, thank you.

Rachel Nixon: Thanks.

Robert Rivard: I'll get back to the microphone here, because we're probably recording this, but that was a global view from Paul and Rachel. And we'll now go to a much more local, regional view with two Texas journalists who are certainly very well known in the world that I am in. And we're going first with Robert Quigley. He's the Internet Editor at the *Austin American Statesman* and the main voice behind @Statesman, which is one of the ten most followed Twitter accounts in the country in newspaper Twitter accounts. And Robert really distinguished himself during Hurricane Ike, for those of you that are either in this market or get online and follow the Austin site. [interference noise] So I think we're going to hear some very interesting things from Robert. And he'll be followed by Dwight Silverman, who I finally have met today after so many years of crossing paths in almost every Texas city where we have both worked. And Dwight is, I believe, the Interactive… Are you still radioactive?

Paul Brannan: It's not me. It's not me.

Man: My phone is over there.

Robert Rivard: All right. He is the… Stop tweeting. He is the Interactive Editor at the Houston Chronicle now and oversees their very impressive blog presentation, which has won national awards and is a really great presentation. So Robert, kick us off. And it's 12:30. You have till 12:45.

Robert Quigley: Okay. Thank you. My microphone is working I hope. Yeah, we are… I'm going to talk pretty much Twitter specific. And I think that most of y'all know that you probably should be on Twitter in some form by now or you are. We're deeply invested in it. We have been for a while. In June of

last year, I went to my boss and said, you know, "I'm on Twitter. I'm addicted to it. And I'm sharing our links on my account, which is RobQuig is my little personal account." And then I said, "Why can't we do this for *The Statesman*?" And he said, "Yeah, go ahead." And that kind of goes back to the kind of Wild West, a little more freedom to try new things. Throw it against the wall, see if it sticks. If it doesn't, you know, change your mind and don't do it anymore. And it was a success from the start as far as I'm concerned. I decided to not use Twitter Feed, which is an RSS feed that just puts your headlines onto Twitter, and instead used some personality and actually Tweet as our brand. You can see that I have the little S right there for Statesman.com. This is our account as when I'm logged in.

And I basically talk with it with my voice. (Let me see if I can get to it.) But I do, I talk with my voice. I make sure that I'm picking stories that I find that I think the community would be most interested in reading at the moment. I've learned over time by asking my followers what they want to see and what they want to read about, what that is, and I've gotten into a really good conversation with our readership through Twitter which has been really interesting. But I actually, you know, said a little bit about this panel right here from my main account, and they respond. I'll show you that. But right now we're at a point in journalism where people are having their conversations on social media, and if we're not there, then we risk becoming somewhat irrelevant, so we need to be where people are. And as you can see here, people actually responded to my question and said hello to you all here and why they want to follow our account. They say it's the next progression of journalism. People really respond well to what we do.

But in the summer, from June on, I was just sending headlines out. And then Hurricane Ike did come along in September. And I started this account called Tracking Ike, which I sent our reporters out and said, "I know most of you haven't used Twitter." And I think one of them had before. "But all I want you to do is log into this account from your laptops or your cell phone and report what you're seeing. You know, if you see a column of ambulances go by, say that. Don't worry about posting links to your blogs or to your photos or anything like that." I was going to kind of run that from back here in Austin, and I did. Not only did I post links to what they were doing, but I was also retweeting what people were saying in Houston from first person accounts. I was posting what the National Hurricane Center was saying every six hours when they were doing their updates. Trying to give the most comprehensive news I could on the account and then also having those live reports from our staff that was out there. We had four people in Houston. Right now, there's still 700 followers, but there were 1,300, I think, at its peak. And it doesn't sound like much, but because it was a lot of people in Houston that were following it, they were really intensely interested in what we had to say, and so they would retweet us.

