Nieman Reports

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY VOL. 63 NO. 3 FALL 2009

Let's Talk: Journalism and Social Media

‘to promote and elevate the standards of journalism’

Agnes Wahl Nieman
the benefactor of the Nieman Foundation

Vol. 63 No. 3 Fall 2009
Nieman Reports
The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University

Nieman Reports (USPS #430-650) is published in March, June, September and December by the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2098.

Subscriptions/Business
Telephone: 617-496-2968
E-Mail Address:
nreports@harvard.edu

Subscription $25 a year, $40 for two years; add $10 per year for foreign airmail. Single copies $7.50. Back copies are available from the Nieman office.

Please address all subscription correspondence to One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2098 and change of address information to P.O. Box 4951, Manchester, NH 03108.
ISSN Number 0028-9817

Editorial
Telephone: 617-496-6308
E-Mail Address:
nreditor@harvard.edu

Internet Address:
www.niemanreports.org

Periodicals postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts and additional entries.

Postmaster:
Send address changes to
Nieman Reports,
P.O. Box 4951,
Manchester, NH 03108.

Nieman Reports

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY VOL. 63 NO. 3 FALL 2009

Spreading the News | Impact and Engagement

56 Words & Reflections

Cover: Words in the speech boxes on the cover are from tweets by or about contributors to this issue. *Graphic by Diane Novetsky/Nova Design*

Nieman Reports Online

www.niemanreports.org

Preparing to Cover a Pandemic: A New Guide for Journalists

'The idea behind this guide is to provide an accessible, trusted resource in case the H1N1 strain, or any new or known flu strain, strikes in more deadly form.'

By Bob Giles

Three years ago, the Nieman Foundation convened a first-of-its-kind conference for journalists, experts in infectious diseases and world, national and local public health officials to explore how to cover a potential pandemic. Then the concern was avian flu, and the gathering's purpose was to achieve the following:

- Improve journalists' understanding of the dynamics of a health crisis—from the threats it poses to efforts needed to cope.
- Engage journalists, scientists and public health officials in dialogue about their intersecting roles and purpose.
- Examine how newsrooms and news organizations should prepare to handle such coverage and keep their own operations going.
- Consider the crucial role journalism plays—from preparedness to response to recovery.

This effort echoes the intent of other conferences organized by the foundation in which we identify an issue pertinent to journalists—one not well understood in newsrooms or not receiving adequate coverage—then bring together experts in the field for several days of learning and dialogue. Information from these conferences is then widely distributed to other journalists.

Nieman Reports published a wealth of material from this conference in its Spring 2007 edition. Then, a special issue, focused solely on this topic, was distributed to journalists. We've updated and expanded that report, and the new guide to covering a pandemic will be available in early fall on the Nieman Foundation's Web site. Stefanie Friedhoff, a 2001 Nieman Fellow and the foundation's special projects manager, organized the 2006 conference and is editor of the guide. "The idea behind this guide is to provide an accessible, solid resource in case the H1N1 strain, or any new or known flu strain, strikes in more deadly form," she says.

While swine flu, so far, seems to have lulled us into a belief that a pandemic doesn't always spell disaster, health officials recognize that flu pandemics typically arrive in waves; as winter arrives in the Northern Hemisphere, it is possible a more lethal strain of the flu—and a more dangerous pandemic—might be with us. Physicians and scientists are learning much about this virus, yet coverage of their findings—and reporting about the public health guidance based on them—is scant. After an initial flurry of "crisis" reporting, coverage of this evolving story, with the exception of occasional pieces about summer camp flu protocols and new recommendations about school closure policies, has diminished considerably.

With layoffs of health, medical and science reporters (and entire science and health units) happening in U.S. newsrooms, fewer journalists with expertise to coordinate coverage are left. Will this story reside with reporters who bring little scientific knowledge or actual experience in covering an outbreak? Our reliance on having journalists who are prepared to dive in with informed questions, probe deeply and report with authority might now rest on shakier ground. The challenge will be amplified if H1N1 is transformed into a pandemic with more widespread severe illness and higher mortality.

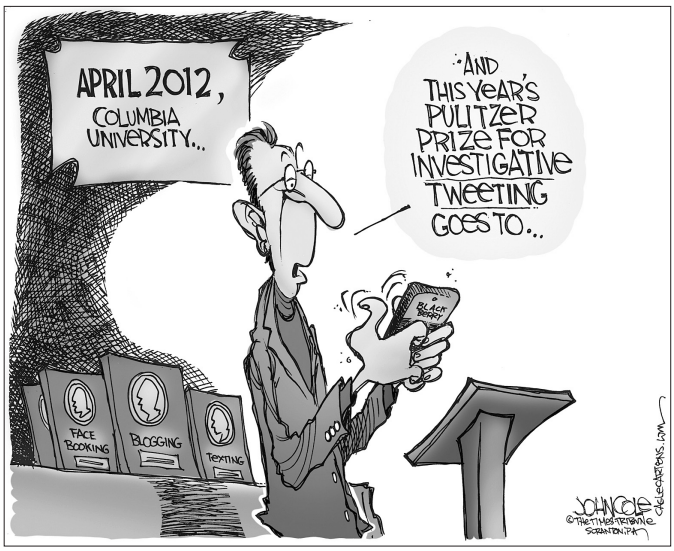
One feature of this story makes pandemic flu coverage unique: Journalists will report on what is happening, but also will be potential carriers. "What do we know about protecting ourselves when we travel to a hot zone?" asks Friedhoff. "How do we make sure we don't carry the virus back to our colleagues? How many newsrooms have thought about how to cover a pandemic when a large number of staff are sick or told to stay home for public health reasons?"

During a pandemic, the news media become a primary source of public communication. The press will want to assure its independence, yet public health officials will certainly ask for cooperation in getting specific messages and information to the public. Journalists need to be well informed about flu viruses in general so they will be prepared to do their work efficiently and effectively with this one. Realizing which of the "experts" is truly to be trusted as a source is essential at a time when public panic is likely to be setting in.

The journalist's guide the Nieman Foundation has created contains the accumulated wisdom of those reporters experienced in covering infectious diseases. Valuable insights surface in excerpts from conversations with public health officials. For those new to the subject, the guide offers a quick introduction to key questions about influenza and pandemics along with a glossary and explanations of basic terms and roadmaps through some local and national preparedness efforts as well as international coordination during an outbreak. It's a resource for story ideas, links to excellent online resources, and questions any reporter is going to want to ask. ■

Let's Talk: Journalism and Social Media

There are times when technological change catches up with an idea. Now is such a moment, as social media transform how people receive and share news and information. Just a few years back the notion of journalism being a conversation, not a lecture, wasn't embraced widely in an industry content to transmit what reporters learned to audiences expected to consume it. Comfort with that notion grew as online comments and live chats assumed a role that Letters to the Editor once held on their own, albeit with greater anonymity and often less civility. Then, from the "audience" spilled forth blogs and photos, videos and tweets. Soon, the words "citizen" and "journalist" were joined in a marriage brokered by technology and nurtured by convenience as news organizations shed staff yet still needed to produce "content."



Cartoon courtesy of John Cole, The Times-Tribune, Scranton, Pennsylvania.

With talking and sharing so much a part of the Web's ethos, it's the job of journalists to adapt. This means using these social media tools in ways that add value to what they do. In some newsrooms, it's a try-everything-see-what-works approach. In others, there's a more deliberate strategy: Specific tools are employed to reach different goals. With each method, the most effective schooling usually comes from outside the newsroom. In recounting the social media learning curve at NewWest.Net, Editor Courtney Lowery writes: "When we turned off the Twitter link to the Facebook page, one of our readers wrote: 'tweets are not fb status posts. glad you got it.' Loud and clear."

Examples abound in our collection of stories about ways journalists are using social media to interact with sources and consumers. Cautionary flags get raised in our multifaceted exploration of emerging ethical issues and how credibility is earned on the Web. As he illuminates key principles for digital media literacy, "We the Media" author Dan Gillmor asserts that "we'll need to transform ourselves from passive consumers of media into active users. And to accomplish that, we'll have to instill throughout our society principles that add up to critical thinking and honorable behavior."

Social media can bring greater depth and breadth to journalists' work. What's curious, however, is how seldom the word "journalism" seems to surface in the numerous forums about digital media. In her Nieman Reports' essay, Geneva Overholser, director of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism, observed this dynamic at her school's "Beyond Broadcast 09" conference in June. "Never in the three days we were together did I once hear the word 'journalism' mentioned," she writes. [While its] "values and practices might be evident, the term itself is absent." In this issue, the term is present, experiences are shared, and intersections of social media and journalism emerge. ■—Melissa Ludtke

What Is Journalism's Place in Social Media?

'Bringing our journalistic values to these environments that have captured the imagination of millions is one of the most promising ways we have of serving that interest.'

By Geneva Overholser

Geneva Overholser's Facebook page.

If our focus on social media is primarily about how to use them as "tools" for journalism, we risk getting it backward. Social media are not so much mere tools as they are the ocean we're going to be swimming in—at least until the next chapter of the digital revolution comes along. What needs our attention is how we're going to play roles that bring journalistic values into this vast social media territory.

It is essential to begin by understanding various social media sites and the ways they can enhance the work journalists do. A regular perusal of sites like 10000words.net and savethemedia.com is a great way to do this. But how do we move beyond acquainting ourselves with this world and actually figure out how to "use" it for journalism, which requires understanding its nature and impact on participants and on public life?

What does it mean to journalists, for example, that people are in large measure obtaining, and shaping, their information so differently than they have in the past? In June, as I got on the plane to fly back from the National Association of Hispanic Journalists convention, a young woman cried out: "Michael Jackson died!" Using my iPhone, I Googled "Michael Jackson died." Several reports showed up—all from years long-gone. His was a much-rumored death. So I checked Twitter, and found the TMZ report—couched in some skepticism from my tweeps. On to the Los Angeles Times, where Jackson was still in a coma. Now the flight was leaving. Not until I landed did I get the confirmation I itched for: the Times, quoting the coroner.

But what if TMZ had quoted the coroner? Would I have stopped there?

This raises questions about what verification means in this age of social media. And what is journalism's role in making sure information is verified? It strikes me that most people don't care as much about who publishes news (or what are often rumors) first these days as they do about whether the sites they rely on have it right when they want it. Now, as we all know, news and information need to be on the platform we're checking, wherever we are.

Being there and being accurate are how journalistic credibility is brought to the social media ocean. Yet many legacy media have fallen behind in delivering this one-two punch combination. While it's a given that there will always be a need for reliable verification,

what must be better understood is how people seek out news and information and how they learn through their use of social media.

Recently, the MacArthur Foundation's John Bracken and I talked about the process by which an online community or group digests an event and comes to an understanding of it in real time. This happens among Facebook friends or people whose tweets we follow or folks who create new records of events on Wikipedia. The question well worth asking is where journalism fits in this fast-emerging and ever-changing social media and digital ecosystem.

During a June conference, "Beyond Broadcast 09,"[1] held at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism, conversations ranged from the information needs of communities to democratizing the language of online storytelling, from maintaining editorial quality to enabling dialogue and the future of public service media. Each topic discussed was central to the future of journalism. Yet, never in the three days we were together did I once hear the word "journalism" mentioned. From there I went to a conference at MIT, where the organizing theme was "civic media." In many of these situations, I find myself using the term "information in the public interest." In all these cases, however much journalistic values and practices might be evident, the term itself is absent.

Journalism: The Missing Ingredient

I'm not suggesting that journalism—as a word, a concept, and a craft—has gone away or is no longer important. I'm saying that those of us who ground ourselves in what we know to be an ethically sound and civically essential mode of information gathering and information dissemination have to find a way to be in these conversations—whatever we call the conversations or ourselves. Our job is to keep an eye on the public interest. Bringing our journalistic values to these environments that have captured the imagination of millions is one of the most promising ways we have of serving that interest.

Too often, it seems, those of us who've been about building community through our journalism seem to assume a kind of "how dare they?" attitude toward those who construct communities through social media. We've got to get over that. People are vastly more powerful now as consumers and shapers of news. The less loudly journalists applaud this development, the further behind we'll be left until we fade to irrelevance.

Accuracy, proportionality and fairness, as time-honored journalistic values, are well worth adoption by those conversing through social networks. Useful, too, would be journalism's (albeit imperfect) emphasis on including a broad range of voices. Cool as a lot of these social networks are, they can be extremely cliquish. Witness the prevailing Twitter discussions about whither journalism, often filled with more strut than substance, lacking both historical and international context and begging the question: If the Web is all about democratization, how come everybody in the debate sounds like a 19-year-old privileged male?

In the Classroom

Finally, how do we bring social media into the academy? So far, we at Annenberg have done it patchily by bringing in folks to do series of workshops for students and faculty. We've had regular discussions with digital media innovators throughout the year. One challenge, of course, is that people's level of understanding and comfort is all over the place. Moreover, when the students learning about social media are 18-year-olds, most are already swimming comfortably in these waters. Yet, they do need to ponder—and practice—the new sensibilities required of them now that they will swim there as journalists.

Integrating the questions and issues and tools into everyday classroom discussion is critical. When the focus is on journalistic ethics, the geopolitical implications of social networks' role belong in that discussion. In lessons revolving around entrepreneurial journalism, there needs to be woven into the conversation the issue of how journalists handle their personal engagement in social networks. Along with this would come discussion of how they "brand" themselves for a future that is likely to include a lot of independent activity.

At Annenberg, we've now hired digital innovators and observers—Andrew Lih, author of "The Wikipedia Revolution," Robert Hernandez, who executed the vision for The Seattle Times' Web site, and Henry Jenkins, who directed MIT's Comparative Media Studies program. Using their ability to weave experiences and knowledge into our curricula, we know that social media will become integral to what is taught in our journalism classes. Timely discussions of emerging examples of social media's influence on journalism and vice versa must continue, as well.

The journalism academy has another important role to play. It's the natural home for substantial analysis and research exploring the impact of social media on learning, on the processing of information, and on the civic dialogue. As journalists come to understand the nature and value of information being gathered and conveyed through various social networks, they will not only act more effectively in this new and vital world. They will also enhance the prospects for journalism's long-term survival. ■

Geneva Overholser, a 1986 Nieman Fellow, is the director of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism.

[1] See the conference agenda at http://bb2009.uscannenberg.org/images/uploads/agenda_print.pdf.

Social Media: The Ground Shifts

Social networks serving as Web services, not sites, 'create new challenges for journalists, news organizations, and media companies that are only now starting to embrace social media.'

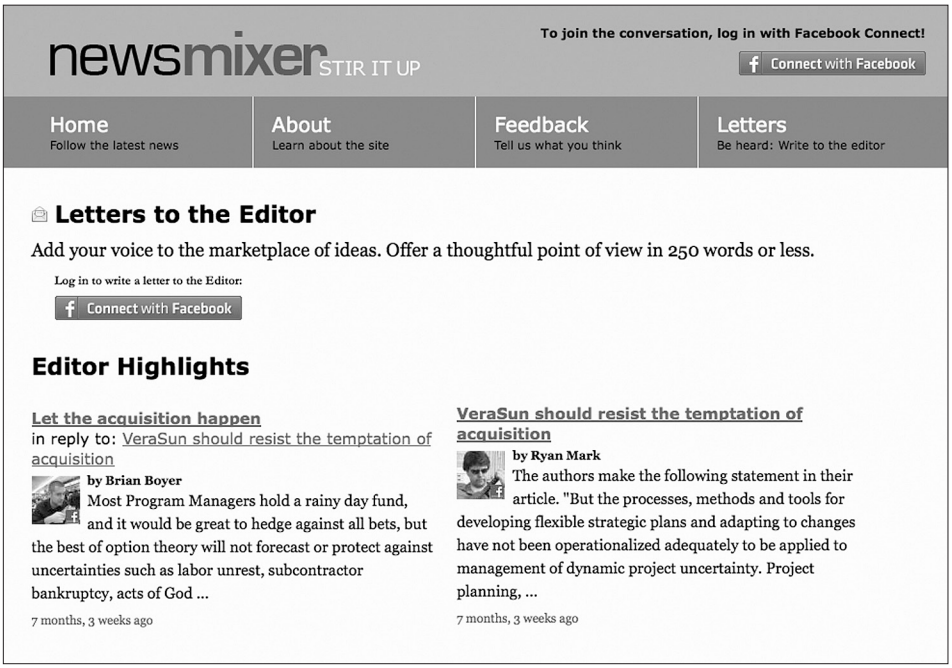
By Richard Gordon

When the history of online journalism is written, it will be hard to ignore the biggest mistake made by news organizations and media companies: thinking of the World Wide Web as primarily a one-way broadcasting or publishing medium.

Back in 1996, when I was the first online director for The Miami Herald Publishing Company, I was as guilty of this misperception as anyone. Our team created discussion boards but hoped they'd require no attention from our staff. We didn't think that cultivating community or moderating discussions were appropriate or necessary roles for a journalist. And we ignored evidence right in front of us—our own behavior as online users—that the most powerful and persistent driver of Internet usage was the value of connecting with other people.

Today, with commenting opportunities available on almost any kind of content Web site, and with Facebook and Twitter empowering new forms of interpersonal communication online, it's hard to find a news organization that's not trying to tap into what we once would have called "online communities" and now more typically refer to as "social media."

So this may not be the ideal time to suggest that the social media landscape is continuing to be transformed in ways that journalists and news organizations will find confounding. Online communities and social networks, which historically have been formed on Web *sites*, are instead becoming Web *services* that shape people's digital lives across many sites and many communication channels. As online users and consumers, we will likely welcome and appreciate this transformation, but it will create new challenges for journalists, news organizations, and media companies that are only now starting to embrace social media.



Newsmixer.us was created by graduate students at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University to test new ways for users to comment on news stories.

Facebook and Twitter

The two forces driving the latest evolution of interpersonal communication online are now well known: Facebook and Twitter. Savvy journalists and media leaders recognize how important these sites are, but many have not noticed what I think are their most significant attributes:

Facebook, through a service called Facebook Connect, now allows any other Web site to log in users with their Facebook ID instead of a site-specific login. Beyond that, Facebook Connect allows other sites to shape users' experiences through profile information, such as their list of Facebook friends.

Twitter, because it makes tweets available through an easily available Application Programming Interface (API), has enabled the creation of an enormous variety of applications that tap into its ever-growing database of 140-character snippets without requiring the user to visit Twitter.com.

Last year, Forrester Research analyst Charlene Li predicted: "... in the future, social networks will be like air." It will seem "archaic and quaint," Li wrote, that we had to go to a Web site to "be

Using Facebook Connect, anyone with a Facebook account can log onto newsmixer.us and post questions, answers, quips and letters to the editor.

social." At the time, it wasn't easy to find the evidence that Li's prediction would come true any time soon. But now, changes at Facebook and Twitter are bringing the future more clearly into focus.

Facebook officially launched Facebook Connect in December, after several months in which a few sites were invited to test it. Today, Facebook says more than 15,000 sites have implemented the service, including YouTube, CNN, Digg and Microsoft's XBox Live service for gamers. While this means online users are becoming accustomed to being offered the option of logging in with their Facebook ID, they might not grasp just how novel this service is by the standards of traditional media thinking.

The revolutionary idea behind Facebook Connect is this: Facebook is encouraging other sites to create more engaging user experiences by leveraging the Facebook "social graph"—without needing to visit Facebook.com. This approach is completely counter to the thinking of traditional news organizations, which have been reluctant even to link to other sites for fear that users will click away and not come back.

Meanwhile, Twitter has become a widely recognized (and sometimes ridiculed) phenomenon not because of Twitter.com, a site experienced through a Web browser, but because of add-ons such as Twhirl and Tweetdeck. This software for personal computers manages people's Twitter experience, with comparable tools such as Twitterific for users of mobile phones. As with Facebook Connect, Twitter is enabling people to connect without visiting its Web site.

There are other services trying to capitalize on the same basic concepts—such as OpenID, a service enabling log-ins to multiple sites using the same ID, and Friend Connect, Google's effort to compete with Facebook Connect. Google is also a force in the OpenSocial consortium, which is trying to develop a commonly accepted toolkit for connecting the social Web.

News Mixer

I can't pretend to know how all this will evolve, which social interaction tools will become the most popular, and whether social networks will ever really become "like air" online. But some of the implications are becoming clear:

- Web sites that have built their audiences by enabling user participation have new opportunities to do so by leveraging social networks people have established elsewhere.
- Social network IDs—typically based on real names—might enable higher-quality interaction than we've seen on news sites where the identity of those who comment is often shielded by anonymity.
- Content sites may find themselves challenged in growing audience engagement because their users are interacting mostly through their social networks instead of on separate Web sites.
- An increasing amount of content shared on Facebook and Twitter consists of Web links that search engines cannot see or index. This poses for Google the most serious threat yet to achieving its corporate mission: "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."
- As Facebook and Twitter increase their ability to understand users and their behavior, they could become formidable advertising platforms—competing with original-content

sites but also potentially becoming useful partners in selling and delivering targeted advertising on news and media Web sites.

To illustrate some of the opportunities that are presented by the new social landscape, I can point to News Mixer, a Web site prototype developed by a class that I codirected last year (with my colleague Jeremy Gilbert) in the journalism master's program at the Medill School at Northwestern University. (News Mixer can be explored at newsmixer.us.)

The six students in the class[1]—including two software developers who were earning their master's in journalism through a "programmer-journalist" scholarship program funded by the Knight News Challenge—were asked to come up with approaches to "conversations around news." They concluded that news site comments often didn't work well. The quality of conversation was poor, and the vast majority of users rarely participated. They also noted that news sites have applied little creative thinking to the challenge of building user participation. All they've done is offer an "open-ended comment box."

Users write Twitter-style quips and comments, which appear alongside the main story.

The students designed News Mixer to improve the user experience. First, it uses Facebook Connect, which, of course, means people can log in with their Facebook ID. Beyond that, the site highlights comments from each user's social network, meaning that every user has a different—and personalized—experience. Also, every time people post to News Mixer, they are given the option of cross-posting that comment to their Facebook feed, exposing it to friends who are not using News Mixer, thereby potentially drawing them to participate as well.

In place of the open-ended comment box, News Mixer offers three ways of commenting:

Questions and Answers: Displayed like annotations in the margin of an article, readers can ask a question about any paragraph of the article—or respond to questions left behind by other people.

Quips: Visible as a small talk-bubble in a live feed on the home page and on article pages, quips are short-form comments that allow people to leave feedback in a quick, to-the-point form. They're modeled after Twitter and instant messaging.

Letters to the Editor: A very old idea, but with a few new twists. News Mixer calls on letter writers to "add your voice to the marketplace of ideas. Offer a thoughtful point of view in 250 words or less." Once written, letters are treated equivalently to articles in News Mixer. Each letter gets its own page, and people are allowed to write letters in response. When a letter is particularly insightful, an editor can use the News Mixer content management system to designate it as an "editor highlight." These then appear on the home page, intermingled with news articles. The idea is to encourage and reward the most thoughtful responses.

News Mixer has been widely praised, described as "an innovative community news framework" (by the influential blog Read/Write Web), a "cool new project" (Editor & Publisher), and "a great piece of innovation" (blogger/consultant Mark Potts). The software code that powers News Mixer has been made available on an open-source basis, and several companies are experimenting with it.

Whatever happens with News Mixer, social media are changing in fundamental ways. Journalists, newsrooms and media companies ignore these changes at their peril. ■

Richard Gordon is an associate professor and director of digital innovation at Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

[1] The students—Brian Boyer, Ryan Mark, Angela Nitzke, Joshua Pollock, Stuart Tiffen, and Kayla Webley—documented their experience and findings in a blog and a comprehensive report available at www.crunchberry.org.

Blogs, Tweets, Social Media, and the News Business

'Merely because a technology is popular with some users and journalists does not mean that its use will be beneficial to the news enterprise as a whole.'

By Robert G. Picard

Judging from their widespread adoption, it's hard to find a technology that news organizations don't embrace. Read the Los Angeles Times on Kindle. Watch ABC News on YouTube. Leave a comment on a blog about media and marketing from the Chicago Sun-Times. Listen to a podcast of "On Science" from National Public Radio. Participate in a discussion board hosted by The Washington Post about college admissions. Receive SMS news about the Dallas Cowboys from The Dallas Morning News. Get features from Time on a PDA and tweets of breaking news from CNN.

The mantra for news organizations is to be anywhere, anytime, on any platform. But is this strategy really a good idea? In an era when the business models for news are stressed, hard thinking should be done in assessing the opportunities that various technologies present. It isn't the time merely to be copying what others are doing.

Tough questions must be asked to figure out which of the new technologies is beneficial for journalism and the business of journalism. Is each one equally useful? What are the real costs in staff time and the operating costs to be on the various platforms? What is actually achieved for the news organization in being there? Does every news organization need to be active on all of the platforms? Finally, how can a news organization achieve optimal benefit across platforms?

The answers we find might lead to deciding which of these technologies to employ. Most importantly, the decisions reached will vary for different news enterprises based on their circumstances and needs.

Determining Technology's Value

News organizations are operating with constrained budgets in highly dynamic markets.[1] Clear strategies must govern all uses of journalistic, financial and human resources allocated for these technologies. Merely because a technology is popular with some users and journalists does not mean that its use will be beneficial to the news enterprise as a whole.

Here's a sensible first question to raise: How will the use of a given technology generate money?

And if its uses don't generate money—or, at the very least, pay for their full costs—one needs to have an exceptionally clear answer as to why it is being used at all. Reasons can be found to use some without full cost recovery, but those should be based on strategic thinking and informed choice, not on technological hype and exuberance.

In the decade and a half since the Internet emerged as a viable medium, and the decade since mobile communications became practicable, questions of how content providers can effectively earn money from either have remained prominent. The lack of truly effective revenue models to support the gathering and distribution of news has led many to argue that providing this serves other purposes, especially in creating interactions that strengthen the brand and form and maintain relationships that bond users of various platforms to news organizations. If these are the primary benefits of contemporary technologies, news organizations must become much more sophisticated in their thinking about them and how to achieve those benefits.

Each platform requires clear and distinct strategies, as does the overall use of multiple platforms. If interactions are the goal, the reason for each interaction needs to be clearly delineated. And what should it accomplish? What messages and images should it project of the news organization? How are the benefits of those interactions to be measured?

Even if the value turns out not to be measured in financial terms, clear goals ought to be set forth in terms of return on the investment—such as the effect on brand equity, number of unique users served, and the movement of nonusers to paid products. These goals should be articulated and pursued, and performance in reaching them measured. When forming stronger relationships is the goal, clear strategies need to be stated. How personalizing communications across platforms will happen also needs to be considered.

Methods for measuring and evaluating performance have to be developed. These should be used to track the effectiveness of any of these new approaches to determine whether the money spent and other resources

[1] In the Winter 2006 issue of Nieman Reports, Picard wrote an article entitled "Capital Crisis in the Profitable Newspaper Industry," in which he observed that this crisis had arrived "at a time when the newspaper industry is struggling, too, to respond to changes in technologies, society and in how consumers use media." His article can be read at www.niemanreports.org.

used were warranted and whether the technology was effectively used. What are the effects on the print product? With online content? With the news organization, as a whole? Have existing products been supported or harmed? Have beneficial business opportunities emerged?

Such managerial challenges posed by these technologies should not deter their use. There are, of course, risks also associated with a decision not to engage in some or all of these technologies. This is the time for neither inertia nor indecisiveness when it comes to making such decisions.

Understanding the Benefits

Clearly, there is benefit to a news organization in interactive communication with users. By using online tools, journalists get information, ideas and feedback. And if they do interact consistently with readers and viewers, they develop a different type of relationship than the arms-length connection that traditional mass communication created.

For users, social media and blogs offer anyone the opportunity to express themselves and to connect with persons of like mind or interests. These digital tools provide an easy (little to no cost) way for members of the public to take part in discussion with larger groups of people and draw attention to issues and topics that traditional news media might have overlooked.

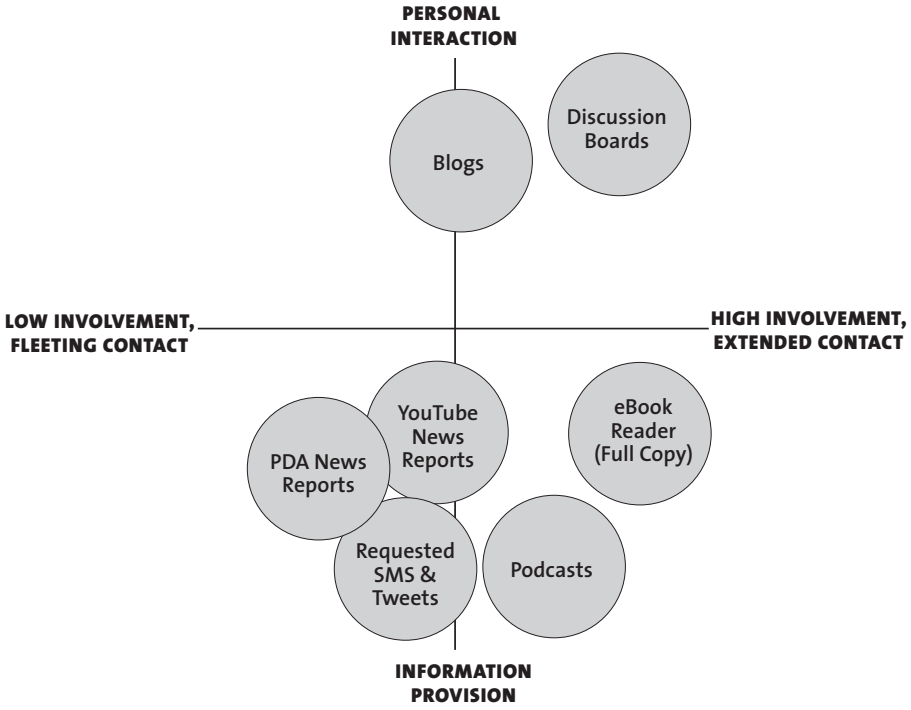
For news organizations, however, this is a two-edged sword. In many instances, the content that news organizations produce (at a cost) is distributed by others, thus removing the need or desire for many people to seek out the original sources of the information. This circumstance, of course, threatens the commercial model because of its deleterious effects on revenue and cost recovery.

Millions of people use new technologies, yet in this time of exploration and experimentation, the users of these digital tools react to them in different ways. Some find them highly useful and satisfying; others find them worthless and disappointing. Some find them a worthy pastime; others conclude they are a waste of time. They are more important to some people than to others. Not everyone wants to be or will be equally wired, communicating, or sharing their opinions and the details of their lives. Some persons find the communications technologies more rewarding in business; others emphasize personal benefits. Consequently, many of these technologies serve only a fraction of the entire digital audience, in most cases from five to 20 percent. This, too, must be factored in as media enterprises realistically assess the potential of the opportunities they seek to create.

The ability to create relationships with and among users is among the widely touted benefits of social media tools. Even so, achieving this goal has yet to be shown to be very effective at maintaining or producing better overall use of the news products, which is the primary revenue source for news enterprises. In short, relationships don't necessarily translate into greater economic value.

Understanding the function and use of social media is critical in making business decisions. In general, the functions range from information provision to personal interaction and, when they are used, the result can be

At the Crossroads of Technology and People



The factors shown in this diagram have important business implications. For a news organization to earn money from using these social media tools, the activities related to the high involvement with extended contact (visible in the lower right) are more likely to generate greater payments from audiences and advertisers than those in other quadrants. They also affect the extent to which relationship development and branding benefits can be obtained. Relationships are established and maintained best through highly involved personal interactions (upper-right quadrant). Some branding benefits occur through ubiquitous contacts of all kinds, but the most beneficial ones are obtained through regular contact that tends to result from uses in the quadrants on the right. *Image and text by Robert Picard.*

low involvement and fleeting contact or high involvement, which can lead to extended contact. [See diagram on page 11.]

It is still early when it comes to the use of these technologies by news organizations. Already, however, we can find some indications of the effectiveness of these interactive, social and instant messaging technologies.

They tend to be more beneficial for national and large metropolitan news organizations than they are for smaller local ones. This is because they offer the competitive advantages of making the brand omnipresent in the face of the myriad of competing alternative sources of news and information.

When their use is more targeted on building effective personal relationships with readers, listeners and viewers, they appear to be more useful for smaller local news organizations. There, the contacts can be more individual and intimate, and the volume of contact is generally not as overwhelming as for large organizations.

There is a clear and growing body of evidence that news organizations' Web sites produce some benefits from various activities. Less evidence has been found to show that social media activities do likewise, especially for newspapers. It is perhaps too early to judge given that experimentation with social media is in its infancy. It behooves all of us, however, to carefully observe and evaluate their development and effects. Then, we need to use what is learned to gauge whether and how a particular tool provides real benefit to a news organization or if it is depleting resources—financial and human—that could be used more effectively in other ways. ■

Robert G. Picard is a fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. He is editor of the Journal of Media Business Studies and author of 23 books on media economics and management topics. His blog can be found at www.themediabusiness.blogspot.com.

Technology Diminishes Journalists' Value

In May, Robert Picard wrote a piece in The Christian Science Monitor titled "Why journalists deserve low pay." The crux of his argument was that the social value created by journalism isn't enough to pay journalists' salaries and keep news organizations solvent. In arguing his case, Picard points out that economic value for journalists' work arose out of "the exclusivity of their access to information and sources, and their ability to provide immediacy in conveying information." That value, he contends, "has been stripped away by contemporary communication developments." Here is how he began his piece:

> Journalists like to think of their work in moral or even sacred terms. With each new layoff or paper closing, they tell themselves that no business model could adequately compensate the holy work of enriching democratic society, speaking truth to power, and comforting the afflicted. Actually, journalists deserve low pay. Wages are compensation for value creation. And journalists simply aren't creating much value these days. Until they come to grips with that issue, no amount of blogging, Twittering, or micropayments is going to solve their failing business models. ■

To read Picard's article, go to www.csmonitor.com/2009/0519/p09s02-coop.html.

An Antidote for Web Overload

With a hunger for explanatory guidance amid the raging storm of Web news flashes, a journalist stresses context to attract digital users.

By Matt Thompson

For the longest time, whenever I read the news, I've often felt the depressing sensation of lacking the background I need to understand the stories that seem truly important. Day after day would bring front pages with headlines trumpeting new developments out of city hall, and day after day I'd fruitlessly comb through the stories for an explanation of their relevance, history or import. Nut grafs seemed to provide only enough information for me to realize the story was out of my depth.

I came to think of following the news as requiring a decoder ring, attainable only through years of reading news stories and looking for patterns, accumulating knowledge like so many cereal box tops I could someday cash in for the prize of basic understanding. Meanwhile, though, with the advancements of the Web and cable news, the pace of new headlines was

accelerating—from daily to minute-by-minute—and I had no idea how I'd ever begin to catch up.

In 2008, I encountered a study describing others from my generation who seemed to share my dilemma. The Associated Press had commissioned professional anthropologists to track and analyze the behavior of a group of young media consumers. Their key conclusion: "The subjects were overloaded with facts and updates and were having trouble moving more deeply into the background and resolution of news stories."[1]

The study's participants seemed to respond to this ever-deepening ocean of news much like I had. We would shy away from stories that seemed to require a years-long familiarity with the news and incline instead toward ephemeral stories that didn't take much background to understand—crime news, sports updates, celebrity gossip. This approach gave us plenty to talk about with friends, but I sensed it left us deprived of a broader understanding of a range of important issues that affect us without our knowing.

After years of working in online newsrooms, though, I had hit upon a secret—talking to journalists was like having the decoder ring without having to do the work. If I didn't understand a story or why it was important, I could ask a metro editor about it. Without fail, she'd lay out the history and context in lush narrative detail, often with entertaining depictions of the players involved and fun asides with snippets of political trivia. Ten minutes of conversation with a good reporter could unlock the fundamentals of a beat so thoroughly I'd walk away feeling like an expert on the topic.

I started to realize that "getting" the news didn't require a decoder ring or years of work. All it took was access to the key pieces of information that newsrooms possessed in abundance. Yet news organizations never really shared that information in an accessible or engaging form. Instead, they cut it up into snippets that they buried within oodles of inscrutable news reports. Once in a while, they'd publish an explainer story, aiming to lay out the bigger picture of a topic. But such stories always got sidelined, quickly hidden in the archives of our news sites and forgotten.

Meanwhile, young news consumers like me were flocking to another Web site—a place structured around context, but which was quickly becoming a go-to destination for news as well.

The Wikipedia Epiphany

In 2007, The New York Times noted that something weird was going on with Wikipedia. This "free encyclopedia that anyone can edit" had taken on a function few could have expected an encyclopedia to perform.

As Jonathan Dee wrote in The New York Times Magazine, "For centuries, an encyclopedia was synonymous with a fixed, archival idea about the retrievability of information from the past. But Wikipedia's notion of the past has enlarged to include things that haven't even stopped happening yet. Increasingly, it has become a go-to source not just for reference material but for real-time breaking news—to the point where, following the mass murder at Virginia Tech, one newspaper in Virginia praised Wikipedia as a crucial source of detailed information."[2]

The following year Martin Nisenholtz, senior vice president of digital operations for The New York Times Company, would play a part in revealing Wikipedia's strength not just as a breaking news source, but as the place to read about a news story long after the headlines have subsided.

Five years prior, in 2002, blogger Dave Winer had made a bet with Nisenholtz that for most of the top five news stories of 2007, blogs would outrank The New York Times on Google. When Winer and Nisenholtz reconvened to settle the bet in 2008, they unearthed a surprise. By the terms of the bet, Winer had won, but the real news was the site that trounced both the Times and the blogosphere—Wikipedia.

What is it about this site, I wondered, that made it the people's choice not only for news over time, but for real-time news updates as well? Sure, the site's ability to instantly marshal an army of amateur editors was a big part of the story. But there was also something quite remarkable about how stories are structured on the site, how breaking news gets folded into an elegant, cohesive record, enabling site visitors to quickly catch up on a topic without having to sort through a torrent of disparate articles and headlines.

If you're looking for a way to combat information overload, to distill the universe of topics covered by the local newspaper into a manageable stream, it's difficult to find a more perfect invention than the format Wikipedia has pioneered.

But I saw opportunity for journalists to build on Wikipedia's model to make something even better. While Wikipedia does a fairly astonishing job of laying out topics of national and international import, it doesn't scale down very well to the level of local news. And hairy, complex stories such as climate change and health care reform require deft, economical storytelling that Wikipedia's cacophonous editing process is ill-suited to provide.

So in September 2008, I went to the University of Missouri's Reynolds

[1] "A New Model for News: Studying the Deep Structure of Young Adult News Consumption" can be read at www.ap.org/newmodel.pdf. Jim Kennedy, director of strategic planning at The Associated Press, wrote about this study in the Winter 2008 issue of Nieman Reports, www.niemanreports.org.

[2] "All the News That's Fit to Print Out" can be read at www.nytimes.com/2007/07/01/magazine/01WIKIPEDIA-t.html.

Journalism Institute (RJI) to explore how journalists might start winning at the context game, creating a new model of news to serve a generation of news consumers like me.

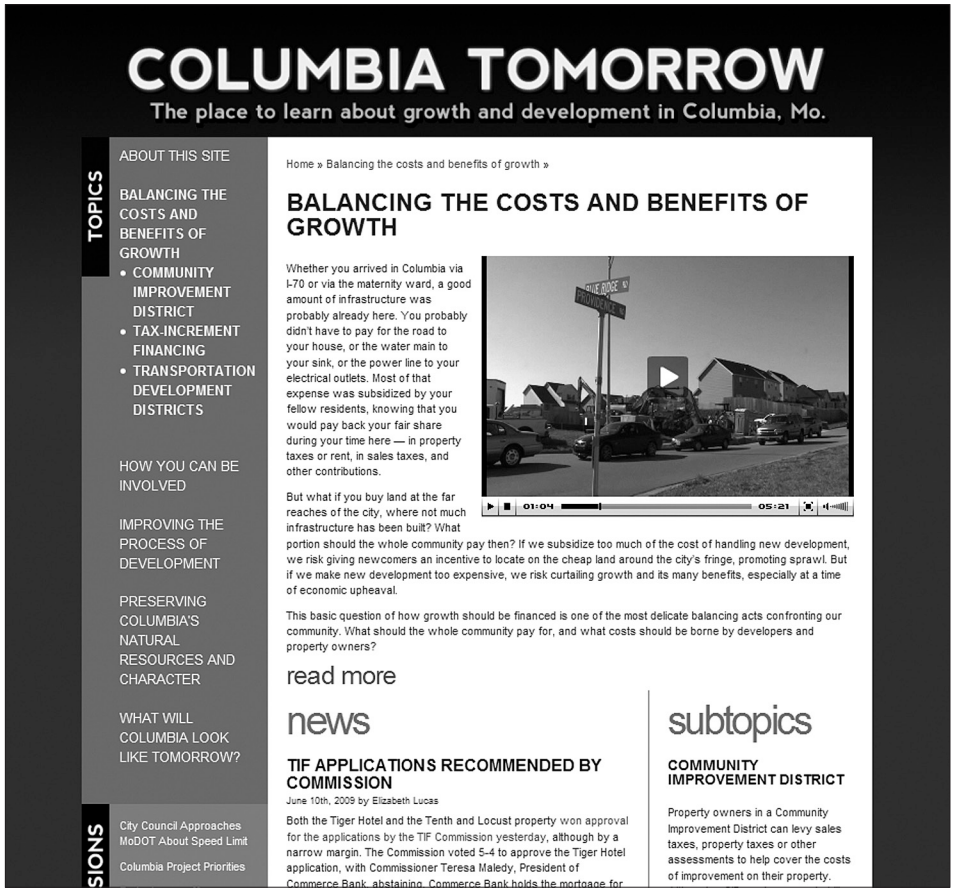
Two Experiments

Among the assumptions I wanted to test during my time at RJI was the idea that news consumers really are looking for context rather than merely the latest news. After all, during years of working in online newsrooms, I'd seen plenty of deep, contextual news packages ignored by our site users in favor of weather updates and crime reports.

The financial crisis provided an early test of this assumption. At the time, news about the crisis was ubiquitous. All at once, every news organization was unearthing news about a different aspect of the meltdown—the collapse of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the role of the Community Reinvestment Act, the status of the bailout plan wending its way through Congress. Amidst all this news, would people choose context?

The answer was yes. The breakthrough news item of the year wasn't an investigation that yielded some hot new scoop, it was a piece of on-the-record explanatory reporting by "This American Life" and National Public Radio that went wildly viral. "The Giant Pool of Money" went on to become the most downloaded episode in the history of "This American Life," garnering the award trifecta of a duPont, Peabody and Polk for its producers. Many listeners said they'd been tuning out all those crisis-related headlines until they heard the episode. For them, "The Giant Pool of Money" was like a decoder ring for this news story. And once you heard it, you wanted more.

But it could have been a fluke, revealing nothing more than a well-told story's capacity to ignite. So at the beginning of October, I spent two days culling the best links I could find laying out different aspects of the crisis into a spare, simple, one-page site called The Money Meltdown. I posted a link to the site on my blog and for the rest of the month spent a few minutes a day maintaining the page.



With Columbia Tomorrow and The Money Meltdown Web sites, Thompson sought to bring context to the news by bringing together vital information about development in Columbia, Missouri on one Web site and the nation's financial crisis on another.