And if you don't know what retweeting is, that's how Twitter goes viral. And so they were taking any message we were saying. If we said, you know, I-45

was under water, that would get retweeted, you know, 20-30 times that time. All times it's retweeted, everybody who retweeted, their followers could possibly see it. So it hit tens of thousands in a hurry. *The New York Times* lead bog was linking to us when we were moving into Galveston, which I had on here. (And let's see. So this is… Yeah, all right.) So we were 25 miles north of Galveston right there. And then Tony Plohetski is one of our reporters. He's talking about going in and trying to figure out how to get across the causeway. Once they got in there, they were saying things like, "Boats are on the highway." "We're driving around boats." "We're seeing…" I was retweeting somebody who was on the island who said that Hooters and the Balinese Room, which is a famous club on Galveston Island, was completely gone. They were saying things like they were seeing the law enforcement caravan, what they were seeing, refrigerators and coolers on the highway, that kind of thing. It was really gripping reporting. I thought this was really an interesting use of the tool. It was showing the journalism potential of Twitter. And we were, like I say, we were getting linked to, and we were getting retweets. And by the end of the four days of doing this, we had 300,000 page views directly from Twitter to our website, which pretty much gave me a "play with Twitter" free pass, you know, from there on out.

And not only did it do that, but our reporters suddenly saw Twitter as a valuable tool. And the reporters who came back evangelized about it, how it was easy to do and felt like they were doing some good journalism. And it made it really easy for me to explain to people why to do it. I said, "Well, just remember what we did in Galveston that we couldn't have done any other way that quick or that in depth." And we were having conversations with people. You don't see a lot of them here, because we were busy going across the island, but I was replying to people. They were replying to people. We were direct messaging people. They were messaging us, asking us things like, here we are saying that we haven't heard anything about certain things or replying to people that were asking questions about their favorite landmarks. And people were asking us questions like, "Is my grandmother's house OK on 24th Street?" And we went out of our way to go look. You know, if people were going to ask us on Twitter and we could do it, [laughter], we checked it out, because we could at the time, and why not? People really appreciated it. I got several direct messages from people saying that their power had gone out in Houston and the only way they could even get any news at all was through Twitter, because their mobile still had battery left, and this was how they were getting it from us. And, you know, it's kind of cool when you think about it.

So once we came back from this and we saw this success, we decided to try to make a serious — more serious push on it. I built this directory that anybody could build. It's real easy to do. It pulls the latest tweets using Twitter's API thing that they have right on there. You can do it from your account. Put what accounts we have on here. We have several official accounts now. And then I listed all of our staff members as well. Broke them down by category. Then I also listed some locals to follow, who I thought are

just interesting. We got the mayoral candidates. We have the little alternative cable company here, and then some social media people, and then some of my friends. [laughter] And they-they-they… I don't take bribes though, I swear. And then just some fun ones to follow. And I'm working... This is kind of a work in progress, but people do enjoy having this on here. We went from that to integrating Twitter itself into our website. And you can see there's Ken Herman, who is one of our state reporters. When he posts on Twitter, it shows up on our — this is our main political page for state reporting. They… This was 18 hours and 2 minutes ago, which is hard to believe. Maybe it's broken right now. But they fight to try to be up there. The reporters are all trying to beat each other with the latest tweet so they can be up there, because it replaces each other as they go. We listed our staff members over here too that are tweeting about the legislative goings on. And so we have that, and then we also have… User registration. Sorry.

Man: [Inaudible.]

Robert Quigley: Yeah. Maybe I hit the registration wall, which is kind of embarrassing. Here's the thing that our developers came up with. They built this. Basically it scrapes people who are following a certain account of ours. And our account is Bevo Beat, which is our Longhorn Twitter, which is really important. And it scrapes anybody that says certain key words or hash tags and pulls them into this page. And so it's just another way to surface material. If it's this kind of orange color or peach color, it's our staff members. If it's this other color, it's just anybody out there who's using those key words. During the election, we did the same thing. We pulled election tweets in. We pulled them also to our homepage. During ACL Fest, which is the big music festival here in Austin, we asked people to use a certain hash tag, and we pulled it in this same style to our Entertainment site, Austin360. And we're trying to find new ways to integrate it into our site so it's not just, you know, external and you've got to click on our links to find our site. We also want it to be all part of our site as well. And then to integrate even further, when a big news event happens like a hail storm, which we had here a couple of weeks ago, I monitor on Twitter Search and try to find people talking about it. I retweet them from our weather account. I pick their Twit pics and ask them if it's okay if we can publish it on our website. And we've led our website several times with Twit pics, and the credit is via Twitter, you know, their name via twitter. And so we're using the content that we're getting, and people love seeing their content displayed, so it's worth doing.