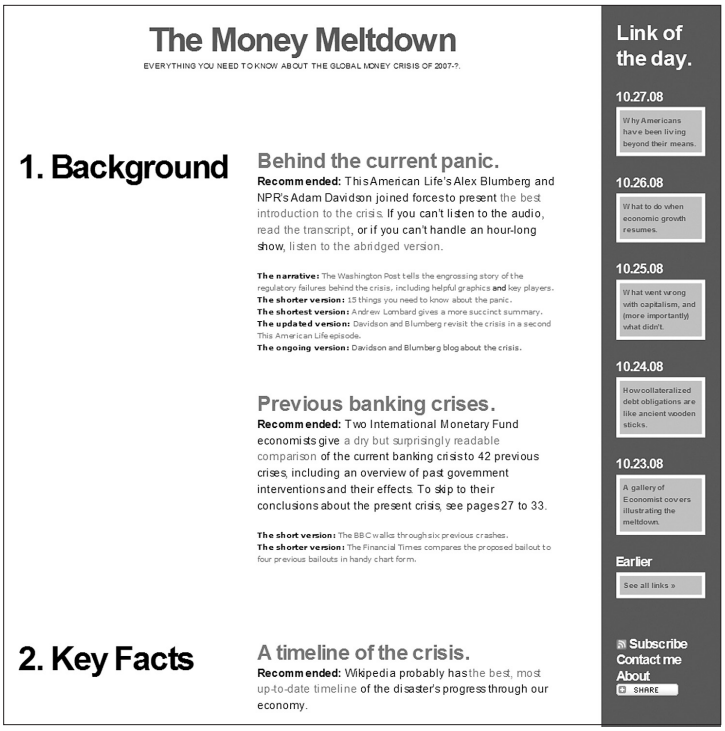
That month, more than 50,000 unique users visited The Money Meltdown. A small number for a big news operation, but significant traffic for two days of work by a random guy with a blog. It was enough traffic, at least, to suggest that the hunger for context was real.

The next question I wanted to tackle during my time in Missouri was how journalists might approach the task of building news sites structured around the bigger picture rather than the latest news. Working with a team of about a dozen reporters and a pair of editors from the Missouri School of Journalism, we decided to tackle the story of growth and development in Columbia, Missouri. A college town bordered by rural land in the middle of Missouri, Columbia's population had boomed over the past two decades, leaving the city grasping for a planning model that could more elegantly handle its explosive growth. It was the type of story that played out in obscure headlines about "tax-increment financing" and "transportation development districts"; a good candidate, I thought, for a dose of context.

I assembled dossiers containing about eight years of coverage of growth and development in Columbia by the city's two daily newspapers, more than 800 pages of news stories. And I read through the dossiers page by page on my Kindle, attempting to ferret out the tropes that came up time and time again, the arguments the city kept having with itself over the decade. With the assistance of Columbia Missourian editors Scott Swafford and John Schneller, my team and I worked to take all that contextual information buried in the stories—the years

of nut grafs, the forgotten explainers—and pull them together into an accessible, engaging package.

The outcome of this effort was a Web site called Columbia Tomorrow (www.columbiatomorrow.com). Built in WordPress, the site so far contains about two dozen hierarchically arranged topic pages that attempt to lay out the bigger picture of growth and development in the city, as well as provide a friendly introduction to topics like storm water runoff. As new developments emerge, reporters post about them in blog entries that appear on the relevant topic pages, which are updated to reflect the latest news.



This Web site is at www.themoneymeltdown.com.

It's too early to tell whether Columbia Tomorrow will be a breakaway hit with residents of the city. But it does, I think, what I hoped it would do. It points toward the possibility of a new direction for news Web sites, one that can balance the needs of news junkies and casual news consumers alike.

For years, our assumption has been that the Web was going to require more and more news, that the way to succeed online was to generate ever more frequent updates and shovel up ever more numerous headlines, to completely saturate our users with information so they'll keep clicking. Needless to say, this is a resource-intensive endeavor. And with all signs pointing to fewer resources for employing professional journalists, it looks like a losing one.

But these experiments are prodding us toward the notion that the real value might be found not in publishing more news on increasingly less serious matters, but in distilling the news into an ever-richer contextual record. Instead of just diverting us with trivia, the Web might transform journalism into something that doesn't need to be decoded, but instead helps us make sense of what's happening in our world. ■

Matt Thompson, a 2008-2009 Donald W. Reynolds Fellow at the Reynolds Journalism Institute, is an online journalist and coauthor of "Epic 2014/2015." He blogs at Newsless.org.

Digital Media's Key to Success: Must-Read Content

In observing what enables some content creators to draw steady and good-sized audiences, lessons emerge about the common factors that make this happen.

By Brian Reich

People are willing to pay for content, but only when they find value in it or in the experience of gaining access to it. With information so widely available and accessible, the quality of the content—its depth and breadth and the context it provides—is what gives it value. In our digital era, in which "information wants to be free," much of what is available, online or otherwise, doesn't lend itself to inspiring people to pay.

In this environment, some people have mastered how to consistently create must-read content. Even those who succeed, however, attract niche (not mass) audiences of people who are intensely interested in what they offer. There is little understanding of how to replicate their work, scale it larger, or transfer their efforts in a significant way to other projects. But there is a lot that can be learned from observing those whose content meets this threshold and does so consistently. Figuring out what factors contribute to their success—while acknowledging that there will be ones unique to each content creator—gives us clues about what can lead to success in this hybrid environment of social media and the gathering and distribution of news and information.

Here is how three people approach this challenge:

Robert Scoble, a blogger, author and technologist, believes the best content begins in the community. Responding to this belief, he has built and cultivated a vast network of people throughout the world and routinely tracks and engages them online.[1] Scoble takes a look at information flowing in from this network and then promotes on his site what he believes will be popular or interesting. The content he highlights has become must-read because it is drawn from sources that few other people have access to or have taken the time to share.

Guy Kawasaki, a blogger and entrepreneur, writes one of the most widely read blogs on the topics of innovation, startups and technology.[2] For him, aggregation and context are key factors. Everything that Kawasaki brings to his blog pulls from a variety of sources and ideas; his role is to add perspective, insight or knowledge that those who come to his blog might not get from consuming the raw information on their own. In many cases, what he does is to transform information into action. "To add value, what I write has to help change people's minds—that's why I am always looking to deliver 'the art of' or 'how to' information," he told me.

Virginia Heffernan, who writes The Medium column for The New York Times Magazine and blogs about digital content for The New York Times,[3] believes that the best strategy for creating must-read content is to look where others aren't. "Shine the spotlight over here," she told me, "when everyone else is shining it over there." She examines what content people are already paying for and what these consumer decisions mean to us as a society. "We assume right now that people are willing to pay zero," she said. "What is interesting is to explore what they will pay a lot for." Recently, she featured the TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conferences as an example. Directed by TED, a small nonprofit dedicated to "Ideas Worth Spreading," the events sell out at a hefty price even though much of the content from the conferences—live blogging, video broadcasts—are available for free online.

There are many content creators who've carved out niches and created highly valued experiences for their audience. Each offers something unique. Yet, here are some threads knitting their efforts together:

Understanding your audience is critical. How does your potential audience use technology to get and share information? What expectations do they have about the news and information they'll find? These questions and more along these lines are what define the individual's media experience at a time when there is more information available and more options about where to go to find it than there is time to consume it. Answering these key questions becomes essential. Having this knowledge contributes to how a story will be presented; if the potential members of an audience no longer read long articles, then explore other ways to tell the story. Knowing this influences how reporting and content creation takes place from the start. A strong editorial voice and judgment are valuable: Help in finding the way through the overload of information is essential—and that's where judgment comes into play, while acknowledging the value users ascribe to voicing their opinions and deciding for themselves how they feel about the news and information. "It's a conversation, not a lecture," is how some frame this change. Where the old media now fails is in covering a narrow band of stories and presenting information in ways that are too similar to how others cover the same story—and doing so without conveying a strong editorial voice. Such a voice has differentiated coverage and given audiences a reason to seek out this information.

Community is necessary. Bringing together people with shared interests is a necessary ingredient for any successful online venture. No person can know everything about an issue or topic, so forming community creates a collaborative process of information gathering. It brings forth stories, presents a wider range of issues, adds voices, and the result is more information. Still, having the community contribute content and perspective does not mean ceding control to the mob. Without significant filtering of what comes in, quality will suffer. Value comes from providing people with the ability to interact and in finding ways to spur more and better content in partnership with community members. As the editor in chief of Wired, Chris Anderson explained, "social filtering is the way people will consume media going forward." It also turns out to be the way to create content successfully.[4]

Aggregation is happening. Success in the digital age revolves around recognizing that just about everything comes from other places, or at least starts somewhere else. With so many sources of content, aggregation can bring the best of related content into

[1] Scoble blogs at http://scobleizer.com, and his Twitter feed is http://twitter.com/scobleizer.

[2] Kawasaki's blog, "How to Change the World" is at http://blog.guykawasaki.com, and his Twitter feed is http://twitter.com/Guykawasaki.

[3] Heffernan blogs for The New York Times, and her Twitter feed is http://twitter.com/page88.

[4] Anderson blogs at www.thelongtail.com, and his Twitter feed is http://twitter.com/Chr1sA.

one place; once there, users can gain more understanding of a topic they care about and find a community with and from whom they can learn more. Still, aggregation requires more than knowing how to use the tools to make it happen. For news organizations, for example, it means a willingness to embrace the idea of featuring content produced by others, being OK with others featuring what they've produced, and devoting newsroom resources to guide the process so this becomes a value-added experience for their audience. As Scoble put it: "You have to stop thinking about being the person who defines what is important all on your own. No one person can do it all, but if you are tapping into the expertise of many different sources, and making connections deep into issues, you will be able to build something that is really good. The real skill is being able to make those connections."

Good stewardship reaps rewards. In an article entitled "Can 'Curation' Save Media?"[5] Steve Rosenbaum, the CEO of Magnify.net, argued that the role of media professionals in the digital era is in "separating the wheat from the chaff, assigning editorial weight and—most importantly—giving folks who don't want to spend their lives looking for an editorial needle in a haystack a high-quality collection of content that is contextual and coherent." He uses the word "curation," but stewardship seems more appropriate. Beyond the responsibility of culling good content lies the commitment to growing the relationship with the people in the audience. The possibility exists for audience members to feel valued and to provide them with ways that they find value in what you offer. Being a good steward will reap the reward of loyalty, and along with that can come revenue since strong relationships make audience members want to buy or recruit friends to join them.

It's always been this way—that content is key to the success of media companies. This has not changed in the digital age. Yet, there's been no proven way found to bring in money so that news organizations—or other content creators—can sustain their efforts over time. As this financial side of the equation continues to be talked about—and experimentation takes place—there is no doubt that must-read content, embedded in a community experience, will be a critical element for all who achieve success. People will pay for content in which they find value. News reporting and other ubiquitous information does not seem to meet that standard. When it reaches the level of must-read content, the rest will fall into place more easily. ■

Brian Reich is the managing director of little m media, which provides organizations with strategic guidance about the Internet and technology. He is the author of "Media Rules!: Mastering Today's Technology to Connect With and Keep Your Audience," published by John Wiley & Sons in 2007. Follow him at http://twitter.com/brianreich.

[5] Rosenbaum's article can be read at www.businessinsider.com/can-curation-save-media-2009-4.

Dealing With Disruption

As digital media gets 'better, faster and cheaper. … [there is] little time for long-established human institutions like journalism to adapt.'

By Jon Palfreman

Seems simple enough: Click on a link to read this article online. But behind the scenes, matters are more complicated. Your click doesn't connect to the Nieman Foundation's offices in Cambridge. In fact, the computer servers with this and other Nieman Reports articles aren't even in Massachusetts; they are in Arizona. The click breaks up tiny data packets that then travel across the Internet by different routes—down copper wires, along fibers of optically pure glass, and through air—to reach your computer in San Francisco, New York or London, where the packets are reassembled and displayed as text.

Dozens of machines are involved in every online mouse click, executed so quickly that you're completely unaware of them. Perhaps you think you don't care, but I hope my words will convince you otherwise.

Ten years ago, Nieman Reports was essentially a print-only magazine. The Internet was seen as just one storm cloud among many that threatened journalism's future. In a special 1999 edition of Nieman Reports on the future of journalism, "The Business of News, The News About Business," there is only one reference to the Internet. Lou Ureneck, now chairman of the journalism department at Boston University, perceptively warned that the Internet "threatens the pot of gold at the back of newspapers—the classifieds." He was right. The Internet has not only disrupted the business and

practice of journalism, it has changed our world in fundamental ways.

Today, American business and government conduct virtually all of their transactions via the Web. According to the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 74 percent of Americans use the Internet, and use it to accomplish a growing list of tasks. Along the way we interact with numerous dot-com enterprises: from Web mail services like Gmail, Hotmail or Yahoo!, to data storage services like Box.net, IDrive, iDisk and Mozy. We upload pictures to Flickr, SmugMug and Photobucket, edit videos with Avid, Final Cut Pro and JayCut, upload our creations to YouTube and Vimeo, buy and sell items on Craigslist and eBay, exchange multimedia messages through MySpace and Facebook, talk to each other on Twitter, compose documents with Google Docs, crunch spreadsheets with Zoho, aggregate news with Bloglines and Google Reader, and even manage projects in Basecamp. Most of these companies didn't exist in 1999. Google, founded in 1998, has become one of the most powerful and influential corporations on the globe.

Accelerated Change

How has so much change happened so rapidly? Part of the answer can be found in the workings of the underlying digital technology that so few of us bother to understand. Its ascent is unlike any in history. The IBM PC on Nieman Reports' Editor Melissa Ludtke's desk today is 30 or 40 times more powerful than the Gateway computer she had in 1999. This spectacular improvement conforms to Moore's Law, named after Intel founder Gordon Moore, who sagely predicted in 1965 that roughly every two years, electronic components would get twice as small, twice as fast, and consume half as much electricity. He was right. If Ludtke's car had realized the same efficiency gains, her car that got 20 miles per gallon in 1999 would be getting 640 miles for every gallon today.

The relentless exponential improvement of digital technology is historically unique. Most technologies develop bounded by physical constraints. There are limits, for example, to how fast planes will travel (without burning up), or how high buildings can be built (without falling down), and these physical boundaries act as a brake on progress, brakes that give human beings a chance to adapt. But digital technology, which involves bits of information, not lumps of matter, is different. It just keeps getting better, faster and cheaper.

If cloud computing takes off, changes in the next decade could eclipse those of the last in making it easy, in principle, for a tiny operation to use the same advanced IT as a large company.

It's exciting but very disruptive. It enables new companies like Google to emerge, grow rapidly and change the world, with little time for long-established human institutions like journalism to adapt. It follows that unless digital technology runs into some kind of major obstacle, the world of 2019—by which time Ludtke's "computer" will be some 1,000 times more powerful than her 1999 machine—will again be turned upside down, raising new transformative opportunities by enabling new digital ventures to share the stage with the powerhouses like Google and Amazon—or perhaps to push them aside.

Cloud Computing

What happens with journalism? Newspaper editors, producers, journalism professors, and even new media gurus, given their record, aren't likely to reliably anticipate journalism's trajectory, so let's look instead at where the technological infrastructure of the Internet is headed.

An interesting and potentially disruptive trend is "cloud computing." A decade or so ago, companies needed to set up dedicated IT departments with their own data storage. Not any more. Today, Google, Microsoft, Yahoo!, Amazon and others offer an alternative: They're building and operating vast Internet data centers offering data processing as a utility to anyone. In "cloud computing" the data, processing power, and software are stored in the Internet cloud rather than on the user's computer.

The physical demands of running cloud computing are significant: They include the construction of a series of gigantic air-conditioned Internet temples—"server farms" that house racks and racks of computer servers. And powering these farms puts environmental concerns into the mix of this technological advance. Microsoft opened a server farm in Quincy, Washington, in 2007; it is larger than 10 football fields. Google's server farm in The Dalles, Oregon, is almost as big. Apple is building one in North Carolina. According to McKinsey & Company, Internet data centers house around 44 million computers—machines that enable users to rent cars, buy books, communicate via social media with friends, and upload videos to Facebook or YouTube. On these 44 million machines everything from Wikipedia entries to YouTube videos is physically stored, and it's where Facebook's 250 million users keep more than 15 billion photos of themselves and their friends.

Almost everything needed to run a business can be outsourced to the cloud, where, the argument goes, professional data processing companies can usually do it better and more cheaply. If cloud computing takes off, changes in the next decade could eclipse those of the last in making it easy, in principle, for a tiny operation to use the same advanced IT as a large company. New

or expanding companies won't need to make a huge capital investment in information technology when they can buy processing by the bit, scaling up slowly or, if they need to, rapidly.

Take, for example, the New York-based new media company, Animoto, a service that turns customer supplied images and music into Web-based video presentations. In 2008, Animoto found that demand was skyrocketing; reportedly 750,000 people signed up in a three-day period. Instead of buying new servers, Animoto contracted with Amazon's new computing service, Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2), to add capacity for about 10 cents per server per hour, absorbing the huge spike in demand. When demand dropped, Animoto was able to scale down easily.

If cloud computing is the next big thing, then why isn't the news media sticking its head in the cloud? So far there are only a few examples, including these:

- In late 2007, The New York Times decided to make its archive of back issues—11 million articles covering the period 1851-1922—more available to users. Rather than loading the articles onto their servers, the Times outsourced the job; now this archive is stored on Amazon servers somewhere in the United States.
- Telegraph Media Group (TMG) in the United Kingdom, publisher of The Daily Telegraph and The Sunday Telegraph, has gone further and made arrangements with several cloud providers. Google provides TMG's 1,400 employees with the Google Apps platform, a suite of communication and document applications. TMG also outsources customer management activities such as subscription services and advertising sales to a cloud provider called Salesforce.com.

Nieman Reports, like others, outsources to distant computer servers, as does the Nieman Journalism Lab, which uses a provider in Pittsburgh. With big potential cost savings, this option is one news organizations will likely consider. But doing this is not problem free: There are a series of environmental, financial, security, legal and privacy problems that will need to be resolved along the way.

Energy and environmental concerns: A lot of energy is required to run the Internet cloud. According to Stanford University's Jonathan Koomey, Internet data centers use about two percent of our nation's electricity, and usage is increasing at about 15 percent a year. Growth in Internet use is thus overwhelming the efficiency gains of Moore's Law and generating a significant and growing carbon footprint.

If cloud computing is the next big thing, then why isn't the news media sticking its head in the cloud?

Financial: Rising energy and environmental costs also reinforce worries that some dot-coms are not properly monetized. According to a report by Credit Suisse, YouTube is losing money for its owner Google at a rapid pace—roughly $470 million in 2009 or more than a dollar for every YouTube click.

Security: Servers holding such data could experience power outages or get attacked by hackers. Or the cloud provider could go bankrupt. Already there have been a few embarrassing incidents: Google Docs users were shut out of their online word processor documents for about an hour on July 8, 2008, and Amazon customers (including The New York Times) lost access to data for a few hours on July 20, 2008 following a power outage.

Privacy: Lawyers have also raised the possibility that if an organization, such as a newspaper or university, stores its records online on a third party's server (e-mails, for example) those documents might not have the same Fourth Amendment protections from unreasonable government search and seizure as data stored on a personal computer.

While troubling, the odds are that such knotty issues can be worked out and digital technology can be expected to continue its relentless and disruptive advance. This raises a broader question: Will there ever be a pause to give us time to adapt?

Perhaps, around 2019. That's about when Gordon Moore thinks his law might fail. The transistors, the switches that are the basis of modern computer hardware, can't in theory keep on getting smaller indefinitely. When the transistor's "gate," which controls the flow of electrons, becomes too small—fewer than five nanometers (five billionths of a meter)—then the transistor may no longer function as an effective switch and the game will be up. Until, of course, scientists and engineers invent something new.

So by 2019, or thereabouts, when Nieman Reports reflects on the state of the news media, we might have a chance to take a breath and consider the distance we've traveled and ponder the road ahead. Until then, expect new cloud computing dot-coms to further change our media landscape. The journalist's hope is that among the next decade's big winners will be some dot-coms (or dot-orgs) that have pioneered sustainable business models for reporting and communicating news. ■

Jon Palfreman, a 2006 Nieman Fellow, is KEZI Distinguished Professor of Broadcast Journalism at the University of Oregon. A veteran of both U.K. and U.S. television, he has made more than 40 BBC and PBS one-hour documentaries including the Peabody Award-winning series the "Machine That Changed the World," the Emmy Award-winning NOVA "Siamese Twins," and the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Silver Baton-winner, "Harvest of Fear."

What's Old Can Be New Again—Assisted By Digital Media

'It's not a digital update of the newspaper, but it is a digital update of the community connection role I first learned about as a child in Shenandoah.'

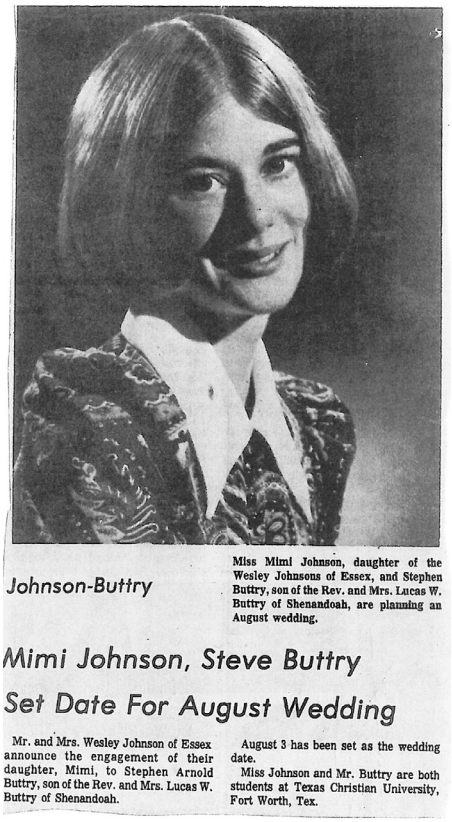
BY STEVE BUTTRY

When I started in the newspaper business as a high school student in a small Iowa town in the early 1970s, our paper was as social as media got. The Shenandoah Evening Sentinel ran short items we called "locals," submitted by area busybodies, telling who was visiting whom, who was ill and who had just returned from vacation. Unlike most tweeps today, our locals actually answered Twitter's question, "What are you doing?"

I didn't care much about that since I wanted to launch my career as an investigative reporter. But I did connect with the community through that social media newspaper. I first encountered my future wife when she called to criticize my prediction about a high school football game. (I was right.) During the next few years the Sentinel told people in and around Shenandoah about our graduations, engagement, wedding, the birth of our first son, and eventually the deaths of my father and Mimi's parents. The newspaper connected our community like nothing else. You couldn't imagine Shenandoah without the Sentinel.

With our children grown, Mimi and I get most of our news from links on Twitter and send our love and honey-do's by txt msg while the local newspaper, The Gazette in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, which provides my paycheck, piles up in the recycling bin, mostly unread.

The Sentinel died in the 1990's, about a decade after the newspaper I carried as a youth in Ohio, the Columbus Citizen-Journal, published its final edition. I was present for the final editions of the Des Moines Tribune in 1982 and the Kansas City Times in 1990. While I did manage to do lots of investigative journalism, I noticed early that newspapers have essentially been dying my whole career. So don't count me among those who blame the current turmoil in the newspaper business on Google, Facebook, Twitter or some other digital demon.



Johnson-Buttry

Miss Mimi Johnson, daughter of the Wesley Johnsons of Essex, and Stephen Buttry, son of the Rev. and Mrs. Lucas W. Buttry of Shenandoah, are planning an August wedding.

Mimi Johnson, Steve Buttry Set Date For August Wedding

Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Johnson of Essex announce the engagement of their daughter, Mimi, to Stephen Arnold Buttry, son of the Rev. and Mrs. Lucas W. Buttry of Shenandoah.

August 3 has been set as the wedding date.

Miss Johnson and Mr. Buttry are both students at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Tex.

In the 1970's Buttry's local newspaper, The Shenandoah Evening Sentinel, published the announcement of his and his future wife's engagement.

Digital Attempts

I encountered the prospect of a newspaper's digital delivery of information before I heard of the Internet. A few proprietary services—America Online, Prodigy and CompuServe—were offering digital news to early adopters who had computer modems—all dial-up, of course. I was pondering such a purchase myself. As an assistant managing editor at The Kansas City Star, I attended meetings about a project called StarText. We were going to provide newspaper stories (text only) by modem the night before their publication to subscribers of the service. I suggested that we sell and install modems and show people how to use them, just as cable companies provided the equipment needed to access their service. My suggestion didn't take root. Like most other newspaper managers, my peers and bosses at the Star thought we were in the newspaper business. While they were trying earnestly to innovate and dive into the digital stream, they failed to realize that we were really in the community connection business.

I saw a more discouraging view of the mindset of newspaper companies when I was at the Omaha World-Herald in the mid-1990's. The publisher dismissed the fledgling Internet as a fad and our company was slow to go online and we didn't pursue any serious innovation. When I left in 1998, I still didn't have e-mail or Web access from my desk. Most reporters still didn't when I returned two years later, but I negotiated to be one of the first.

When I worked at the American

Press Institute (API) from 2005 to 2008, I became heavily involved in the Newspaper Next project, focused on helping newspaper companies develop business models for the digital age. Clayton Christensen, a Harvard business professor who has studied innovation in dozens of industries, partnered with API on the project. I had seen the newspaper companies I worked for as an employee and consultant make all of the errors that Christensen said established companies typically make when faced with the threat or opportunity of disruptive innovation.

We ignored competitors because we didn't think their product or service was good enough to worry about.

We crammed our existing model into new technology rather than imagining and exploring the possibilities.

We bogged innovation down in the culture of our hidebound organizations.

As I taught the principles of innovation in Newspaper Next, I saw newspaper companies respond with limited, narrow projects that barely, if at all, changed their cultures or their business models.

Email this | Share this | Print this | Comments (Be the first to comment)

ST. LOUIS' BEST BRIDAL

Home | My Profile | Join | Bridal Community | Marketplace | View Members | Bridal Events | Announce Engagement | Search Announcements

Every sign pointed straight to you

By Nancy Larson

In high school, Sarah Stawizynski and Tim Peniston were both players – volleyball players, that is. During various games and tournaments, they traveled in many of the same circles. But each of them was dating someone else, so they remained friends.

Tim, a year younger, had his eye on Sarah, but didn't tell her.

"I was too chicken to ask her out in high school," Tim said.

Had they not run into each other several years later – after they'd both graduated from college – they might not be married today. But again, it was volleyball that brought them together. By this time, Tim was playing on a team with Sarah's cousin. When they saw each other again, Tim knew he had to make his move.

(Photos by Bobbi Brinkman Photography)

ST. LOUIS' BEST BRIDAL MARKETPLACE

WEDDING ATTIRE
- Children's Formal Wear
- Gown Preservation
- Gowns
- Jewelers
- Mother of the Bride
- Shoes
- Tuxedos
- Veils & Tiaras

BEAUTY & HEALTH
- Cosmetic Services
- Dentistry
- Hairstylists
- Spas & Fitness

CEREMONY SITES
- Ceremony Sites
- Musicians

DESTINATION WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS
- Bed & Breakfasts
- Destination Weddings
- Honeymoon
- Travel Agents

REGISTRY

Though Buttry doesn't know of a newspaper Web site that handles engagement announcements and weddings in the way he envisioned in his Complete Community Connection blueprint, StlToday.com, the Web site of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, uses digital tools to gather and share this news.

Connecting the Community

I began to develop my own ideas to use digital tools to do some of the jobs that were essential to connecting the community when I was cutting my teeth at the Evening Sentinel. I wrote my first drafts of a vision for a new business model. When API decided not to use my work for the second Newspaper Next report in early 2008, I started looking for a newspaper company adventurous enough to give my Complete Community Connection plan a try. At this time, I was also jumping into social media, first with Flickr and LinkedIn, then Facebook. Twitter really showed me how social media were revolutionizing how the world connected. With brief comments, questions and links, I communicate daily with thousands of people, becoming so familiar with many that when we actually "tweetup," we greet one another like old friends.

My business model and my enthusiasm for social media appealed to the executives of Gazette Communications, and I arrived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa to start as editor last June 10th. Two days later, our nation's worst disaster since Hurricane Katrina struck my new home. Our staff has covered the flood and its recovery with a wide range of digital tools—interactive maps and databases, social media, video, multimedia, liveblogging.[1] We are recognized as industry pioneers in the use of liveblogging and Twitter. Our digital editor, Jason Kristufek, launched and led a series of BarCamp NewsInnovation conferences around the country.

But the disaster delayed us from the crucial work of transforming our business model. On top of the national economic slowdown and the economic challenges facing the rest of the industry, our community is reeling from a crisis that damaged or destroyed a thousand businesses. We had to join the wave of newspaper companies cutting staffs. But, unlike most of our shrinking peers, our executives faced the music the next day in a live chat.

In April, I published my vision for the new business model on my blog, calling it "A Blueprint for the Complete Community Connection."[2] I'm now "C3 Coach" at Gazette Communications, trying to turn the vision into fact. Bloggers and tweeps responded positively to the blueprint, and it earned me a seat at the Poynter Institute's Big Ideas Conference in July.

It's not a digital update of the newspaper, but it is a digital update of the community connection role I first learned about as a child in Shenandoah. Yes, the model includes professional journalists who will use digital tools to tell the community's big news in new ways. More important, we will provide the platform where the community will tell those big stories in people's lives that connect the community in important and meaningful ways—stories of graduation, engagement, birth and death, and who's visiting whom and who's in the hospital. (Many days, my biggest news now arrives from CaringBridge, a custom-

[1] See ongoing flood coverage at www.gazetteonline.com/section/flood.

[2] "A Blueprint for the Complete Community Connection" is at http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2009/04/27/a-blueprint-for-the-complete-community-connection.

ized Web site where my brother-in-law updates friends and family around the world on my nephew's recovery from a bone-marrow transplant.)

Just as important, C3 calls for us to move beyond the collapsing advertising and subscription revenue model. Many of those community moments described above are occasions for sending a gift or flowers. We need to enable businesses to conduct those transactions and many more through C3 using credit or debit cards. We need to connect businesses with ways to target the customers they want; when a high school graduate fills in "University of Iowa" for his college choice in our Class of 2010 site, ads for campus-area restaurants and bookstores should appear, offering opportunities for grandparents to buy gift cards.

I wish I could boast of C3 accomplishments and not just the vision. Like many others, our company has spent more time and energy on reorganization than on true innovation. I get frustrated at the pace of transforming a culture focused on producing our newspaper, television broadcasts, and news Web sites. I'm going to have to pursue this as persistently as any investigative story I ever worked, with the same commitment to reaching the goal, whatever the obstacles. ■

Steve Buttry is C3 coach at Gazette Communications. He can be followed at http://twitter.com/stevebuttry or on his blog, http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com.

Inviting the Rise of the Entrepreneurial Journalist

True/Slant is modeling the newsroom of the future by empowering contributors to build their own digital brands—and by changing the role of the editor.

BY LEWIS DVORKIN

News of the moment, contributor perspective, and social media come together on the True/Slant homepage.

I love the newsroom, both in real life and the movies. I remember my wire service days, ripping copy line by line from a manual typewriter to get it quickly to the slot man. I spent many exhilarating nights at The New York Times, Newsweek and The Wall Street Journal editing breaking stories on deadline. And nothing was crazier than my stint in a tabloid TV newsroom.

An original "one sheet" movie poster of "All the President's Men" hangs in my office. To this day, the final scene in The Washington Post newsroom makes me quiver. With power, authority and trust, a Teletype machine swiftly bangs out, one keystroke at a time: "Nixon Resigns. Gerald Ford to become 38th President at noon today."

All those glorious newsroom days are gone—forever. The rapid transition to a digital news world challenges every journalistic structure, process and delivery system that served the public interest so well for so long. Bold ideas for news organizations once came from Henry Luce, Bill Paley, and Ted Turner. Today, the once invincible media elite appear paralyzed, left sheepishly to ask, "Who's going to produce the news if we don't?"

Well, everyone is—old brands, new brands, Twitter, Flickr, anyone with a digital device.

Media extinction comes slowly. Newspapers and magazines, television and radio news are here for years to come. But innovative, ambitious organizations will emerge with vastly different concepts for lower-cost newsrooms and content generation. They will dramatically redefine long-standing relationships between content creators, the audience—and marketers, too. To engage passionate news consumers, news operations must unite the values and standards of journalism with the dynamics of the Web and the connective power of social media.

Editing Talent, Not Words

True/Slant, an original content news network, is building the "newsroom of the future." There are two key components: individually branded content contributors, all linked to one another

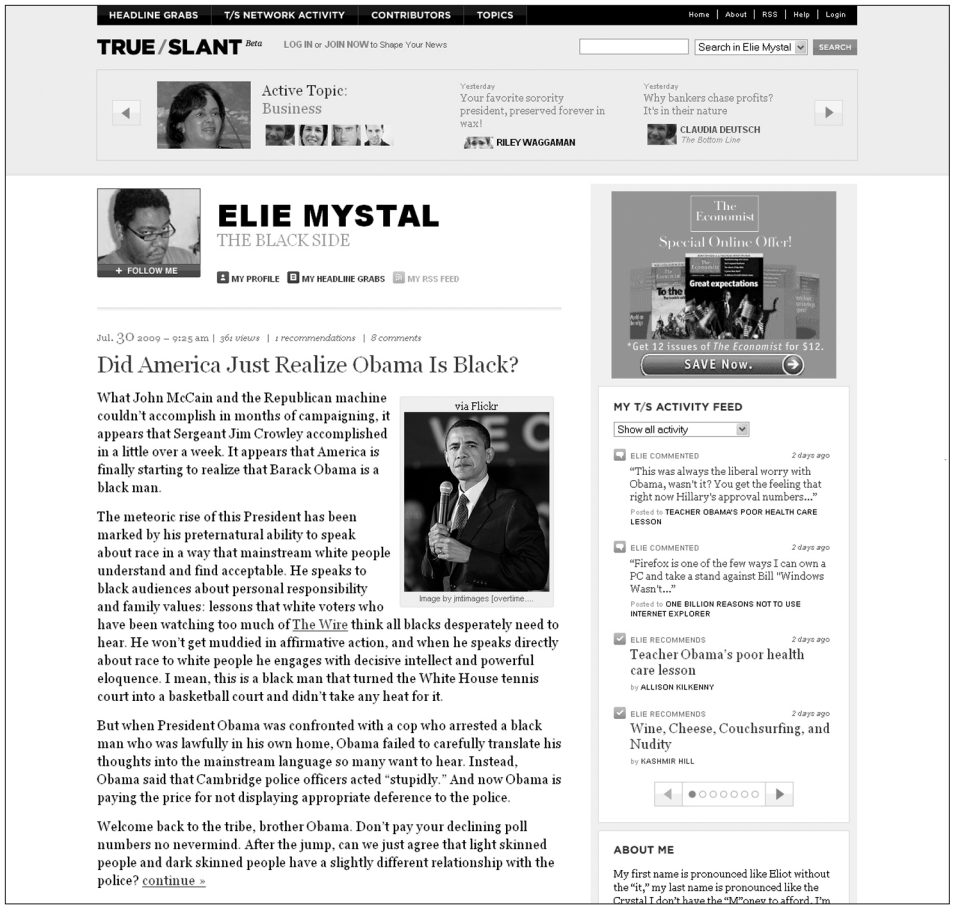
but really working for themselves, and editors who focus on editing talent, not copy. The result: a news experience and publishing environment shared with the audience that upends both traditional journalism models and more recent digital news experiments.

At its core, the True/Slant news experience is built on knowledge, transparency, authenticity and intimacy. These attributes are vital in a news world that appears split in half: traditional brands on one side, struggling with notions of objectivity and monolithic voice, and upstart digital entrants on the other, careening toward passion-fueled bias in the spirit of openness. True/Slant is honest about its adherence both to truth and slant. It's a place for diverse multiple viewpoints and for marketers to engage in new ways with passionate news consumers.

It all begins with consumers trying to cope with the flood of news—and confused by whom and what to trust. True/Slant believes consumers want their news created and filtered by credible individuals with topic-specific knowledge. They want a freeflowing news stream, untouched by top-down editorial decision-making. They want a chance to be heard directly alongside those bringing them the news.

Enter the entrepreneurial journalist. These are credible content contributors who provide information, perspective and insight on targeted news topics. At True/Slant, this person can be a journalist, blogger, author, expert or academic, and each is carefully selected by our newsroom's editors, who discuss ideas and work with them to market their content across the Web using custom-designed "playbooks." Our newsroom is not a journalism bureaucracy that assigns stories, line edits, copyedits or acts as a gatekeeper. True/Slant editors are facilitators, not gatekeepers. Free to publish information as they see fit, entrepreneurial journalists write for the audience, not the editor. Their flow of content is timely, transparent, expert and passionate.

Miles O'Brien, a former CNN anchor, brings his aviation and space



As an entrepreneurial journalist, True/Slant contributor Elie Mystal publishes under his own name and brand. He, along with almost 200 other True/Slant contributors, uses social media to help build an audience around his specific area of expertise.

expertise to his True/Slant audience. F. Paul Wilson, a best-selling author and physician, examines scientific and health-care myths for his followers. Ryan Sager, a newspaper columnist, explores neuroscience. Jennifer Kirk, a former World Junior Champion figure skater, exposes the inner workings of that elite sport.

True/Slant has nearly 200 contributors. Rather than a static employer/worker model, True/Slant contributors can determine the financial arrangement that best suits them. Options include monthly stipends and incentive plans based on audience growth for their content. Some contributors have been granted equity in True/Slant.

In effect, each contributor is a brand of one, with a unique voice, strong perspective, and an audience drawn to what they publish. As the owners of their brand, they can act as CEO, publisher or content creator. It's their choice. True/Slant holds no exclusivity in what they do. In fact, our model is built on the idea that an entrepreneurial journalist has a multifaceted career. O'Brien writes and produces video for other Web sites; Wilson writes books and treats patients; Sager writes a New York Post column; Kirk is a student at UCLA.

Creating a Digital Home

On True/Slant, contributors anchor, consolidate and build their digital home. Social media is one of its cornerstones. From this home, they produce original content on True/Slant, but they also promote and link to work they do elsewhere via the easy-to-use self-publishing and social media tools that we provide. They blend their perspective and reporting with content they curate—creating links to online words and video—and with commentary they

True/Slant provides a continuous live stream of activity across the network, blending new posts, contributor comments, called-out user comments, and active conversations.

encourage their audience to produce. And because entrepreneurial journalists need to understand their audience and their business, when they log on to our platform they get important real-time data: unique visitors, page views, blogs and sites pointing to their content, and new user comments.

The True/Slant news user and the contributor form a bond through social media. Contributor content is followed, accepted, rejected and corrected by the audience. Those who write for True/Slant share their daily news consumption with their audience, and they manage conversations and market themselves virally online through Twitter, Facebook, reddit, Digg and ties they have with blogs and Web sites.

On our site, contributor and audience-generated content is commingled, enabling contributors and users to interact within a network—a sort of news democracy—that encourages cross-talk among contributors and readers and participation across contributor communities.

This type of collaborative dialogue opens the door to unique opportunities for advertisers looking for more effective ways to engage with news audiences. Yes, advertisers can buy display advertising on True/Slant, but marketers can also speak with True/Slant consumers through the T/S Ad Slant. With this option, a marketer can publish content to their own page using the same tools as contributors. Clearly labeled as advertising, this content is contextually integrated throughout the site, enabling marketers to participate in news related to them and the social news conversation. All along the way, the integrity of the news process remains intact.

For me, True/Slant is an idea 35 years in the making. I do miss those newsrooms with all the grizzled journalists who loved what they did and who taught me so much. But news can now be so much more than it was. True/Slant brings fresh thinking to an industry that is reeling. I can't imagine anything more exciting than helping lead the news business into the future. ■

Lewis DVorkin is the founder and CEO of True/Slant. He was a senior vice president at America Online in charge of news, sports and network programming and helped launch TMZ.com. He held top editing positions at The New York Times, Newsweek, The Wall Street Journal, and Forbes.

Ours, Theirs and the Bloggers' Zones: Compatible, Yet Different

Over the years, creating community on the Telegraph's Web site has come to mean a lot more than someone leaving a comment at the bottom of an article.

By Shane Richmond

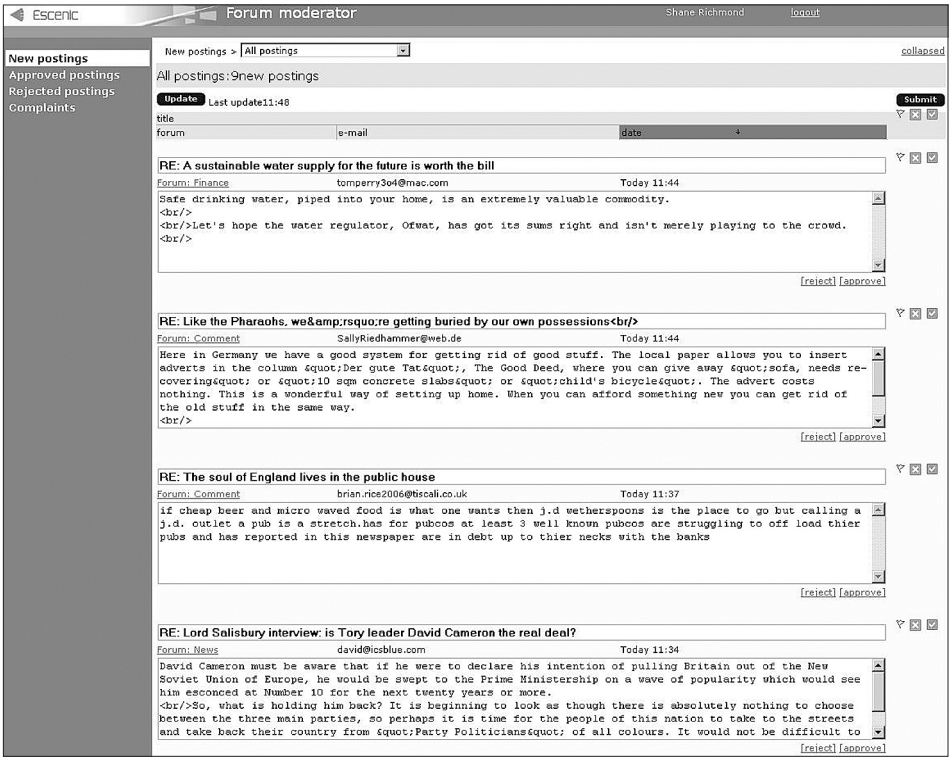
In an episode of the 1980's BBC comedy series "Yes, Prime Minister," Jim Hacker described the readers of Britain's various newspapers: "The Daily Mirror is read by people who think they run the country; The Guardian is read by people who think they ought to run the country; The [London] Times is read by the people who actually do run the country; The Daily Mail is read by the wives of the people who run the country; The Financial Times is read by people who own the country; The Morning Star is read by people who think the country ought to be run by another country; and The Daily Telegraph is read by people who think it is."

His cabinet secretary asks: "Prime Minister, what about the people who read The Sun?" Before the prime minister can answer, his private secretary, Bernard, chips in: "Sun readers don't care who runs the country, as long as she's got big tits."

Though played for laughs, Britons will hear a ring of truth in Hacker's analysis. In Britain, the newspaper people read can say a lot about their political views, social class, and background. Describing someone as a Sun reader implies certain things about them that are very different from the assumptions one would make about a Mail reader or a Guardian reader.

Those distinctions are becoming blurred online. The habit of reading a single newspaper was largely formed by practical concerns: It's expensive to buy more than one, and they must be carried around with you. On the Web, someone can read several newspapers, and we know that plenty of people do, dipping in and out of different ones through the day. If they prefer the political coverage of the Guardian, the sports coverage of the Telegraph, and the financial coverage of The (London) Times, they can now read all three without having to buy them or carry them around.

This fragmentation has increased as news aggregators, such as Google News, make it possible for readers to click straight through to the story level. Often, after reading this one article, the person moves on. Therefore, in a short space of time we've moved from audiences gathering at title level to audiences gathering at section level and now to them gathering at story level.