And then to get back to some of the points that I heard earlier was, you know, we have to verify still. And there's still a chance that you could pull something in, like this page right here. We're not moderating this. And if you are moderating it, if you're looking at it, you can often see misinformation.

And I'm just going to conclude here with a short little story that happened recently. We had a man with a gun on top of the Apple Bar on 6th Street and

Colorado here in Austin a couple of nights ago. That's what the police told us. And we sent out a… I sent out a — or the copy desk guys sent out a tweet that night from *The Statesman* account saying, "Man on bar, on roof of bar with gun." And we linked to a blog posted [that] basically said the same thing the police say. It was already being talked about by people who were near the bar. They were already saying they saw the SWAT Team there. "There's a guy on top of the Apple Bar." They were saying that he had hostages, which the police were not telling us. They said that people were being pushed out of the way of the line of fire, which we hadn't heard of any line of fire or anything like that from the police. So I was at home, but I was alerted to it by just monitoring Twitter. And I started retweeting some people's Twit pics from there, but I wasn't retweeting any factual information that I didn't already know or had verified. And I started asking. I got my reporter on the phone and started asking him who was on the scene at that point. "What's really going on here? Are the police saying that there is a hostage situation?" He goes, "No. I asked them that specifically. No, there's no hostage situation." So I went into Twitter and said, "I'm reading a lot of people saying it's a hostage situation. Police are telling us on the scene it is not." And I got several people reply and say, you know, "OK, good. But the guy that's right next to the bar says not only is it a hostage situation, but somebody's been shot." And so I then got the reporter on the phone again and said, "Somebody been shot?" And he goes, "I'll go ask." And he went and asked and the police said, "No. You know, there's a guy up on the bar. We don't know even if he has a gun at this point." [laughter] And so I sent out a tweet saying, "Well, now we're not sure that the guy has a gun and nobody has been shot." And I got a reply from somebody saying, "So the story is there's a guy at the Apple Bar." [laughter] And, Yes, yeah, that's it, but the SWAT Team is there, so it's newsworthy. [laughter] And eventually, I guess, about a few hours into the incident the guy came down on a ladder. The police were escorting him down nicely. He was not wearing any clothes and he had no gun. [laughter]

But, and I was able to verify facts as we went. I was able to ask, have my reporter ask the police, and he has access. There was people that were right there at the scene who were spreading the same rumors, but because our reporters have access and kind of that instinctual verify mentality, we served a great purpose, I think, in stopping the rumors. Because once I was verifying things, the rumors did slow down and then stop. And once we got all the way to the very end, they stopped completely when we said, "OK, it's over. They pulled the guy out, and here's a picture of him." But I think that's an important point. I think that people say that, "Well, now we have Twitter and everybody is a reporter." Well, to an extent. I think everybody can witness something and see something, but I think reporters still, if they are in the conversation, if they are out there in the media sphere, and they are trusted by the people, and they are not just parachuting in and saying, "Hey, I'm on Twitter. I'm here to verify things for you." But if you've been there all along and you've been paying attention and trusted by the people on there, then you can serve a pretty important role.

Robert Rivard: Thank you, Robert.

[Applause.]

Robert Rivard: The moral of the story is there, is that we can invite sensational and utterly false rumors and reports onto our websites and drive real traffic by knocking them down with good old-fashioned journalism. [laughter] So did you put the naked guy photo out there?

Robert Quigley: We did, but there's something blocking that.

[laughter]

Robert Rivard: That'll work. Okay. Dwight Silverman, our last panelist, and then we'll open it up a little bit if we have some time, I hope.

Dwight Silverman: Thank you. I wasn't going to tell this story until later, but now that he has told his Twitter bad fact story, I'll tell mine. At *The Chronicle*, we're not quite as intense about Twitter as *The Austin Statesman* is. I am intense about Twitter. And what was interesting was when we were exchanging email between the panel members on this, Rosental asked, you know, "Talk a little bit about…" and everybody jumped in and said, "I'm going to talk about Twitter." And I think that as journalists we are really excited about Twitter, because it's, you know, some of our best stories come from overheard conversations in bars. This is the *ultimate* overheard conversation in a bar. [laughter] And not only that, but you can talk back, you can disseminate your news, you can use it to do research. It's kind of a Tabula Rossa of information. And, of course, Tabula Rossa's have their own problem.