With this content management system, editors review user comments at My Telegraph after they are posted when users complain. *Image courtesy of The Daily Telegraph.*

Engaging Readers Online

Audiences are booming at the Telegraph, as 27 million unique users came to the Web site in June. Within this vast audience still lurks our newspaper's original community—made up of people who we'd identify, and who would proudly identify themselves, as being Telegraph readers. They are enormously important to us, and ensuring that they become engaged with what we do online could be crucial to our success in an increasingly tough environment for news organizations. They are the people who will, for example, join Clued Up, our crossword site, play fantasy football, and will perhaps subscribe to future niche services.

What the Telegraph needs to do is make certain these loyal readers have easy access to the tools that will enable them to participate on our site. Of course, community tools are becoming more common on other newspaper Web sites, and social media are part of the Web landscape for everyone online, so if we want our new visitors to be regulars they'll need to find these tools here, too, and an environment that welcomes them.

Five years ago there were few places for readers to contribute to our Web site. Indeed, apart from the letters page, they had few places to share their opinions with us, even in print. So we began this ongoing conversation with them by soliciting opinions on the big issue of the day. To do this, we'd write a brief article and ask readers to e-mail us their opinions. Back then, we didn't have comment boxes. Once we had the ability to add them, we did so at the end of all of our opinion pieces and to selected news stories.

Readers embraced the new tools with enthusiasm. Yet, in the newsroom the cultural shift was relatively small. Most journalists knew of the trend for inviting reader comments to stories. And while they didn't see the harm in letting readers join in, they weren't sure of the value of reader comments, and they certainly weren't about to start replying.

Soon the Telegraph was receiving hundreds of comments each day, then thousands and, when that happened, we had to think about moderation. In handling a couple dozen reader e-mails each day, it was relatively simple to take a look and decide whether they were appropriate for publication. Now, doing so has become a full-time job. For the most part, this change has been a good thing because this kind of attention and focus allowed us to develop expertise in moderating reader comments. It also helped a

small group of us get to know some of our readers better. The downside of this approach was that it also kept journalists at arm's length from comments on their articles; this meant that it remained an option for them to engage with readers.

At the same time, journalist participation was growing on the Telegraph's blogs, and our best writers quickly realized that blogging works best as a conversation. With articles and commentary, however, journalists seldom engaged with commenters. Still, in this early stage, our plan was targeted to increasing reader participation.

My Telegraph

By early 2007, we had created a very active community of commenters in certain areas of the site. Now we decided to go further. We noticed that many readers shared a common outlook as they expressed their feelings that the country had been led in the wrong direction by the Labour Party, which has governed Britain since 1997. Crucially, many of our readers/commenters felt that very few people shared their views. Yet, we could see by monitoring their comments across the Web site that, in fact, many people shared this view. We saw in this moment the opportunity to help them connect to one another.

We did this by inviting some of our regular commenters to come to the Telegraph offices for a tour and to meet some of our journalists. While they were there, we invited them to become beta testers on a new community site we were building called My Telegraph. By working with these community members and others, we were able to build the site very quickly, dropping features that users didn't like and building new ones based on their feedback. My Telegraph (http://my.telegraph.co.uk) was completed in 17 working days and went live in May 2007. Thousands quickly signed up. Its home page was redesigned to cope with the quantity of content, some features were dropped, and new experiments, such as a mini-RSS reader, were tried.

We heard a common question from other news organizations, media observers, and bloggers about one aspect of our site: "Why would anyone want a blog with the Telegraph?" We knew that plenty of Telegraph readers wanted to identify themselves as such, and they would see value in having their words appear on the Telegraph's Web site. But the important point was not that we were giving them a blog; we were giving them an audience. Of course, they could create a blog with WordPress or Blogger but they'd then spend months building an audience. With us, they could get a dozen comments from fellow readers within minutes of writing their first post. And the comments almost certainly would come from like-minded people.

The community on My Telegraph came together very quickly, and soon the site offered us new ways to connect with our readers. One reader wrote about his two daughters who were killed in a car accident by a drunk driver. The case was in court, and a story that would have run in brief, if at all, was expanded to half a page including excerpts from the father's blog. When Islamist terrorists attempted to bomb London, we asked one My Telegraph blogger, a Muslim, to expand on a post that she had written denouncing the attacks as being against the teachings of Islam. Her piece then ran in the newspaper.

Very soon it became clear to us that My Telegraph members saw the site as theirs. Quick to point out faults, they were equally happy to suggest improvements. We now realize there are three spaces on the Telegraph's Web site: ours—where comments on articles reside, theirs—My Telegraph, and the bloggers'—our blogs. Knowing this, we try to operate the site accordingly.

Our Telegraph

At the moment, comments on the Telegraph's areas of the site are premoderated, meaning that a moderator reviews them before they are published. However, readers can post their comments without registering with the site. Blogs and My Telegraph are postmoderated, though readers must be registered to comment.

Free speech is important to the Telegraph's readers so we tried to reflect that in our moderation policy. We're careful to remove material that runs afoul of Britain's racial and religious hatred laws, and we have to be careful about libelous material. In premoderation this is relatively simple ,but in postmoderation we rely on our readers to bring inappropriate material to our attention. Only then does a moderator review a comment.

Our journalists are learning to engage. This effort has been helped by the growth of online social networks. With our journalists now using Facebook, Digg and Twitter, each of which is an increasingly important source of traffic, and being familiar with YouTube and Flickr, engagement doesn't seem as strange to them as it did a few years ago. Still, it is important they have guidance.

Our advice to our journalists is to "play the ball, not the man" when joining comments. By all means say someone's argument is idiotic, but don't call them an idiot. Engage with constructive comments, even when they are negative, and ignore those who are being abusive or trying to derail debate. Of course some writers, and some readers, disregard those rules entirely and seem to enjoy it when comment threads turn into an anything-goes fight. That can work, too, as long as everyone understands the rules.

There's still plenty more to do. This year, having already relaunched our blog platform, we plan to release a new comment tool and refresh My Telegraph. We've been doing this for a long time now, so we feel like we know our readers pretty well. But the social media landscape has changed a lot in the past few years—and continues to change at a rapid pace—so we're eager to collaborate with our readers in building new community tools. ■

Shane Richmond is the communications editor at The Daily Telegraph.

AN ESSAY IN WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

A Photographer's Journey: From Newspapers to Social Media

BY JIM MACMILLAN

A Philadelphia Phillies' fan celebrates on South Broad Street after his team won the World Series in October 2008. Within 24 hours, MacMillan's blog showing photos from the celebration had 35,000 page views.

It used to be so simple: Whether I needed to make my way through a police roadblock or explain to curious neighbors why I was taking pictures on their block, barking just two words usually did the trick: "Daily News!" In one breath, the transaction was complete. I had told them something about the authority behind my presence, and at the same time let them know exactly where they'd find my photos—in the next day's paper.

I spent the better part of 17 years with the Philadelphia Daily News as a staff photographer and, eventually, the newsroom's first video journalist. Then, 10 months after taking a buyout, I found myself unable to respond to a local deli clerk's simple question: "What do you do for a living?"

My Web site described me as a backpacking, independent, live-blogging, entrepreneurial, economically sustainable, all-platform, multimedia, visual journalist, educator and consultant—and it wasn't entirely a joke. I was all of those and none of those, depending upon the challenges of each day.

Schooled in Social Media

My professional identity began to splinter in 2007 when I began producing

video news reports and found myself struggling to explain where anybody could find my work. The steps to locating it were these:

- Send everybody to the Philadelphia newspapers' Web site, philly.com.
- Steer them to the Daily News tab.
- Direct them to the "Watch This" section, then the "More Multimedia" link.
- Instruct them to read through a text list of content and click on my report.

My video news report would play right after a commercial for new cars or health insurance, both of which often were juxtaposed uncomfortably with the breaking news I often covered.

Needless to say, my videos weren't getting a lot of clicks. And my Web surfing habits led me to believe there had to be a better way to get my content seen, so—with no training money in the newsroom's budget—I laid out my own cash and burned some comp time to go to Las Vegas for my first Blog World Expo. And I promptly got schooled in the basics of online distribution and monetization.

I joined dozens of social networks and set up every account with the same user name—think branding—and I arranged to be e-mailed when a member friended, linked, followed me, or became a fan. Over time, some sites turned out to matter more, a few are defunct, and from others I never heard a peep. I also began using video distribution sites to post my work to social networks. Soon, my stories could be found on YouTube and other video sites or as iTunes podcasts. Updates would appear on my blog.

A year later, further budget cuts were making my job ever more difficult, and I saw little multimedia progress at the office. I got the feeling that what I'd learned in Vegas might as well have stayed in Vegas. When buyouts came along, I raised my hand, intending to apply the severance toward a sabbatical year as I threw myself into learning all I could about social media, monetization, content distribution, and their implications for journalism.

I still wanted to do this kind of work—communicating information that matters. And as I launched my own blog, I gradually came to understand that I'd always be a journalist, whether or not I carried an employer's credentials. All I needed were three things: content, an audience, and revenue.

I looked for guidance. At the Online News Association meeting near Washington last fall, I heard Jeff Jarvis describe his entrepreneurial journalism course at the City University of New York. Then, as my friend George Miller prepared to teach a similar course at Temple University, I watched him develop the curriculum. And I made a return visit to Blog World Expo.

On my blog, I wrote some analytical posts about social media and its impact on the coverage of breaking news, especially during the plane crashes in Buffalo, New York, and in the Hudson River off Manhattan; the swine flu panic, and the infamous Air Force One fly-over photo op over Lower Manhattan. I posted—and marketed—my photos and videos of election night celebrations and holiday fireworks and much more. Among my news gathering and distribution tools are TweetDeck—a desktop Twitter client—and a number of Web sites that search Twitter posts. I use Tweetie to send my stories via my iPhone, which can post and link to photos and add live geotags.

Over time, traffic grew on my sites. Among the social media highlights of my news coverage are:

- When about 35,000 visitors came to my site after I posted celebration photos after the Phillies won the World Series. I'd sent links to several photo editors, and The Associated Press bought and distributed them.
- When Philly.com purchased and published some of my iPhone photos from the scene of a fatal fire, I was profiled by Philadelphia Weekly and even got blog mentions from BuzzMachine and Romenesko.
- When President-elect Obama's inauguration train pulled out from 30th Street Station in Philadelphia, news choppers had been grounded for security purposes. I feel almost certain that my iPhone TwitPics were the first photos available anywhere.

So where do these eyeballs come from? In conversations I had with bloggers they shared with me strategies about audience-building and schooled me in the importance of creating and maintaining conversations with the online community. By Christmas I had about 3,000 Twitter followers; in July I was up to more than 50,000, and with tweets I was driving them to my blog and to newspaper sites where content originated. There were many days when I had 2,000 page views on my blog.

Building Connections

Now, I had to figure out how to monetize my work. I learned about cost-per-impression, cost-per-click and cost-per-action advertising, and opened numerous affiliate accounts. I was still making lunch money, but by July, I was approaching the level of blog traffic estimated to be necessary to sell sponsorships.

I poured countless hours into social media distribution, combining aggregated news content with creative human editing and occasional original content. Some argue that aggregation adds nothing and that aggregators are mere parasites, regurgitating content already available at mainstream sites, but I disagree. Services like mine connect disenfranchised communities with important news, and they repay the content creators by sending my audience their way.

Intelligence Group, a market research company, interviewed a college student whose perspective seems to neatly sum up how the "social media generation" sees the world: "If the news is that important, it will find me." With young people, in particular, information today is shared, not sought.

By July, I was the second-most followed Twitter user in Philadelphia, behind only Ahmir "?uestlove"

Sisters celebrate in Center City Philadelphia on election night in November 2008, as it was becoming clear that Barack Obama would be the next President of the United States. Launching a blog—where I can post photos—permitted me to begin monetizing my traffic, as opposed to sending my audience to TwitPic or similar sites, where others collect the ad dollars.

President-elect Barack Obama's train leaves Philadelphia for inaugural celebrations in Washington in January. Because conventional news photography prohibits shooting and publishing from the same device, I am almost certain that my photos were the first to show the train in motion after it left 30th Street Station.

Photos and text by Jim MacMillan.

Thompson of The Roots. Sometimes I'd break into the top 500 global users, ahead of some celebrities, star athletes, mainstream news outlets, and other staffed accounts.

I think it's fair to say that my editing and distribution techniques—and my interactions with my audience— earned me this influence. In conversing online, I've gained a broader understanding of the news consumer and discovered new content. My online audience immediately let me know not only their opinions about my reporting, but also where I could go for more information—I'll never forget the day I discovered the Twitpic of the USAir plane in the Hudson.

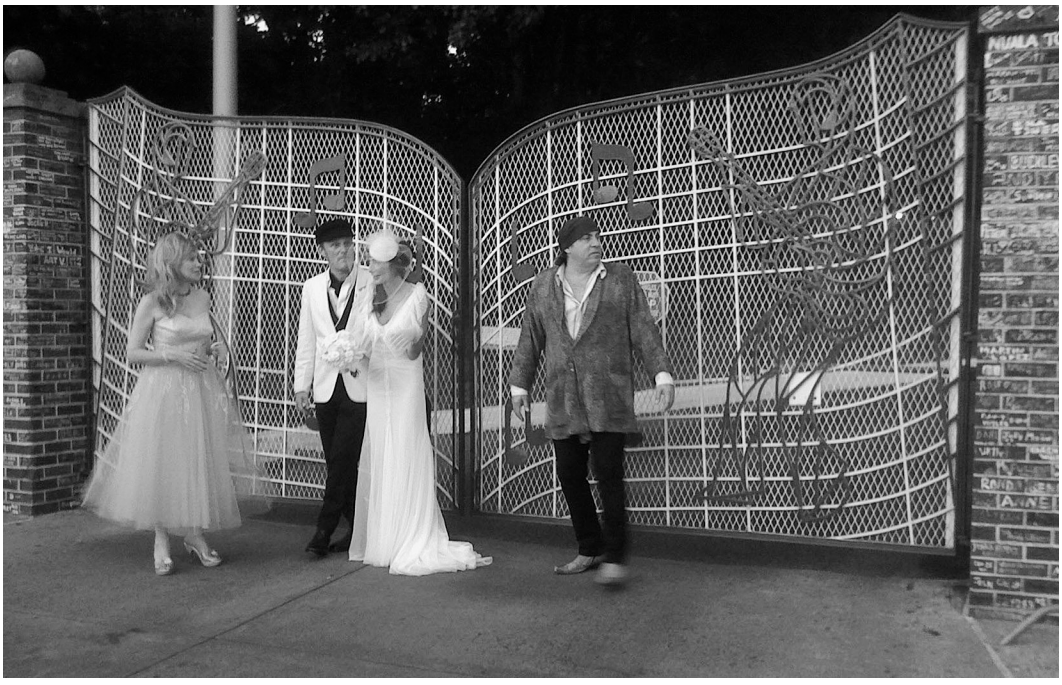
Given my online experiences—mixed in with what I know about newspapers—I'm starting to suspect that social media might never work as well for these larger, old media outlets. Social media works well for entrepreneurs, as it does for celebrities and star athletes, because we have complete authority. We direct the endeavor and can be swift and nimble. Those aren't always attributes readily associated with traditional news organizations these days.

City University in Birmingham, England, has recognized the significance of this new age by offering a master's degree program in social media. The "Internet Famous" course at Parsons The New School for Design challenges the relationship between excellence and recognition, but applies distribution and reputation management strategies that certainly every journalist would benefit from learning.

Social media needs to be part of the curricula for training journalists, so I feel fortunate to be able to take the lessons I've learned in my life-after-my-buyout into the classroom. In August, I joined the convergence faculty at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and will teach there for at least a year. In preparing for this transition, I've refocused my blog (jimmacmillan.net) more closely around convergence journalism education and media industry matters and launched an accompanying Twitter account, writing there as @missourijim.

I don't know if I'll return to the life of a backpacking, independent, live-blogging, entrepreneurial, economically sustainable, all-platform, social media, multimedia, visual journalist, but the experience was priceless. Without walking down that road and having to find my way, I'm not sure I'd be ready to teach students who will be carving out their own roads in journalism. ■

Jim MacMillan teaches convergence journalism at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. He worked for 17 years as a staff photographer for the Philadelphia Daily News.



Actor and musician Steven Van Zandt, his wife, and her newly married relatives pose for photos at the gate of Elvis Presley's Graceland estate in June 2009. With my iPhone and the WordPress app, I am always prepared for live, mobile photo-blogging, including this day when a cancelled flight stranded me in Memphis.

Photo and text by Jim MacMillan.

Reporting Relies on Questions: Now They Come From Readers

At MyReporter.com, StarNews readers get the conversation going by asking about what's on their minds, and then reporters respond.

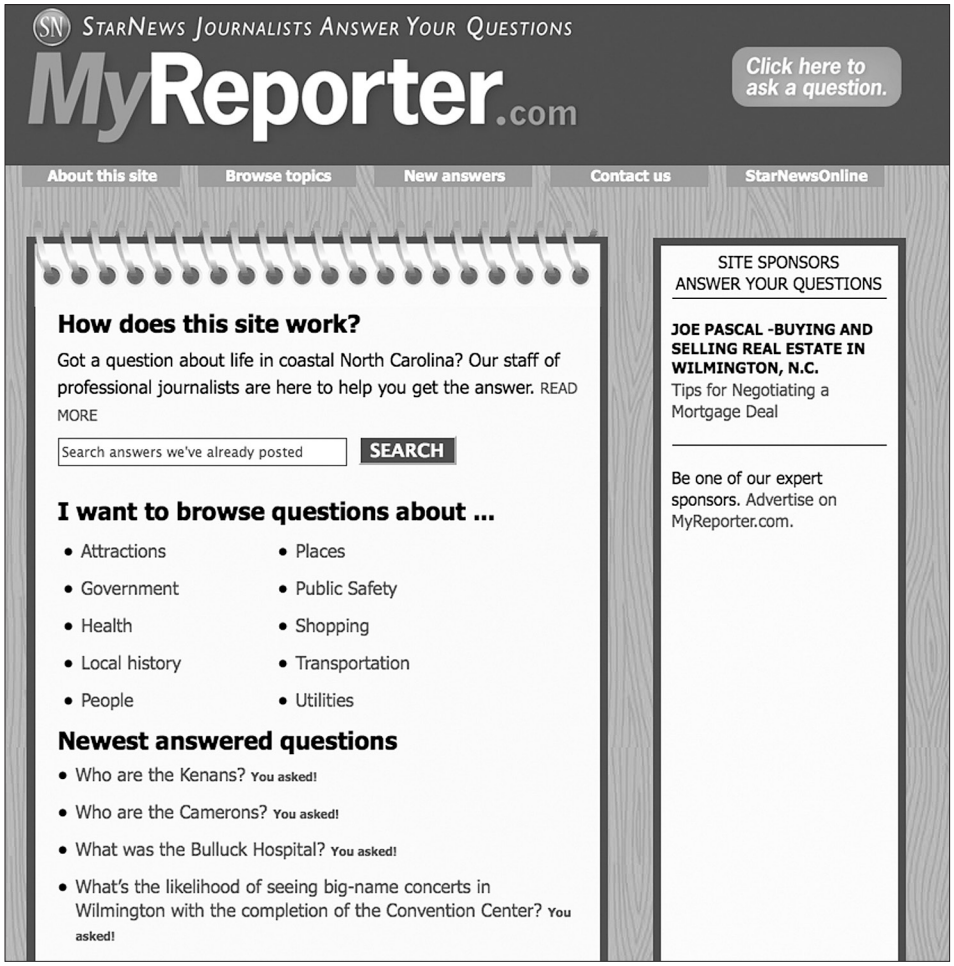
By Vaughn Hagerty

All good journalism starts with a question. But, who's doing the asking?

In most newsrooms, it's not the reader. If the reader has input, it's usually a reaction to what already has been reported. Of course, some stories originate from a reader's call, but most of the time the reporter and editor drive the decisions about what gets covered and the questions asked in doing so.

MyReporter.com, launched in mid-2009, turns that dynamic on its head. Now, readers are in control at the start of the process. It works like this: Ask a question, either on our Web site, via e-mail, or by Twitter. Within 24 hours (longer on weekends and holidays), a personal response will come from our newsroom describing how we plan to handle the question. While we don't commit to answering questions that are too specific to a single person's situation or ones seeking to resolve disputes, we'll at least direct the person who asked to possible resources. Questions we do answer are assigned to staff reporters, who provide a timely response that we post on the site, with credit given to the person who raised the question.

This idea grew out of a discussion StarNews Executive Editor Robyn Tomlin led about how we could innovate. Like many newspapers, we use tools such as Twitter and online forums to communicate with readers. In listening to our readers, we often heard them ask questions like "What were all those sirens I just heard downtown?," or "Who can I complain to about my neighbor's trashy yard?." With this in mind, Tomlin challenged us: How could our newsroom provide a "help desk" for our community?



In an effort to provide a sort of help desk for the community, the StarNews of Wilmington, North Carolina, launched MyReporter.com earlier this year. The site invites readers to submit questions, which are then answered by staff reporters.

Our conversation took place on a Thursday. That weekend, the idea took form in my head. I sketched out a rough mock-up and drew up a proposal for what is now MyReporter.com. During the next few months, I built the site by customizing the WordPress blog platform. We launched it with about 300 staff-originated items, followed by readers' questions and our answers. Once they are displayed on the front of the site, all of these Q & A's are then archived. This is the second function of MyReporter.com: to become a growing, eclectic, Wiki-like reference for our community.

The concept was new for us and for

the community. We weren't sure how people would take to it or whether they'd even figure out how to use it. With an unexpectedly high volume of questions submitted early on, it turned out to be a positive reception. In our first two weeks, we received about 60 questions, ranging from "How do I find out who's responsible for cleaning and maintaining local roadside ditches?," to "Should I get someone to urinate on me if I have a jellyfish sting?." A number of questions played off news coverage or led to new stories. For example, North Carolina recently strengthened public smoking laws as they apply to businesses such as restaurants. A question from one reader about how the changes applied to hookah bars resulted in a story pointing out that they likely would be shut down.

Paying for MyReporter.com

Our volume of questions has grown steadily to about 75 each week, about two-thirds of which result in new answers on MyReporter.com. This development, while immensely gratifying, has weighed on the editorial staff. We've assigned the equivalent of about one and one-half full-time journalists to this site, without adding to our staff. Since MyReporter.com is now one of our Web site's more popular features, we are committed to making it sustainable by finding ways to have it earn revenue.