The story I wanted to tell was we, me and Dean Betts, whose the online news editor and content director at *The Chronicle*, for Chron.com, both monitor Twitter pretty much during the day. We use Tweet Deck which is a client that lets you sort the people you are following into different groups. And so I follow probably about 1,000 people, who I know are in Houston who are using it, and he does the same thing. And we watch periodically, just keep an eye on what's going on. And some people that I know began talking about at the building next to them, there was both Houston Police and FBI SWAT Teams descending on this building. And they operate a co-working location called the Caroline Collective. And they got up on the roof of the Caroline Collective and were taking pictures of the police action. And so I was saying via Twitter, "Can you email them to me? Can you get them to us?" And they were giving us detailed information. In the meantime, our City Desk was trying to get through to the police to find out what's going on, and obviously they didn't want to be immediately forthcoming in the middle of an action. They sent us the photos. They weren't great photos. And it turns out that it was actually a relatively minor warrant arrest. But the day before in

Houston during a minor warrant arrest, a police office was shot in the face. So essentially, this was – they were being really careful. And we never put any of this up on the web. We didn't do anything with it. If we had, we would have had kind of a narrative of what was going on that we were going to put on. And that's kind of what I want to talk about today.

I want to talk about Twitter and relationships and the idea that some of the best journalism comes from when you have a good relationship with a source or with the community. And that's one of the things that I think Twitter can really foster. So I'm doing some seriously old school HTML, handspun HTML, instead of PowerPoint. And what I want to talk about is first I want to talk a little bit about our kind of how we do citizen journalism at *The Chronicle.*

We have a site called TheChron.commons. And this is kind of our hub for our blogging initiative, *The Chronicle* for the community. *The Chronicle* in 2004 began doing staff blogs and about a year or so later began an initiative where we had readers' blog on our site. We now have — I believe we've got about 160 reader bloggers in various formats that we have featured, and we have hundreds more who are kind of at a standard level. We use Pluck Software which lets them — anyone can start their own blog, upload photos. A lot of newspapers do this. And we've essentially broken them into groups. And so we have kind of done this metamorphosis from staff blogs and over to reader blogs and now we're kind of going to the next level. Blogging remains a viable platform. I have heard people say that, oh, blogging is dead, but I really don't think so. I think there will always… You know, new tools come up, and just because something else that's new comes up doesn't necessarily mean that the old thing is dead.

So one of the things that we've done in using relationships is we have started to blend the work of our staff writers and the reader bloggers that cover the same thing. Eric Berger is SciGuy. He is an award-winning science writer. He has become an online monster. He just won an internal award this week as the multimedia journalist of the year, even though he primarily is a writer. And what we've done with him is he… And covering science in Houston involves covering weather. He handles the run up to hurricanes. He helps with NASA. Rice University is there. University of Houston. There's a lot of science research being done there. So he actually has a very busy beat. And he developed, as his blog developed, a healthy community of scientists, people who actually when they commented on his blog knew what they were talking about. He worked very hard to develop those relationships. At one point, he took his — he invited his commenters, including some of the scientists, to go together to see the movie "An Inconvenient Truth," because there was intense debate about it when it came out on his blog. So he said, "Okay, let's go see it." And he had a couple dozen people go. They went to see it and then they went and had a beer and discussed it. He is excellent at developing the relationships within his blog. And so what happened was we decided, he has all these scientists that comment all the time, so what if we gave the scientists their own blog, their own blogs, and put those blogs on

his blog? So now you can go from his blog to read the writings of his sources in his community, in his commentary.

One of them is Steve Schafersman. He has three science blogs here: Evo.Sphere, Cosmo.Sphere, and Atmo.Sphere. And you can blame me for the dorky names. And Evo.Sphere is a — deals with evolution. Uh-oh. Evo.Sphere deals with evolution. And Steve Schafersman is the president of Concerned Scientists in Texas. And so when the Texas Legislature was considering strengthening the language regarding creationism in textbooks, Schafersman decided to go to the hearings in Austin and live blog it in his blog, which in turn was on the SciGuy blog. Then… And he was blogging from a point of view. He obviously was against it. And he was very passionate about it. Excellent live blogging. And then he also had been invited to testify. So he stopped blogging, he got out of the chair in the gallery and went and sat down and testified, and then got back up. Now the obvious question arises, a journalist would not do this. But he's not a journalist. He's a scientist. He's an expert with a specific point of view. By doing this and clearly indicated in the blogging that he's a reader and he's not a Chronicle staffer, not a journalist, we were able to add through this relationship that Eric had developed another level of reportage that we wouldn't have had otherwise. Some of this information that he got and some of his blogging made it into the print edition as well.

So I've lost my little place. So we have been using Twitter in similar ways to the way *The Austin Statesman* has. We also have been experimenting with kind of pulling in raw themes. This is very similar to something that had Andy Carvin been here today, he would have shown something similar to this. During the inauguration, Hearst as a corporation made a decision not to actually send reporters to cover it. What we did was we asked reader contributors to cover it. And we also went in and pulled RSS feeds for various components to put it on one page, a place where essentially you could find what you wanted about the inauguration from our reader contributor. So we had a live Flickr feed that was streamed over. We had blogs from people who were coming in. We also ran a… There's a very cool open source tool called Monittor, M-o-n-i-t-t-o-r, and it was able to pull into… And each one of these three… Each one of these three panels has different key words. It's pulling in different key words. And so for a raw feed, you can pull this in. We then had a separate blog where I was going through and selecting specific tweets and kind of by hand doing, building kind of a narrative. And then we also picked up a Qik video. We have a partnership with Qik where we can go in and pull specific video. They helped us create an inauguration page, event page, where people could upload their videos, their live streams, and we pulled them into here. So this is kind of the raw feed version. But I think one of the things that, again, is really very powerful is the ability [of] using Twitter to build other relationships.

So this is from a blog that was during the Texas caucuses, Democratic caucuses in March in the primary. And what we did was we — I recruited

from people among these thousand Houstonians that I know on Twitter, that I follow on Twitter. I know some of them are reliable. I've met some of them. I have a relationship with them. And so I recruited them knowing that they were going. They had mentioned in their Twitter feed that they planned to attend the caucuses. And so I recruited five of them to go in and say, using Twitter, what was happening inside these caucuses. Caucuses would not allow us to get a reporter in there just to watch, but these were participants who were actually there. So what we did was we recruited them, we got them in, and they were not journalists. This is a… This is Gwendolyn Zepeda who is an author. She just released her first children's book. She has a collection of essays that's also been published. Her second children's book will be out soon. We had… This woman is… I'm not quite sure what she does. She's on Twitter. Here's a photographer that I know in Houston that I recruited. Laura Mays is a kind of Web 2.0 expert and a public relations person. And this is one of my favorites. Jim Thompson is helping to write the software that will power the next space shuttle at NASA, so yes, he's a rocket scientist. And so each one of these people told us what was going on inside the caucuses. I trusted them. I knew kind of what I was going to get from them. And I think that that's really important. It was of higher value than probably just the raw feed, but the raw feed had its own value.

We did something similar during the coverage of — during the coverage of the launch of the iPhone. I recruited several people to talk to me as they were waiting in line for the iPhone sale this year, including we gave one woman her own place to put her own feed and I was pasting her stuff in here. And again, I could control what was being said.

So to kind of take this finally to the next level, you know, in all of these cases, we're looking at the relationships that media have with readers and with sources. And I think that one of the things that's going to happen that's going to kind of kick that up one more level is what's happening in mobile. If y'all are journalists, you should have an iPhone. You should get one, get your hands on one. You should use it if possible. Journalism… Very interesting capabilities for journalism on this because of the application. I know there are other platforms out there, but what's occurring on the iPhone platform is probably the most unusual. Earlier this week there was an application released by the band Nine Inch Nails. It's called Nine Inch Nails Access. And this is probably the ultimate relationship tool, and it has a lot of lessons, I think, for journalists. Mobile is intimate. It's in your hand. It's right in your face. You carry it with you. You know, your phone is almost a physical part of you if you are using a Smart Phone. People who have one know what I'm talking about. And so to be able to communicate and disseminate news and receive news from this device, people are very invested in it. So what the band Nine Inch Nails has done is created this application that, as you would expect, you can listen to their music over it. You can also see photos that the band has taken and that fans have taken at concerts. You can use the iPhones picture/camera to take photos, preferably from their concerts, and upload it. So it's full of fan material. When the next version of the iPhone