MyReporter.com's success rests, in large part, on the quality of answers that result from using professional reporters and editors. We don't want to dilute that, but also we want to preserve our core function of reporting and writing the daily news along with producing enterprise and investigative pieces. Right now, we're using a variety of approaches to balance these seemingly competing priorities, including being more selective about the questions we answer and looking for new resources, such as local experts, to help in our efforts to respond.

Readers have embraced MyReporter.com. Even in its first month, MyReporter.com ranked among our site's most-viewed categories. We'd receive messages such as "No question today, but just a comment that I think this feature is excellent," and "the Web site is the greatest. My father and I spent hours last night reading it." Through questions they ask and their use of MyReporter.com, readers tell us—and the rest of the community—what they want to know more about. With their excellent questions, they prompt us to provide content that will measure up; the information sharing that is a part of these exchanges sometimes ends up being reverse-published in the paper.

But MyReporter.com has also become a tool that we're using to shape our overall coverage. It's led us, for example, to focus more of our newsroom resources on stories about transportation and development issues. MyReporter.com provides us with a real-time window into our community's curiosity about our region's culture, history and events. It's one we wouldn't have without them, and this might well turn out to be its greatest value. ■

Vaughn Hagerty is the Web development manager at the StarNews in Wilmington, North Carolina, and the creator of MyReporter.com, which won the 2009 Knight-Batten Citizen Media Award.

An Explosion Prompts Rethinking of Twitter and Facebook

'... this explosion was our "aha" moment in experiencing how social media, Twitter, in particular, opens up new possibilities in journalism.'

By Courtney Lowery

When a building exploded in Bozeman, Montana, last spring, leveling half a block of downtown and throwing debris as far as 200 feet, neither NewWest.Net—a Missoula-based online network covering the Rocky Mountain West—nor any local news organization had a reporter at the scene. But there were plenty of "reporters" there, ready and willing to broadcast via Twitter what was happening.

Within moments of the explosion, Bozeman "tweeps" had posted photos, described in detail the scene, and shared vital emergency information. A few hours later, those on Twitter were offering coverage of the city's press conference and acting as a larger reporting team than any individual news organization in the community could have mustered.

Michael Becker, a Bozeman-based journalist who organized the explosion tweets into the now locally famous #bozexplode hashtag, wrote this on his blog:

> For a long time, people have been talking about the potential of

Twitter as a news source. Today, Twitter earned its stripes.[1]

Since that day in Bozeman, Twitter's ability—and agility—as a tool to gather and distribute breaking news has been exhibited throughout the world, in Iran and China most notably. Here in Montana, this explosion was our "aha" moment in experiencing how social media, Twitter, in particular, opens up new possibilities in journalism.

Before that day, we'd used Twitter to push our stories, viewing it as another channel by which to market our content. The Bozeman explosion demonstrated that its potential is much greater.

Our Learning Curve

At NewWest.Net we began using Twitter and Facebook relatively early, although I can't say we saw a clear path at the beginning. We made some rookie mistakes, the first being using our personal Twitter and Facebook accounts to post NewWest.Net stories, which created a weird intermingling of the personal and professional. Our next one was to link our Twitter account to our Facebook account that, as we learned, is not the point of Facebook.

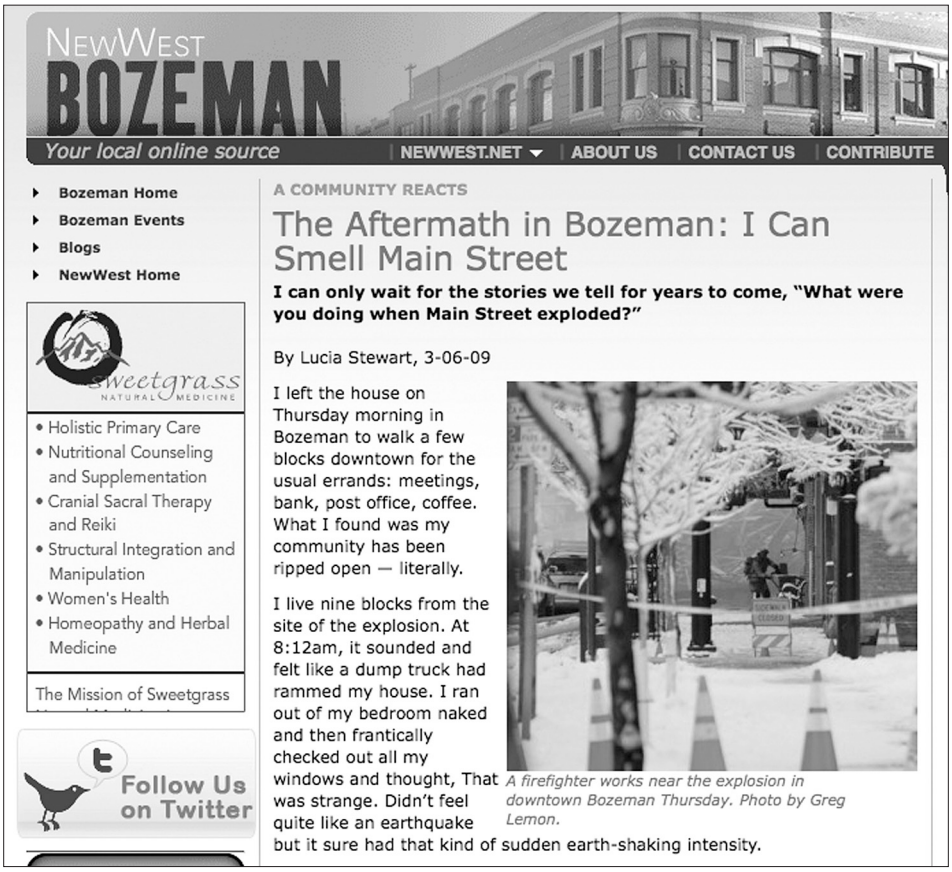
One of our worst mistakes, and one many news organizations are still making, was to automate. To alleviate the time crunch of having to continually Tweet, we thought: Automation! There must be a way to automate this. And so we created a feed from our pages that on our instruction would post scheduled headlines and links to our Twitter account. That did not go well. If people wanted to subscribe to our headline feed, they'd do so via RSS or just go to our Web site.

Gradually we began to figure it out. First, we created and ramped up our NewWest.Net Twitter and Facebook accounts. Then, and this is no small task, our CEO and Editor in Chief Jonathan Weber and I carved out the time to use them.

We saw that Twitter is about personality—about adding value to your stories by pulling important information, soliciting feedback and, in general, acting like a human, not like a robot. When we turned off the Twitter link to the Facebook page, one of our readers wrote: "tweets are not fb status posts. glad you got it." Loud and clear.

We started thinking about our Twitter feed as a separate product, another platform not just to push our journalism, but to do it as well. We used Twitter to do live coverage of stories of our choice. There's an emphasis here on "choice." Live-tweeting school board meetings might not quite work. Live-tweeting a high-profile court case, on the other hand, might. It's all about listening to readers and applying news judgment in deciding which stories lend themselves to which medium.

Our most popular Twitter coverage turned out to be a court case: the bankruptcy trial of the ritzy Yellowstone Club resort. It got so much attention, in fact, that the court banned Weber from tweeting in the courtroom. As it turned out, witnesses and counsel were following our Twitter feed both inside and outside the courtroom. The judge disapproved, even after Weber gave him a personal lesson on what



NewWest.Net, an online-only publication based in Missoula, Montana, relied extensively on first-person news accounts when half a block of downtown Bozeman was leveled by an explosion last spring, and it had no reporters on the scene.

[1] Read Becker's blog entry that day at www.hypercrit.net/2009/03/05/what-twitter-did-for-crisis-journalism-today.

exactly Twitter was.

We've also used Twitter to help aggregate useful information for our readers by re-tweeting what others are saying, sending our followers to other interesting stories and, most importantly, making it a vehicle with which to converse with readers.

Since March, just after the Bozeman explosion, 600 people have become Twitter followers. We're adding at least three new "friends" or fans on Facebook each day. In the past six months, traffic from Facebook to NewWest.Net has increased by more than 350 percent from the previous six months. It's now No. 4 on our list of referring sites, up from 26. Traffic from Twitter is up by a bit more than 800 percent and is now our No. 8 means of referral, up from No. 74.

What Happens Next?

While the traffic boost is certainly good news, the value of using any social media application is found in its ability to facilitate meaningful conversation with users. This is something traditional news entities struggle with and even we—as an online-only publication—haven't quite figured out how to do yet.

The Bozeman explosion served as a perfect example of how social media and mass media can lean on each other to create a new form of journalism. Throughout the coverage, I observed a fascinating symbiotic relationship forming. On-site observers used Twitter to cover the event in a way that we, as a small newsroom, could not. On the other hand, only a handful of people, especially in remote Montana, even knew at the time what Twitter was. So as good as the coverage was on Twitter, for the average Montanan, it was inaccessible until news organizations started using the information and pushing it to the broader public. The local radio station went live shortly after the explosion, took calls from people on the scene, and repeated what the anchor was finding out from Twitter.

NewWest.Net and the Bozeman Daily Chronicle both quoted from the Twitter feed, and we directed readers to those people tweeting from the site of the explosion. But we also performed another very important function: We filtered the information and confirmed facts. In most cases, the Twitter community was self-policing, but in one case, a tweet named an unconfirmed casualty and, while the Twitter community acted quickly to quash it, the name had already made the rounds. I don't think this information made it into the mass media.

Again, Becker summed it up quite well on his blog:

> Will this sort of thing ever replace those journalists who went into the blast zone this morning, the ones who stood at the press conferences and asked questions? No. Not at all. But Twitter did a job that traditional journalism could not possibly do in a city of this size. It informed the people as quickly as events happened and let people know what they needed to know right away.

Just like every other news organization—online and offline—we're still assessing just how and when to use social media. There are still a lot of unanswered, even unasked, questions. But it's here to stay—and it's here to help us, if we can get past seeing it as a marketing vehicle and learn how to use it to create community by developing a relationship with our readers.

A few months ago, I was given an additional duty in my job description: "Spend meaningful time on Twitter and Facebook." That's something I never thought I'd see. ■

Courtney Lowery is the editor of NewWest.Net.

The thinking about how to use Twitter at NewWest.Net has evolved over time. An automated feed of headlines was not well received. NewWest.Net's use of Twitter to provide live coverage of the ritzy Yellowstone Club's bankruptcy trial was extremely popular, except with the presiding judge.

The 21st Century Journalist's Creed

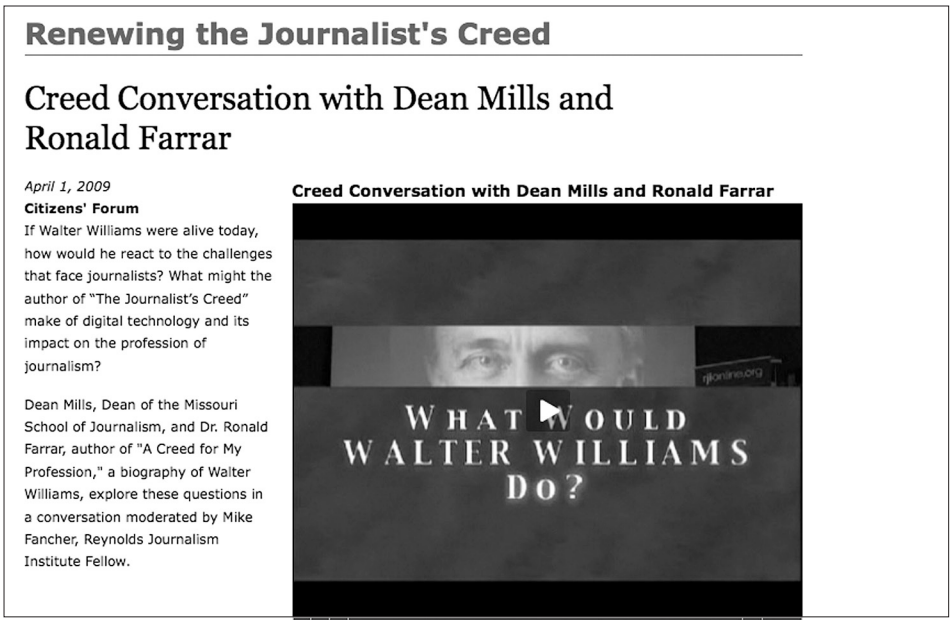
A former newspaper editor urges journalists to 'let go of the sense that we have control and recognize how much better public service journalism can be when we accept the public as true partners.'

By Michael R. Fancher

"The whole world is watching." Demonstrators chanted those words in the streets of Chicago in 1968, and many people throughout the world did watch as the story was told through the voices of professional print and broadcast journalists.

That summer I had graduated from the University of Oregon and would spend those next 40 years in journalism, working for just two newspapers. I left The Kansas City Star as city editor in 1978 and spent the next 30 years at The Seattle Times, 20 of them as executive editor. I worked with amazingly talented journalists and for principled owners dedicated to public service journalism. When I retired in 2008, I could not have asked for a more fulfilling career.

Today, the words "the world is watching"—uttered from the streets of Iran and by President Obama—convey a wholly different sense of the instantaneous global reach of news reports and the multitude of ways that information is collected and delivered. Consider how the world watched Neda Agha Soltan, a 26-year-old music student, die in Tehran this summer. Independent news organizations were prohibited from being in the streets, but two amateur videos—one 37 seconds long and the other 15 seconds—put a tragically beautiful face on the story of post-election protests that the Iranian government sought to suppress. Try as it might, the government couldn't block transmission of images from mobile phone cameras, e-mails, and social networking sites.



Former Seattle Times Executive Editor Michael R. Fancher considered the question of whether "The Journalist's Creed," written in 1914 by Walter Williams, founder of the Missouri School of Journalism, remains viable in the digital age.

In this digital age, the world is watching all of the time, everywhere. People have nearly limitless access to information, allowing them to exercise their own news judgment. They are increasingly serving as reporters and editors for themselves and others. Indeed, the case has been thoughtfully articulated that, "We're all journalists now."[1] And, the question has been provocatively asked, "When everyone can be a publisher, what distinguishes the journalist?"[2]

In considering that question, it is

[1] Scott Gant wrote about this in his book, "We're All Journalists Now: The Transformation of the Press and Reshaping of the Law in the Internet Age," published by Free Press in 2007.

[2] Arthur S. Hayes, Jane B. Singer, and Jerry Ceppos wrote about this in an article, "Shifting Roles, Enduring Values: The Credible Journalist in a Digital Age," published in the Journal of Mass Media Ethics in 2007.

important to recognize that professional journalism is relatively young and has no claim to permanence. At the turn of the last century, "yellow journalism" and sensationalism prompted calls for reform. In 1908, Walter Williams founded the nation's first journalism school at the University of Missouri, believing that journalists would earn the public's trust only if they were trained as professionals and held themselves accountable to the highest professional and personal standards.

In 1914 Williams wrote "The Journalist's Creed,"[3] which begins:

> I believe in the profession of journalism. I believe that the public journal is a public trust; that all connected with it are, to the full measure of their responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of a lesser service than the public service is betrayal of this trust.

I first read "The Journalist's Creed" as a sophomore working for my high school newspaper, and it inspired me throughout my career. Its core principles of clarity, accuracy, fairness, truth, independence and, above all, public service, remain the heart of journalism today.

But Williams's "Creed" was written at a time when information was scarce and access to it was limited. Journalism was mostly a one-way relationship with journalists deciding what best served the public. Today, anyone can perform the traditional functions of journalism, and thus arises a serious question about whether the kind of public service journalism Williams advocated can remain viable in the digital age.

After I retired from The Seattle Times, I was offered a fellowship in the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism for the 2008-2009 academic year. Through public forums, research and study during my fellowship, I've come

[3] "The Journalist's Creed" can be read at www.journalism.missouri.edu/about/creed.

The Public and Journalists: They Disagree on Core Values

By Esther Thorson and Michael R. Fancher

In considering the modern relevance of Walter Williams's "Journalist's Creed," it was well documented that people who aren't journalists held increasingly negative attitudes toward news organizations. For example, The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press reported in 2004 that from 1996 to that year there was a sharp fall in the percentage of those who reported that they believed most of the news reporting in newspapers and on television.[1] What follows are some specific findings:

- "Your daily paper" fell in the percentage of those saying they believed what was published from 25 percent to 19 percent.
- With USA Today, the number dropped from 24 percent to 19 percent.
- "Your local TV news" experienced a fall from 34 percent to 25 percent.
- With network news, the decrease was 31 percent to 24 percent.

Pew reported this year that only 43 percent of people surveyed thought civic life in their community would be hurt "a lot" by the closing of their local newspaper.[2]

Given these findings, it seemed likely that American citizens and journalists might have a very different sense of what the values of journalism are and should be. To test this idea, however, required identifying two values dimensions that would capture the essence of modern journalism's code of ethics. At one end, the anchoring idea was "doing no harm"; at the other end was "valuing accuracy regardless of other considerations." The other dimension was anchored by the values of "complete independence of the journalist from all influences" and the "journalist being socially responsible."

Journalists routinely weigh these variables in deciding whether and how to report stories. We tested the application of these values dimensions in three hypothetical situations:

1. A journalist is worried that reporting crime stories involving young male African Americans might lead citizens to falsely stereotype all young African Americans as criminals.
2. Right before an election, a source reveals that a candidate has an illegitimate child.
3. A journalist worries that reporting

[1] "News audiences increasingly politicized." Report from The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (2004) http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=838.

[2] Results from this 2009 Pew study can be read at http://people-press.org/report/497/many-would-shrug-if-local-newspaper-closed.

to believe that the imperatives facing journalism are far more fundamental than I had appreciated. They go beyond the collapse of the business model that supported journalism in the past century.

Restoring Public Trust

One particularly compelling explanation for what is happening comes out of Forrester Research and is captured in the book "Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies," published by Harvard Business School Press in 2008. The authors, Forrester analysts Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff, define this "groundswell" as "a social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need from each other, rather than from traditional institutions like corporations." They assert in "Groundswell" that this is "an important, irreversible, completely different way for people to relate to companies and to each other."

Li and Bernoff offer this advice: This groundswell won't be stopped, but it can and should be understood. We ought not only to live with it, but thrive in it. Doing so requires new thinking—skill, knowledge, experience and, eventually, enlightenment.

I think everyone associated with journalism and journalism education appreciates the need for acquiring new skills, knowledge and experience. New business models will and are emerging. Of necessity, journalists are rethinking what they do and how they do it.

As for enlightenment, my belief is that journalism must also develop a new ethic of public trust through public engagement. This will require that journalists let go of the sense that we have control and recognize how much better public service journalism can be when we accept the public as true partners. Instead of fearing and resisting this shift, journalists must embrace and lead the way. This fundamental change in perspective isn't just necessary for journalism to survive; it is the

on CIA illegal activities might tip off others about how that agency is operating to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks in the United States.

We asked college students and a national sample of adults to indicate where they thought an ideal journalist would be in dealing with these possible stories based on the two values dimensions. We then asked them where they thought real journalists would be given the same set of circumstances. We also posed the same questions to a large national sample of editors and reporters, asking them to show us where they would put themselves on the dimensions for each scenario.

Here is some of what we found:

- **Independence:** As a journalistic value, independence was more significant to reporters than to students, adults or editors, who lined up closely with each other.
- **Minimizing harm:** This value basically didn't register with any of the groups. Journalists use situational ethics in relation to minimizing harm; it's much stronger for them in political stories. Students are situational as well, but show the opposite pattern than journalists. Adults consistently favor accuracy over minimizing harm.
- **Gaps between ideal and real:** In the responses of adults and college students, significant gaps emerged between their ideal and what they thought journalists would really do. Social responsibility is a higher value for adults than for journalists or students.
- **Journalists agreed:** Editors and reporters tended to make the same basic decisions in how they would cover each story.

Here is where these findings took our thinking:

- **Independence:** Journalists need to better articulate the meaning and importance of independence as a value, while also better understanding and respecting why the public puts less emphasis on it.
- **Minimizing harm:** These results support other recent research asserting that the admonition to "minimize harm" requires clarification.
- **Misperceptions:** Students and adults have very inaccurate perceptions of the values of journalists. Their ideal journalists match real journalists better than their predictions of what journalists actually value.
- **Journalists' values and the public:** While agreement among editors and reporters can be regarded as shared professional values honed over time, it can also be interpreted as an inclination to make judgments through a common, narrow filter. This becomes significant when journalists' choices are compared to the judgments preferred by the public.

It was clear that adults and college students feel that the values journalists use in making their decisions don't match their own. This gap won't be closed merely by journalists explaining their values, though this is an important step for them to take; they must also understand and respect the values of the public they hope to serve, just as the public can learn why journalists hold to the values they do.

These findings contributed to the conclusion—described in greater detail in the accompanying article—that journalism must also develop a new ethic of public trust through public engagement. ■

Esther Thorson is dean of graduate studies and research at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

right thing for journalists to do.

In the foreword to Charlie Beckett's book "SuperMedia: Saving Journalism So It Can Save the World," Jeff Jarvis calls this "the natural state of media: two-way and collaborative." As he observes, "The one-way nature of news media until now was merely a result of the limitations of production and distribution. Properly done, news should be a conversation among those who know and those who want to know, with journalists—in their new roles as curators, enablers, organizers, educators—helping where they can."

As the economics, architecture, tools and technology of journalism change, Jarvis writes that he hopes what changes most is the culture: "I hope journalism becomes more open, transparent, inclusive and flexible."

For this to happen, journalists must put public trust through public engagement at the heart of everything they do. This starts with re-examining the values of journalism—what they should be and how we can live up to them. Research conducted as part of my fellowship project[4] suggests that the public views the core values of journalism differently than journalists do. [See box on pages 36 and 37.]