comes out, which is expected to have video, I suspect they will allow videos from their concerts. The most interesting aspect of this, though, is the fact that it uses a form of micro-blogging similar to Twitter that's based on location. So you can find and chat with, using a Twitter-like interface, other Nine Inch Nails fans. You can do that globally or you could do it within one mile. And what the band is going to do is during concerts they'll ask people who have it to focus on the one mile. You'll be able to talk to each other in the concert arena. In addition, people, this interacts with the website. So when you go to the website in this area on the website, it uses a Google Earth plug-in and you can see plotted on the globe where the tweets are coming from. So again, the band is building an intense relationship with its fans. I think this is a breakthrough application for the iPhone and it has profound implications for media companies. You know, imagine a local newspaper having something like this all in one little package that allows us to communicate with readers, allow readers to communicate back to us, an easy way to get video and photos uploaded, and build a relationship with the reader.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

Robert Rivard: Rosental, do we have someone with a microphone that's going to work the audience?

Rosental Calmon Alves: Yes, I'm the microphone.

Robert Rivard: Okay. You're-you're… While we're starting and people are maybe thinking about their questions, for all of you, there was some pretty strong stuff on some of the micro-blogging, some of the boundaries for either the bloggers or…

Rosental Calmon Alves: You are putting your finger in here.

Robert Rivard: I'm sorry, Rosental. I won't ever do that again. [laughter] Are there any boundaries and if there are, how can you possibly police your contributors, especially when you really start aggravating — aggregating huge volumes of people doing different things?

Dwight Silverman: I think when you're presenting a Twitter feed, I think people know what that is, that that is a raw feed. There are ways in the Twitter API where you can actually filter out the seven dirty words. You know, stuff will get through. But I think on the internet we may be past the fact that you click on something and, oh, my God, there's a dirty word, and people understand that it is kind of raw conversation. At least that's kind of the approach we're taking to it. But at the same time, I think that if you're nervous about it, there are ways through these relationships with people who use Twitter to kind of get a higher level feed.

Robert Rivard: Anybody else?

Robert Quigley: I've actually found that because people have a reputation that they build up around their Twitter feed, for the most part, they are well behaved, especially compared to our site-wide comments, where it's anonymous. Because you have that accountability and you don't want to be the jerk that nobody follows, it's not a tough community to wrangle. We have tough communities that we do have to wrangle. And I'm the community manager for our Longhorns bulletin board, and that's a tough one, [laughter], especially with all the Sooners that show up there. But Twitter hasn't been a problem that way. Are you asking about staff too? Like boundaries for staff? [no audible response] As far as the staff, yeah, our Managing Editor Debbie Hiott, who is dhiott on Statesman, is on Twitter. Our publisher mvivio is on Twitter. They are in it not to monitor us all, but they are in it and they are involved and having a good time on there, but they also see everything that's going on. And so I think if somebody went… You know, we haven't had like, "Here are your rules, and you must stay within this." It's more of a, "Use common sense. You're a journalist. You're always representing *The Statesman* in every capacity [in] everything you do." And if somebody goes out of bounds, I think it's handled gently and just said, you know, "We love that you're trying this new thing, but don't do that."

Robert Rivard: I think we have a question from up here.

Question (Steve Fox, University of Massachusetts, USA): Hi. I'm Steve Fox. I teach at U-Mass. I really like your example, *The Statesman* example about verification with the guy on the roof. We talk a lot about verification when it comes to Twitter, when it comes to citizen journalism, yet, clearly through this example, it takes a lot of effort. Especially if you're talking about citizen journalism, you're talking about a lot of training involved. A lot of time and effort is needed. Is this notion of verification scalable? Can it really…? Do we have the…? You know, all these operations are cutting back. Do we have the people? Do we have the time? Do we have the ability to do the verification needed?

Paul Brannan: Well, I feel very uncomfortable about the example of the naked guy on the roof and all the kind of rumor mill stuff. I think in the noise is an awful lot of problems. And I think our role in this is a bit like panning for gold. You know, you've got to go into this, pull out the nuggets, check, recheck, speak to the people. I'd be aghast if the BBC website started running that kind of churn of information which at the end of the day turns out to be completely wrong. I think the audience can certainly help in curating a lot of the content, so people will jump in very quickly if something is wrong, and that's a help. But, you know, there's always that pressure to be — you want to be out there very, very quickly. And being quick and being certain are not necessarily compatible. So it depends on the threshold of

your organization. How important is it to be first? Or, how important is it to be first and right?

Robert Quigley: And I think speaking to that, I think that if your journalists are all involved in social media and they are already there, them verifying a breaking news story or verifying an important fact out there is not going out of their way. It'd be something they would be doing anyway. So it's just a different medium for doing what they already naturally do.

Rachel Nixon: And I think in addition to that, it depends on your audience's level of comfort and your organization's level of comfort with verification. I mean, for an organization like the BBC, having worked there and then having switched over to a participatory journalism model, clearly, an organization like the BBC and other mainstream outlets have their reputation depend on the accuracy of their information. But what you can also use things like Twitter for is to get an impression of generally what's being said. So if the conversation is moving in a particular direction, that gives you an idea of strength of feeling. You may not necessarily be able to verify all of that strength of feeling at the same time, though, so, you know, that's another way of thinking about Twitter, not necessarily as facts that have to be verified, but as a kind of sense of what the community itself is thinking.

Robert Rivard: Leaving the public citizen journalism aside for a moment and talking about staff, are we all comfortable with the fact that newspapers because of protocols and traditions, there's a certain stricture to what you can print. You can take the Rick Perry succession story, and it's laid out in the print products around the state or really even around the country now, as a very sort of straightforward but incredible story, but straightforward. However, if you go into the blogosphere, including on newspaper websites and see what journalists and others are saying about it, it's the most astonishingly stupid suggestion. And that's how it's being written about with very strong point of view by the very journalists that are also following it in a much more traditional sense in print. And are we comfortable with saying that's the way it should be? That they are different platforms and there should be certain protocols in print that should be totally ignored now in the virtual world?

Dwight Silverman: Well, I think that context is everything. And I think if we're in print, if we're not noting that many in the blogosphere think that the Rick Perry story is stupid, we should be saying that, because what's happening online and what people think about it is part of the news. But you present it in that context. And I think if you… You know, essentially you can do aggregation in print as much as you can do it online, and I think you're almost derelict if you don't.

Robert Rivard: Okay. Well, we have one more question, and we'll do it quickly, and then it's time for whatever it's time for.

Question: Probably you as an editor might be the one who would like to address this. But I'm just thinking here about the legal ramifications of things posted through your traditional media websites and the potential for legal backlash, lawsuits, and so forth. And so what is the review, since it doesn't go through editorial review necessarily or filters all the time?

Robert Quigley: We-we…

Question: Just say, "I'll call my lawyer."

Robert Quigley: That's a great question. We've been told by our legal advice that generally third party material hosted on our site is not something that we are to be held liable for, or at least not easily, and that's because they are trying to protect ISPs who are hosting. You know, people having their blog hosted by an ISP, can the ISP be found liable for material? We're pretty safe there as journalists hosting third party material. We don't have to really worry about that. I think what we need to more worry about is what, you know, what is ethically right and what is good standards and decency. But as far as law, no. I think that we're… We all… I think we all know everybody that hosts third party material on their site probably has some kind of way to report abuse and to delete it all that. And I think that's all important for those standards and decency reasons.

Robert Rivard: Okay. We're out of time unfortunately. Thank you so much to our panelists. [applause] Especially those who traveled so far from the UK and Canada to be with us. And hopefully you'll get to visit with them throughout the day. We're going to have a brief presentation right now from Steve Semelsberger. So Steve, are you in the house?

Steve Semelsberger: I am, Robert.

Robert Rivard: Okay. You take it away. And thank you again.