Journalists can't regain public trust without better understanding and respecting those differences. A new ethic of public trust through public engagement would:

- See public trust not as an abstraction, but with an abiding desire to connect on a human level.
- See the public not as an audience but as a community, of which journalism is a vital part.
- See the Internet not just as a new medium for communication, but as a new way of networking among people, with journalism at the hub.
- Be independent without being indifferent or hostile.
- Feel a responsibility to help the public be smart consumers of news.
- Recognize that journalism isn't just on behalf of the people, but in concert with them.

Most importantly, this new ethic of public engagement can be the sustaining embodiment of Williams's belief that the supreme test of good journalism is the measure of its public service. ■

Michael R. Fancher was until 2008 the longtime executive editor of The Seattle Times. For the past year, he has been a fellow at the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

[4] For more information about Fancher's project at the Reynolds Journalism Institute, go to http://rji.missouri.edu/projects/creed-convo/index.php.

Why the News Media Became Irrelevant—And How Social Media Can Help

'Only the savviest of journalists are using the networks for the real value they provide in today's culture—as ways to establish relationships and listen to others.'

By Michael Skoler

Journalists are truth-tellers. But I think most of us have been lying to ourselves. Our profession is crumbling and we blame the Web for killing our business model. Yet it's not the business model that changed on us. It's the culture.

Mainstream media were doing fine when information was hard to get and even harder to distribute. The public expected journalists to report the important stories, pull together information from sports scores to stock market results, and then deliver it all to our doorsteps, radios and TVs. People trusted journalists and, on our side, we delivered news that was relevant—it helped people connect with neighbors, be active citizens, and lead richer lives.

Advertisers, of course, footed the bill for newsgathering. They wanted exposure and paid because people, lots of people, were reading our newspapers or listening to and watching our news programs.

But things started to change well before the Web became popular. Over the past few decades, news conglomerates took over local papers and stations. Then they cut on-the-ground reporters, included more syndicated content from news services, and focused local coverage on storms, fires, crashes and crime to pad profit margins. The news became less local and less relevant, and reporters became less connected to their communities. Surveys show a steep drop in public trust in journalism

occurring during the past 25 years.

As discontent grew among the audience, the Internet arrived. Now people had choices. If the local paper and stations weren't considered trustworthy and journalists seemed detached from what really mattered to them, people could find what they wanted elsewhere. What's more, they could stop being passive recipients. They could dig deeply into topics, follow their interests, and share their knowledge and passions with others who cared about similar things.

Connecting Through Trust

The truth is the Internet didn't steal the audience. We lost it. Today fewer people are systematically reading our papers and tuning into our news programs for a simple reason—many people don't feel we serve them anymore. We are, literally, out of touch.

Today, people expect to share information, not be fed it. They expect to be listened to when they have knowledge and raise questions. They want news that connects with their lives and interests. They want control over their information. And they want connection—they give their trust to those they engage with—people who talk with them, listen and maintain a relationship.

Trust is key. Many younger people don't look for news anymore because it comes to them. They simply assume their network of friends—those they trust—will tell them when something interesting or important happens and send them whatever their friends deem to be trustworthy sources, from articles, blogs, podcasts, Twitter feeds, or videos.

Mainstream media are low on the trust scale for many and have been slow to reach out in a genuine way to engage people. Many news organizations think interaction is giving people buttons to push on Web sites or creating a walled space where people can "comment" on the news or post their own "iReports."

People aren't fooled by false interaction if they see that news staff don't read the comments or citizen reports, respond and pursue the best ideas and knowledge of the audience to improve their own reporting. Journalists can't make reporting more relevant to the public until we stop assuming that we know what people want and start listening to the audience.

We can't create relevance through limited readership studies and polls, or simply by adding neighborhood sections to our Web sites. We need to listen, ask questions, and be genuinely open to what our readers, listeners and watchers tell us is important everyday. We need to create a new journalism of partnership, rather than preaching.

And that's where social media can guide us. If we pay attention and use these tools, we can better understand today's culture and what creates value for people.

Relying on Collective Wisdom

Today's new culture is about connection and relationship. Social networks are humming because they fit the spirit of the time, not because they created the spirit of sharing. They're about listening to others and responding. They're about pursuing our interests because we know they will converge with the interests of others. The new culture values sharing information and being surprised by the experiences, knowledge and voices of others.

The old journalism, with its over-reliance on the same experts and analysts, is out of touch with a culture of information sharing, connection and the collective wisdom of diverse voices passing along direct experience.

Take Wikipedia as an example. For better or worse, most school kids treat it as the first place to go for information, and so do many adults. It's not written by scholars, as is Encyclopædia Britannica, but by citizen experts. In today's culture, collective expertise carries as much or more weight than scholarship or deference to titles. And while fewer than 45,000 people are actively contributing to the nearly three million English articles on the site, people know that anyone can contribute, and they have trust in the culture's collective wisdom.

Digg and reddit are popular as sites because they are about collective wisdom and trust. These social bookmarking sites help people find relevant news based on who is recommending stories. Anyone can play, even if experienced and dedicated users have an advantage. Twitter is half diary and half stream of consciousness, and it is all about relationships and trust because it is easy to follow people, see if there is a connection, and drop those you don't like.

Changing Journalism's Culture

Social media sites are not doing journalism, though sometimes breaking news shows up there (like when a plane crash-lands in the Hudson River). For the most part, they rely on news coverage from mainstream media organizations to produce their value. And these sites are not yet profitable. They are not models for the new journalism. But they do serve the new culture and point to how news organizations must change to be considered relevant and value-creating.

Of course, news organizations are rushing onto social networks, adding social bookmark buttons, and creating Twitter feeds at a torrid pace. But for the wrong reasons. You can hear the cries in newsrooms of "we need to be on Facebook, we need to Twitter" as a fervent attempt to win followers and increase traffic on their sites.

Mainstream media see social media as tools to help them distribute and market their content. Only the savviest of journalists are using the networks for the real value they provide in today's culture—as ways to establish relationships and listen to others. The bright news organizations and journalists spend as much time listening on Twitter as they do tweeting.

Most of the discussion about the "future of journalism" these days centers on finding the new business model that will support journalism in the Internet age. Yet that is premature. There is no magic model that will save us, if only we could find it. We have no business model unless

people need our work to enrich their daily lives and value it highly enough to depend on it.

Unquestionably, we must be creative about designing new models and smart about marketing our work. But a fact of business is that people only pay for what has obvious value to them. Every good business plan starts by explaining how it creates value for the customer.

The problem with mainstream media isn't that we've lost our business model. We've lost our value. We are not as important to the lives of our audience as we once were. Social media are the route back to a connection with the audience. And if we use them to listen, we'll learn how we can add value in the new culture.

The new journalism must be a journalism of partnership. Only with trust and connection will a new business model emerge. ■

Michael Skoler, a 1993 Nieman Fellow, is a Reynolds Journalism Institute Fellow at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. He founded the Public Insight Journalism model used by a dozen public broadcasting newsrooms to partner with their audiences. He wrote "Fear, Loathing and the Promise of Public Insight Journalism" in the Winter 2005 Nieman Reports.

Media Users, Media Creators: Principles of Active Engagement

In transforming 'ourselves from passive consumers of media into active users … we'll have to instill throughout our society principles that add up to critical thinking and honorable behavior.'

By Dan Gillmor

This article is adapted, in part, from an essay Gillmor wrote in 2008 as part of the Media Re:public project (www.mediarepublic.org) at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. In the Winter 2008 Nieman Reports, Persephone Miel, who directed that project, wrote "Media Re:public: My Year in the Church of the Web."

In the age of democratized media, the tools of creation are increasingly in everyone's hands. The personal computer that I'm using to write this essay comes equipped with media creation and editing tools of such depth that I can't begin to learn all their capabilities. One of the devices I use regularly boasts video recording and playback, still-camera mode, audio recording, text messaging, and GPS location, among other tools that make it a powerful media creation device (and, by the way, it's a phone).

Equally important in this world of democratized media, we can make what we create widely accessible. With traditional media, we produced something, usually manufactured, and then distributed it—put it in trucks or broadcast it to receivers in a one-to-many mode. Today, we create media and post it online. We make it available; people come and get it. There's an element of distribution here, by virtue of letting people know it's there, but the essential fact in a one-to-one or many-to-many world is availability.

This democratization gives people who have been mere consumers the ability to be creators. With few exceptions, we are all becoming the latter as well as the former, though to varying degrees. More exciting, some creators become collaborators.

What does this mean? For one thing, contrary to the panic we're hearing from newspaper people whose jobs are disappearing, the end of our oligopolistic system of media and journalism is good news, not something to dread. Indeed, I no longer worry about a sufficient supply of journalism, not in the emerging age of abundance. We'll have ample amounts of information and journalism—in some ways, too ample.

Why, given the crumbling of newspapers and the news industry in general, should we believe in abundance? Just look around. The number of experiments taking place in new media is stunning and heartening. Entrepreneurs are moving swiftly to become pioneers in tomorrow's news. Philanthropic enterprises are filling gaps they perceive in coverage. Even the traditional media dinosaurs are, probably too late, moving to adapt to the changes that have put them in such difficulty, namely the transition from monopoly and oligopoly to a truly competitive marketplace.

Most of the experiments in new journalism and business models will fail. That is the nature of the new and of start-up cultures. But even a small percentage of successes will still be a large number because so many people are trying. We won't lack for supply, though we should never stop trying to make it better.

But to ensure that this supply of

information is useful and trustworthy, we'll have to rethink our relationship with media. In the supply and demand system that guides all marketplaces, including the marketplace of ideas and information, we need better demand, not just more supply. To ensure that demand, we'll need to transform ourselves from passive consumers of media into active users. And to accomplish that, we'll have to instill throughout our society principles that add up to critical thinking and honorable behavior.

Even those of us who are creating a variety of media are still—and always will be—more consumers than creators. For all of us in this category, the principles (illuminated below) come mostly from common sense. Call them skepticism, judgment, understanding and reporting.

Media saturation requires us to become more active as consumers, in part to manage the flood of data pouring over us each day but also to make informed judgments about the significance of what we do see. And when we create media that serves a public interest or journalistic role, we need to understand what it means to be journalistic, as well as how we can help make it better and more useful. This adds up to a new kind of media literacy, based on key principles for both consumers and creators. These categories will overlap to some degree—as do their principles, each of which requires an active, not passive, approach to media.

The Mediactive project consists of a book, Web site, and more with the goal of creating a user's guide to democratized media and persuading people who have been passive consumers to become active users.

Active Media Users, Not 'Consumers'

Be skeptical of absolutely everything. We can never take entirely for granted the absolute trustworthiness of what we read, see, hear and use. This is the case for information from traditional news organizations, blogs, online videos, and every other form known now or yet to be invented.

Although skepticism is essential, don't be equally skeptical of everything. We all have an internal "trust meter" of sorts, largely based on education and experience. We need to bring to digital media a more rigorous level of parsing, adapted from but going far beyond what we learned in a less complex time when there were only a few primary sources of information. A key point: Some things deserve negative credibility; that is, they would need to improve just to achieve zero credibility.

Go outside your personal comfort zone. The "echo chamber" effect—our tendency as human beings to seek information that we're likely to agree with—is well known. To be well informed, we need to seek out and pay attention to sources of information that will offer new perspectives and challenge our assumptions. This is easier than ever before, due to the enormous amount of news and analysis available on the Internet. If we're not relentless with ourselves, we can't expect much of others.

Ask more questions. This principle goes by many names: research, reporting, homework and many others. The more personal or important you consider the topic at hand, the more essential it becomes to follow up on the media that cover the topic. Lifelong learning is now accepted as fundamental, and it applies to our use of media, too.

Understand and learn media techniques. In a media-saturated society, we need to know how digital media work. The techniques of media creation are becoming second nature, at least to younger people. But it's equally essential to understand the ways people use media to persuade and manipulate. Moreover, we need to help each other know who's doing the manipulating.

Media Creation, When Credibility Matters

Do your homework and then do some more. You can't know everything, but good reporters try to learn as much as they can about a topic. It's better to know much more than you publish than to leave big holes in your story.

The best reporters always want to make one more call, check with one more source, because they worry that the fact(s) they don't know are the ones that might matter the most.

Get it right, every time. Accuracy is the starting point for all solid journalism. Get your facts right, then check them again. Factual errors, especially ones that are easily avoidable, do more to undermine trust than almost any other failing.

Be fair to everyone. Whether you are trying to explain something from a neutral point of view or arguing from a specific side, fairness counts. You can't be perfectly fair, and people will see what you've said from their own perspectives, but making the effort is more than worth the difficulty. Like all of these principles, fairness is a never-ending process, not an outcome.

Think independently, especially of your own biases. Being independent can mean many things, but independence of thought may be most important. Creators of media, not just consumers, need to venture beyond their personal comfort zones.

Practice and demand transparency. This is essential not just for citizen journalists and other new media creators but also for those in traditional media. The kind and extent of transparency may differ. For example, bloggers should reveal biases. Meanwhile, traditional journalists may have pledged individually not to have conflicts of interest, but that doesn't mean they are unbiased. They should help their audiences understand what they do, and why, in the course of their journalism.

Who should teach or coach these principles? Parents and schools, of course, should lead. It's tragic, however, that journalism organizations haven't made this one of their core missions over the years; had they done so they might not be in as much trouble because they would have helped people understand better what it takes, from all of us, to have the kind of news and information we need.

These principles are just the beginning of a larger conversation. In my new project called "Mediactive"—which includes a book I am writing, a Web site (mediactive.com) and more—I intend to explore ways to help foster a new generation of activist media users and better journalism in general. Most of all, what I hope to contribute to is a society in which critical thinking is understood as not just an interesting concept but an essential part of our daily lives. ■

Dan Gillmor is director of the Knight Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at Arizona State University's Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication. He is author of "We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People," published by O'Reilly Media in 2004.

Creating Ethical Bridges From Journalism to Digital News

'… what appears on Web sites and on blogs is not generally regarded as adhering to standards that govern legacy news organizations.'

By Jan Leach

If all content consumed will be digital within 10 years, as Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer told an international advertising audience in late June, then it's time to embrace our roles as "digital doers," and figure out how best to connect digital consumers to reliable news and information. Improving credibility will be high among our strategies, and this means more attention must be paid to ethics.

As Ballmer put it, "Static content won't cut it for the consumer in the future." Neither will static ethics; as media evolve so, too, will ethical guidelines.

Digital media—and the emerging use of social media—are exponentially expanding the reach of journalism, and this presents us, its practitioners (and those whom we hope to reach) with opportunities and dilemmas. Among those who gather news, publish it and consume it, ethical questions will be raised by the demands and possibilities of this new media environment—one that now embraces social engagement as a core function. Views on ethics will intersect and overlap among players, and there doubtless will be places where opinions diverge. It's unlikely that agreement will be easy to find across the wide range of ethical issues, but unity ought to be expressed in ways that let digital consumers know we are thinking hard about these emerging ethical issues.

Here is a sample of some of the ethical issues rising to the surface:

- How will journalists and/or news organizations approach the issue of

posting stories on personal or company Web sites or blogs? If a reporter covering a local business posts negative information or complaints about the business on his news organization's site, does that compromise the reporter's objectivity?
- Is it appropriate for reporters to publish on a personal blog their opinion about a source, an event, or a story?
- Does the posting of personal opinion compromise a reporter's fairness? If opinion is discouraged, does that infringe on free expression? Does it "dehumanize" the reporter? [See Reed Richardson's essay on page 63 for more on this topic.]
- In an environment where anonymity rules, how is the accuracy of user-generated content such as tips, articles, photos and video, to be determined? And how are consumers to be alerted?
- When news organizations invite and feature citizen contributions, does publishing these stories on their site transfer "authority" to information that may be biased or incomplete?
- Posted without any moderation, comments about articles often stray off topic or, worse, devolve into name calling and ugly slurs. Does the anonymity of the Web culture encourage animosity? If so, is moderating essential for a news organization? Or is churlish online debate simply the price to be paid for increased online traffic?

Journalism's reliance on the tools of social media is evident already. What this means for a battered journalism industry is significant. Consider the coverage of the post-election protests in Iran. With journalists banished or silenced by the Iranian government, news organizations and Web sites relied on showing random snippets of video or text messages or tweets sent from people witnessing the protests on the streets of Tehran. Having access to these images and words, but not being certain of what was being shown or who was sending the information, troubled many journalists on this end of the story. News organizations were confronted with what seemed their only choice: publish unconfirmed, yet compelling pictures and information or be left behind and considered uncompetitive in breaking and updating news accounts of this global story. A New York Times story[1] well captured this dilemma: After acknowledging the difficulty in substantiating some of the citizen-witness information, news managers admitted that texts and cell phone video were the only way they had to cover the protests.

The Iran protest coverage illuminates how legacy media's goals now intersect with social media's tools. Accuracy and credibility are still seen as worthy goals, but do traditional reporting rules—among them the attempt to reach all sides before publishing a story and verification of information—take too long? Should posting of unverified information as news raise questions about accuracy and bias?

It's possible that as various news gathering and social media efforts intersect with greater frequency, they might also find themselves moving in very different directions in terms of their goals and purpose. Even as they do, credibility and ethical concerns should continue to be points of intersection and overlap.

Areas of overlap are likely to be found, for example, in the emerging voices of diverse communities and in feedback from users. A great strength of the Internet is its ability to encourage the formation of community while giving voice to anyone digitally connected. In journalism, recognizing diversity and inviting feedback adds depth and human interest. Those who are overlooked in mainstream media coverage, including people espousing unpopular causes, will use the Internet to gather and share information and use it to stitch online communities together.

Yet, some are expressing concerns related to the nature of the Web-user's experience. In digital media, people self-select information and news to read or view. Often what they search for is biased toward affirming what they already know and believe. Then, by using social media tools, they share links with an online community of self-selected friends. The notion of reaching more diverse and broader communities with information and news all but evaporates in the fragmentation that characterizes digital media.

Ethical Issues

Areas of disconnect between the practices of journalists and the emerging conventions of digital/social media demonstrate the need for ethical guidelines. Among the issues are:

- Authenticating sources of information, especially when they are provided by an anonymous source
- Assuring the reliability of information on linked sites
- Dealing with conflicts of interest
- Concerns involving lack of oversight or accountability.

These ethical issues, and many others, have been discussed in journalism organizations for years. And numerous industry and news organization policies have been created to address them, even if ethical lapses still occur with worrisome regularity. But even this organized step of establishing guidelines hasn't happened yet within digital/social media. Some news organizations have drawn up policies regarding ethical reporting conduct when using social media sites such as Facebook and MySpace, and on occasion one hears stirrings among bloggers to urge the development of standards to address ethics. Still, however, what appears on Web sites and on blogs is not generally regarded as adhering to standards that govern

[1] "Journalism Rules Are Bent in News Coverage From Iran" can be read at www.nytimes.com/2009/06/29/business/media/29coverage.html?ref=business.

legacy news organizations.

When it comes to news reporting via social media, conversations about ethical standards and guidelines ought to be taking place in more news organizations. Right now, digital consumers are right to feel confused by what they read and watch online. When they see user-generated content on a news outlet such as CNN (and CNN.com), they might believe it has been verified as any other news story on CNN would be, even if the iReports page is labeled "Unedited. Unfiltered." And as they travel around the Web and link to and read blog posts and information on other Web sites, what gets blurred is the line separating personal opinion and unverified information from what journalists are reporting.

In his keynote talk at the Poynter Kent State Media Ethics Workshop in the fall of 2008, PressThink blogger Jay Rosen described online media as an "open system" that offers anyone with access to the Web the opportunity to contribute news and commentary.[2] For digital doers the challenge will be to find ways to embrace this open system without sacrificing what it takes to sustain credibility.

Here are two recommendations: transparency and education. Though many ethical tenets are contained within these suggestions, maintaining a focus on journalistic transparency and on passing along reliable news and information to consumers will give credibility to digital/social media. Explain to consumers what is being covered, how it's been reported, and what information might be missing. Avoid sensationalism and offer context. Invite feedback and provide cautionary warnings to readers when feedback is not moderated. Explain conflicts, even potential conflicts of interest. Prominently label Web pages that contain user-generated content and, provide signals to point out discrepancies between user-generated and reporter-generated information. Strive for accuracy, and make sure that information about transparency is visible.

Educating online users about journalistic ethics—what they are and why they matter—will require effort and commitment. And journalists will not be—nor should they be—the only ones raising ethical questions and figuring out ways in this digital territory to find a place for standards that speak to the credibility of the content we read and watch. ■

Jan Leach is an assistant professor of journalism at Kent State University and director of Kent's Media Law Center for Ethics and Access. She is the former editor of the Akron Beacon Journal and a 2004 Ethics Fellow at The Poynter Institute.

[2] Watch Rosen deliver his remarks, "If Blogging Had No Ethics, Blogging Would Have Failed (But It Didn't. So Let's Get a Clue)," at http://jmc.kent.edu/ethicsworkshop08/keynote.php.

Closing the Credibility Gap

Web users have developed a set of tools for deciding what to trust online, and now journalists can learn from them.

By Scott Rosenberg

In November 1996, Pierre Salinger, former ABC News correspondent and White House press secretary to President John F. Kennedy, inspired a brief flurry of headlines when he stepped forward with what he claimed was dramatic news: He'd found documents proving that U.S. Navy missiles had shot down TWA Flight 800, which had crashed in the Atlantic Ocean earlier that year.

The FBI looked at Salinger's papers and identified them as identical to discredited documents that had been floating around the Internet's Usenet newsgroups for months.

Whoops! Salinger's snookering illustrated a common failing among journalists at that early point in the Internet's rise—a sort of online credulity syndrome. Somehow, he'd concluded that if information was published online and seemed real, it must be trustworthy. Once Salinger placed his imprimatur on the story, his credentials as a media insider ushered it past the usual checkpoints. It wound up all over cable news and front pages.

This sequence of events was plainly a failure of the journalistic process. But its coverage as news reframed it as a failure of the Internet. The problem, observers like Matthew Wald of The New York Times declared, was that the Web just can't be trusted: "It used to be called gossip. Now it takes the form of e-mail or Internet postings, and it has a new credibility."