Steve Semelsberger: Yeah. I'm between everybody and lunch, so I promised Rosental this would absolutely be brief. This is our fourth year involved with the conference. Thank you so much for enabling us to host lunch once again. If the lunch is good, thank Rosental. If it's not so good, blame us. Quick snapshot on Pluck. We're an Austin-based company. We provide integrated social media platforms. We also provide a variety of custom content solutions. And we're owned by a firm called Demand Media, which was started a couple of years ago by the guy who sold MySpace to News Corp. We work with large companies typically; although, those organizations often have a variety of local, regional, national, and global websites. And we've been fortunate to really kind of cut our teeth in online news. *The Austin American Statesman* — thanks, Robert and everybody — was our first customer here in our backyard. We have about 250 websites that are using Pluck solutions. What I thought I'd do is just feature a few

things that we've seen that are compelling, interesting, and seem to be working as well, too.

So there's a big trend, of course, around trying to figure out comments on story pages. What works? How do you control the conversation? When do you not control the conversation? The CBC, I think, is doing a really interesting job around encouraging folks to more explicitly recommend or not recommend other user's comments and to sort in a variety of ways. We love what *The Houston Chronicle* is doing, not only around starting with a default of most recommended comments, but then also doing things like highlighting how users have friends and really kind of deepening the engagement process on their core website. *The Washington Post* has made, I think, a really good decision to encourage folks to start the conversation based on the story, but to then move it off to a secondary page to ensure that the discussion go where users would like it to.

We also see some great things around celebrity communities. Eugene Robinson and guys on *The Post* have kind of what we look at as blogorums, so blog posts which then have an explicit question at the end that leave users in a guided forum-based conversation. It's a really nice way to use celebrities in the mix, whether they are staff or they are invited outside experts. We're seeing some cool things around broader celebrity communities. So *USA Today* is really pushing forth and offering groups and blogs and forums and discussions and bringing in noted experts for things like hotel travel.

User connections. So as conversations start around your core content, how do you then encourage users who are interested in finding one another to really connect through your core web properties. So NPR, it's a little bit hard to see, has basically a hyperlink model around things like their programs. And I can then go find other people who are fans of all things considered.

We're seeing some really compelling apps. *The Guardian* in the UK has done a great job around things like chalkboards, where users can really map out how passes lead to goals and things like that in football, and then, of course, engage one another and comment on the application.

We're seeing more and more groups start to form. So, you know, things moving from Yahoo Groups or Google Groups or elsewhere into core properties that have local relevance and contextual content.

And then, of course, there's a huge push around the unification of the greater social web. So we talked a lot about Twitter today, but opening up registration systems to allow folks to authenticate via Facebook. Allowing auto Facebook posts. So if somebody comments on your website and they decide they'd like for it to show up in a mini-feed with basically a link back to your site is key. So kind of the walls are falling down altogether. It's been

great to talk about Twitter, but I don't you want to lose site of Facebook's importance, based on its user sphere as well.

And so really what we're seeing is this big push towards integrated social media. So integration throughout your core website experiences, giving folks consistent platform-based approaches, and then making sure that the broader social web is invited in and stuff that occurs on your website gets to post out.

So we see it starting primarily with your core content. You're still publishing a lot of great stuff, of course. We don't want to lose site of that, but allowing users to enhance that through comments, recommendations, ratings, reviews, abuse reports, etc., encouraging them to contextually generate and contribute their own content, engaging them in conversations with one another stimulated by the relevancy of your websites, and then hooking things in and out, so allowing stuff to post on Facebook as well as allowing different Widgets and components to be torn off and appear in things like iGoogle pages, so they can kind of consume the conversation wherever they'd like it to. And what's cool is that it's working. So across our base of customers, we're seeing a variety of audience usage. Kind of have your regulars who may start to come in and comment and recommend. You have enthusiasts of your property as well as of things that you are really covering. You have folks who are maybe real true mavens for your site and other users around it. And then you can bring in new users from offsite. So overall, we're seeing actually tangible benefits associated with the use of social media as you start to think about things like page re-lifts. That's everything in less than five minutes. Did I do it?

Audience: Yeah.

Steve Semelsberger: All right. Enjoy lunch. Thanks everybody.

[Applause.]