As I read this coverage, I fumed. I'd already been online for half a decade, and I'd left my newspaper job a year before to help start Salon.com, a professional news magazine on the Web. I knew that the Internet sped

Blogging: Taking a Look After a Decade of Growth

Scott Rosenberg's book, "Say Everything: How Blogging Began, What It's Becoming, and Why It Matters," looks at the history of blogging and offers his opinions on what, after 10 years of existence, the medium can provide.

The book opens with the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, which sent countless bloggers in the city and across the country to their keyboards to chronicle the moment. Rosenberg credits these blogs with jumpstarting the modern blogosphere, as he writes in his introduction that "in September 2001, conventional wisdom held that Web content was 'dead.'"

Web content was not, of course, dead, and Rosenberg uses the book to discuss the course it has taken since then and even dates the now-familiar organization of a blog (newest items on top, oldest on the bottom) to the Internet's very first Web site. The book also focuses on a number of the influential players in the history of blogging.

Naturally, he also discusses the long-standing feud between these bloggers and the mainstream press, examining the ways that each has influenced the other and taking on the question of blogger vs. journalist by writing:

> The answer has always seemed simple and obvious: writing a blog neither qualified nor disqualified you for the "journalist" label.
>
> Blogging could be journalism anytime the person writing a blog chose to act like a journalist—recording and reacting to the events of the day, asking questions and seeking answers, checking facts and fixing errors. Similarly, journalists could become bloggers anytime they adopted the format of a blog as a vessel for their work.

■—Jonathan Seitz

up the diffusion of rumors—and that it also accelerated their debunking. Surely it behooved newsroom pros to grasp the dynamics of this unfamiliar but fascinating process. The flow of information was changing fast in front of us, and reporters, of all people, needed to become experts in navigating that flow.

Journalists should have been leaders in teaching others how to gauge the trustworthiness of information in this exciting but anarchic new environment. Instead, they were making awful public mistakes themselves, such as this one, and then scapegoating the Internet.

Breakdown of Trust

This Salinger flap set me on a trajectory, for the next several years, of chronicling the triangular breakdown of trust I saw unfolding among the media, the Web, and the general public. Journalists thought they could defend the reputation of their newspapers and broadcast outlets by trying to discredit the upstart online world. Internet natives and recent immigrants to it lost respect for many mainstream journalists, concluding that they were clueless about the emerging online medium. Members of the public, instead of enjoying a smooth transition guided by the journalists they knew and trusted, found themselves asked to take sides in an intramedia feud.

In this melee, everyone lost. Today's newsrooms are full of journalists with considerably more Web experience and online savvy than their predecessors, but the "blame the Web" reflex is now deeply embedded in the media-professional psyche, emerging on cue each time some hapless journalist makes a Salingeresque mistake.

Fortunately, we now have a wide range of reasonably sophisticated tools and approaches for rating the quality of information on the Web. Here are a few examples:

- Reliable online coverage documents its assertions with links to primary sources; the absence of such links is a red flag.
- Good bloggers lay out their backgrounds and biases in a stream of posts over the years, allowing readers to decide where they can be trusted and where they lose their bearings.
- Every page on Wikipedia—the collectively assembled and edited online encyclopedia—has a "discussion" tab where users can see who has challenged what and a "history" tab that shows every change to the page's information.

The comments area found below most Web articles and posts provides a natural space for give-and-take about possible errors, omissions and problems with the coverage—and how a site handles such issues is another

MediaBugs: Correcting Errors and Conversing

The Knight News Challenge describes Rosenberg's MediaBugs project:

> All journalists make mistakes, but they sometimes view admitting errors as a mark of shame. MediaBugs aims to change this climate, by promoting transparency and providing recognition for those who admit and fix their mistakes. ... Comments will be tracked to see if they create a conversation between the reporter and the person who submitted the error, and then show whether corrections or changes resulted.

MediaBugs will launch a pilot project in the San Francisco Bay Area in late 2009 or early 2010, and once it begins people will be able report errors in any news report—online and offline. ■

way to decide whom to trust.

Anonymous sources remain as suspect online as they are in any other medium, but new opportunities to examine who links to any site and what they say about it often yield insights, even about sites that don't tell us their authors' names.

These customs and practices for assessing the trustworthiness of information online have evolved in the years since Salinger's gaffe. Throughout that time, journalists have also often found themselves in a defensive crouch, unwilling or unable to embrace the Web's new techniques. Large media companies spent years discouraging outbound links from their Web sites, citing business reasons, and they still lag behind. Newsroom traditions of impersonality and aspirations to objectivity mean that most newspaper bylines remain opaque in comparison with the full profiles we have for our favorite bloggers. Newsroom culture remains committed to delivering a finished product to readers, so the Wikipedia-style "discussion" and "history" pages aren't an option. And the comments feature on most newspaper sites serves as an outlet for readers to vent frustration, rather than an arena for collaboration between readers and journalists.

All this has left editors and reporters employed by traditional news organizations scratching their heads, wondering how it is that their time-honored approaches have continued to lose trust and readers, while new-media upstarts multiply and thrive.

Earlier this year, a 22-year-old Dublin student inserted a bogus quote into the Wikipedia entry for composer Maurice Jarre, who had just passed away. Wikipedia's moderators did a pretty good job of removing the unsourced quotation, but not before it had been picked up by a depressingly high number of news outlets for use in their Jarre obituaries.

Surely, in 2009, working journalists must understand how to use Wikipedia. It was easy to discover that this quotation had been added to the Jarre page after the composer's passing; one click on the page's "history" tab brought up all the information you'd need. Apparently, not a single obit writer of the many who used the quotation bothered to make that simple inquiry.

The quotes would most likely have stood, uncorrected, had the student prankster not notified the publications of their error himself. That's depressing enough in itself. It's even sadder when we realize that, 13 years since Salinger's mistake, there are still so many journalists who know less than their readers do about how to read critically online. ■

Scott Rosenberg is the author of "Say Everything: How Blogging Began, What It's Becoming, and Why It Matters," published by Crown this summer. He was awarded a Knight News Challenge grant for his project, MediaBugs.

Confessing Errors in a Digital Age

'With accuracy as the foundation of media credibility, setting the record straight is essential to restoring trust that is eroded by errors.'

By Scott R. Maier

"Accuracy is our goal, and candor is our defense," proclaims The Washington Post's credo for handling corrections and doing so promptly. Imagine the chagrin when earlier this year the newspaper's ombudsman, Andy Alexander, discovered a backlog of hundreds of correction requests; a few dated back to 2004. In his column, "A Corrections Process in Need of Correcting," Alexander observed that reporting inaccuracy for some was akin to "sending a correction request into a black hole."

Rest assured that the Post won't be lonely in digging deep into this black hole. News errors rarely are corrected. In a study I did of factual

errors reported to 10 daily newspapers, I found that nearly all—97 percent—went uncorrected. Nevertheless, survey research indicates the majority of U.S. newspaper editors and reporters believe that a correction "always" follows a detected error. This level of faith is not widely shared by newspaper readers.

It's important to understand why newspapers have tended to fall short on their perceived commitment to correct what they got wrong the first time around. And in a time when anybody can easily post—and pass along—news and information online (usually without an editor's scrutiny), the need is greater than ever to set in place a coherent system of correcting errors—despite the digital practitioners' assurances about the Web's inherent self-correcting nature.

With accuracy as the foundation of media credibility, setting the record straight is essential to restoring trust that is eroded by errors. The code of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists states: "Admit mistakes and correct them promptly."

So, if corrections are agreed to be a fundamental contract of journalism, then why have newspapers shown themselves to be hesitant, at times, to acknowledge their errors? I'd propose a few explanations:

Unwillingness to recognize that errors are numerous: Journalists err more often than many in the profession acknowledge—or even realize. The first step in overcoming inaccuracy is to recognize that errors in the press are far more numerous than the "corrections box" would indicate. Industry and scholarly research have documented time and time again that errors in the news media are disturbingly common. The largest accuracy audit, a recent study that Philip Meyer and I conducted of 22 newspapers, found an error rate among the highest in seven decades of accuracy research: over 59 percent of local news and feature stories were found by news sources to have at least one error.[1] Still to be assessed by research is the toll on accuracy brought by newsroom staff reductions and the concurrent expansion to 24/7 operations producing print and digital editions of the news.

Hesitancy in offering corrections: In a follow-up study, I tracked 1,220 news stories identified by news sources as being factually flawed. Of those, corrections were published for 23 of them, a corrections rate slightly below two percent.

Hesitancy in demanding corrections: Journalists and news organizations are often unaware of the errors they've made. In our cross-market examination of accuracy in U.S. newspapers, Meyer and I found that only about one in 10 news sources informed the newspaper of errors that they'd identified. While many errors were considered too inconsequential to correct, news sources also expressed a sense of futility; either a correction would do little to set the record straight, or worse, that their complaints would draw reprisal from the newspaper.[2] The study's findings are consistent with a large-scale public survey by Associated Press Managing Editors, in which many people told pollsters that they don't contact newspapers about mistakes.

Reader complaints are often ignored or denied: The news media can hardly be expected to correct errors they do not know were made. But what happens when mistakes are brought to their attention? Too often, very little. Of 130 news stories in which the news sources said they informed the newspapers of factual inaccuracy, complaints yielded only four published corrections. In other words, the corrections rate budged barely higher (three percent compared to two percent) when sources reported factual errors than when they did not inform the newspaper of errors.

There are few incentives to acknowledge errors. Even quality newspapers often lack a system or culture of vigilance when handling reported errors. As Alexander noted in his Washington Post column, "Accountability is lacking. Reporters and editors can neglect correction requests with little consequence. Correction rates are not typically raised in performance evaluations."

Corrections Online

The corrections system is often flawed in print journalism, but the checks and balances needed to assure accuracy are arguably even more haphazard with the journalism that news organizations display online. In a survey of 155 U.S. newspapers, my colleague John Russial found that in only half of the newsrooms were stories posted online always copyedited. Among larger newspapers (circulation above 100,000), a quarter reported they never copyedit online stories. Blogs received even less scrutiny—only one third of editors said they copyedit these Web postings. This sharply contrasts with the print tradition of having all stories, including staff columns and guest op-eds, be edited for accuracy, style, taste and libel.

"Unlike reporters and photographers, copyeditors have not been

[1] This study, "Accuracy Matters: A Cross-Market Assessment of Newspaper Error and Credibility," was published in the Autumn 2005 issue of Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly and in Meyer's book, "The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age" (University of Missouri Press, 2004).

[2] The article, "Setting the Record Straight: When the Press Errs, Do Corrections Follow?" can be read at www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/9/1/5/3/pages91538/p91538-1.php.

invited to participate in the online revolution at many newspapers. That failure might have serious implications for the quality of newspapers," Russial dryly concludes in an article published in the Newspaper Research Journal.[3]

Many bloggers contend that online news needs less editorial oversight because readers quickly point out errors and content is corrected in real time. "We need to realize that journalism and the telling of a news story is a process, and we don't have to wait until we have everything before we publish," writes Mathew Ingram in a PoynterOnline column with the provocative headline, "Break Journalism Rules When You Blog?" Ingram continues: "That doesn't mean we should stop at telling just part of a story, of course; but it is fine to publish something short, then update, edit and correct. That's what wire services do, after all." A responsible blogger, Ingram adds, acknowledges mistakes and corrects them.

Still, a clear standard for handling online errors is lacking. As freelance journalist and author Craig Silverman notes in his "Regret the Error" column, news organizations often "scrub" their errors online. This means that an entire story can disappear without explanation when it has been found to have been erroneously reported. Yet, others not only quickly correct errors but acknowledge within the article what had been previously misreported. Unformulated, too, are accepted standards for correcting assertions made in citizen videos, blogs and other forms of social media.[4]

Silverman argues that acknowledgement of inaccuracy is even more essential in an online world than in print because it is virtually impossible to erase erroneous information posted on the Internet. He writes: "Online errors don't disappear like yesterday's print edition. News organizations need to recognize what the new permanence means for errors and corrections, and act accordingly."

Improving Accuracy

News accuracy is an age-old challenge, now heightened by the online realities of real-time, multimedia reporting by citizens as well as professional journalists. While it's not plausible, or perhaps even desirable, for every news error to be detected and corrected, clearly the profession—in print and online—can and should do better.

Minimizing errors by figuring out why they happen and doing what it takes to get the story right at the start is, of course, the best solution. As absurdly obvious as it might sound, the evidence supports it wholeheartedly. Research shows that error rates fall markedly when two things happen:

1. Reporters take the time to recheck their work sentence by sentence.
2. Reporters and editors are held accountable for mistakes when they occur.

Ensuring prompt corrections is another good remedy. It might also seem obvious, but when National Public Radio last year adopted a vigorous policy to identify and correct mistakes in broadcasts and on the Web, the network reports that its corrections' page had nearly as many error posts in one month as it had during the entire preceding two years. And The Washington Post whittled its huge corrections backlog after summoning 30 editors and staff for "remedial training" on how reported errors should be handled.

Digital practitioners should recognize that it isn't sufficient just to update content as mistakes are discovered. If time doesn't permit traditional copyediting, then a system of "back editing" should be implemented so that all content benefits from an editor's eye. Mistakes should not only be promptly corrected but also explicitly acknowledged in the story.

Then there is the now-legendary claim that the interactive nature of digital media makes mistakes quicker to be identified and corrected. This premise needs to be tested and evaluated by independent research. In the meantime, communication scholars also can help identify and evaluate ways to proactively curb inaccuracy as well as to encourage corrections when errors are made, whether in print or online.

Technological change does not fundamentally alter the need to publicly confront these errors. As The Washington Post states in its corrections policy: "We have an affirmative obligation to make corrections, not just to avoid repeating them. Confessing error enhances our credibility with readers, and humbles us appropriately." ■

News accuracy is an age-old challenge, now heightened by the online realities of real-time, multimedia reporting by citizens as well as professional journalists.

Scott R. Maier is an associate professor at the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication. He worked for nearly 20 years as a newspaper and wire service reporter in Seattle, where he acknowledges having made more than his share of errors requiring correction.

[3] Russial's article, "Copy Editing Not Great Priority for Online Stories," was published in the Spring 2009 edition of Newspaper Research Journal.

[4] Silverman wrote "Reliable News: Errors Aren't Part of the Equation" in the Spring 2009 Nieman Reports.

Blogging Communities Spurred to Action

'Coverage of civil rights and social justice issues could be made the core of a digital news organization, national or global in scope.'

BY LEONARD WITT

This could be the finest era to be a journalist. My daughter, Emily Witt, a recent graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, got a summer gig at ProPublica. Her first coauthored story highlighted proposed cuts to California's state crime lab and was picked up by The Huffington Post. Within 24 hours there were 177 comments. Think back just 10 years: To write a story and receive 177 letters would have been a miracle. Frankly, it never happened in my 30-year career.

Veteran reporter Howard Witt, this time no relation, experienced his own social media miracle. Working out of the Chicago Tribune's Houston bureau, he wrote a story about Shaquanda Cotton, a 14-year-old black girl who pushed a hall monitor at her school and was sentenced to seven years in prison. Pretty harsh punishment for a push. The real twist in this story, however, was that this same sentencing judge put a 14-year-old white girl on probation after she burned down her family's house.

He filed the story, knowing it was a good one, but, as he told me in a video interview,[1] he didn't expect much reaction. What happened next surprised him. "Within a matter of a couple of days I started to get hundreds of e-mails from people who had encountered that story through e-mails, through blogs, through places far removed from the Chicago Tribune's Web site. ... I started to realize there was this network of blogs out there devoted to African-American issues that were actually distributing that story."

More than 20,000 people went to Jena, Louisiana, in September 2007 to support the "Jena Six," a group of black teenagers charged with the attempted murder of a white classmate after a fight. The protestors came together largely through social media, with no central organizer, after Chicago Tribune reporter Howard Witt wrote about the case and alerted the African-American blogosphere. *Photo by Ann Heisenfelt/The Associated Press.*

Turns out that the African-American blogosphere picked up Witt's story, and it had gone viral. So much fervor erupted over the apparent injustice that in three weeks Cotton was released from prison.

For my daughter's generation, social media is part of their daily milieu. For Witt, witnessing the power of the African-American blogosphere was an epiphany. So when he traveled to Jena, Louisiana, to report on six black teenagers charged with attempted murder following a fight at a high school, he didn't wait for the blog-

[1] Watch Leonard Witt's interview with Howard Witt at http://pjnet.org/post/1841.

The Reverend Al Sharpton, center, flanked by radio personality Michael Baisden and Melissa Bell, the mother of one of the "Jena Six," walked in protest in Jena, Louisiana. *Photo by Alex Brandon/The Associated Press.*

gers to find him; he e-mailed them to suggest they read his stories from Jena. In time, word spread through this blogging community and the young men became known as the "Jena Six." Soon, more than 20,000 people descended upon the tiny town of Jena to protest, some riding more than 20 hours on buses. As far as Witt could tell, the protest organized itself with no central leader.

Of course, these events would not come as a surprise to New York University professor Clay Shirky, who wrote the book, "Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations," which was published last year. Nor would it surprise Howard Rheingold whose book, "Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution," published in 2003, says in a nutshell, "Smart mobs consist of people who are able to act in concert even if they don't know each other."

Investing in Social Justice Reporting

This notion of crowd action being propelled by online exchanges raises a related question: If people organize themselves for social justice, will they do the same to support—which in this case means invest in—journalism that gives people reliable information about civil rights and social justice? After all, if Witt (or another reporter) is not there to report these stories, it's unlikely that the injustice Shaquanda Cotton faced or the trial of the Jena Six would have generated this kind of public response. Yet, in working for the Chicago Tribune, his job is hardly secure. [Witt has since left the Tribune and is now senior managing editor for Stars and Stripes.]

If reporting jobs aren't there for my daughter and her peers, will such stories be told? In some ways, it is ironic that only when the crowd recognizes the invaluable role that high-quality journalism plays in social action—and realizes that such reporting isn't done for free—will social media and journalism become truly linked in common purpose.

Would this crowd be willing to invest in journalism—to "own" newsrooms like fans own the Green Bay Packers? Coverage of civil rights and social justice issues could be made the core of a digital news organization, national or global in scope. Or the creation of such content could be done in partnership with other journalistic enterprises. In an interview I did with John Yemma, editor of The Christian Science Monitor, he said that his online newsroom of about 80 people costs about $7 million a year. With that as a gauge, a 20-person "newsroom" could exist for about $2 million a year.

What percentage of the 20,000 people who came to Jena might want to become owners of such a journalistic cooperative with a stable of editors, investigative reporters, and feature writers whose job it would be to cover these beats?

The civil rights and social justice story well runs deep and its issues are complex. What follows are some starter ideas, stories that even now don't receive the attention they should:

- The prison industrial complex where thousands of people languish for selling a few joints or for having a drug habit
- The immigrants, who will, in time, save the United States from aging itself out of existence
- The buyout story in which older workers are cast out because they cost too much.

Or stories similar to those Barbara Ehrenreich highlights in her book "Nickel and Dimed" and reinforced in her New York Times op-ed, "Too Poor to Make the News." There, she paraphrased a social justice worker in Los Angeles:

> The already poor ... the undocumented immigrants, the sweatshop workers, the janitors, maids and security guards had all but 'disappeared' from both

the news media and public policy discussions.

Will those marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, age discrimination, or economic circumstance decide it is in their interest to become part of a community-supported journalism cooperative devoted to covering social justice issues? Of course, the promise on the other side of the equation would be adherence to the standards and ethical practices of journalism and a rejection of pressures to act as a public relations' vehicle.

Ruth Ann Harnisch, president of the Harnisch Foundation, believes enough in community-supported journalism that she provided a $1.5 million pledge to enable me to start the Center for Sustainable Journalism at Kennesaw State University, outside of Atlanta. This center has the capacity to develop such a project. From the Jena protest, we know the crowd exists. And we know that in the African-American blogosphere—and other blogging communities—resides the power for self-organizing. If these various online communities can find ways to come together in common purpose—and a social justice journalism infrastructure is in place to greet them with the "ask" to potential investors—then a grand experiment in democracy will be launched, and it will be grounded in an emerging model of sustainable journalism.

Interested in joining? We are ready to begin. ■

Leonard Witt holds the Robert D. Fowler Distinguished Chair in Communication at Kennesaw State University and is the founder of the Center for Sustainable Journalism at http://sustainablejournalism.org.

Internet Censorship: The Myth, Oft Told, and the Reality

Protests in Iran and China have spotlighted the use of social media, showing its power in finding ways to push information past barriers set up by government.

By Fons Tuinstra

The political situations and protests in Tehran, Iran and Xinjiang, China unfolded as this summer began. So, too, did the latest round in the inevitable clash of the Internet's borderless communications and governments' attempt to rein them in. Similar tensions from earlier confrontations offer glimpses of the complicated relationship between the power of the Web and the question of how authoritarian rulers exert their power in return.

Follow reports on Internet censorship, and the road leads not only to China, Kenya and Iran, where governments have attempted to clamp down on the use of social media, but to Australia, Germany and the United States, where companies develop software to enable such censorship. In such stories resides the illusion that the Internet actually can and will be controlled. This myth of control is perpetuated by many in the old media,

The Chinese government sent security forces to Urumqi, the capital of western Xinjiang province, in early July after ethnic riots left nearly 200 dead. *Photo by Eugene Hoshiko/The Associated Press.*

some of whom must be hoping, as they tell these stories, that their top-down approach to news gathering and distribution still has a chance against the tsunami of people-generated information that has devastated so many legacy media brands and likely will destroy more in the years ahead. (Of course, there is also the argument that when freedom of information and press is at stake, siding with those who urge restraint seems odd. But let's not make things too complicated.)

In the telling of this Internet censorship story, a psychological component is almost certainly in play. This is, after all, a time when journalists feel their livelihood is under siege from the Internet. Although some at legacy news organizations have embraced parts of the Internet, a foreboding fear of its power and consequences prevails. Stories about the success of Internet censorship, illusionary as they might be, can provide relief to those who feel embattled and who hope that in some way the Internet can be controlled, in part because their survival depends on it.

Such hope is misguided. Add to this a trail of inaccurate reporting about what's been happening in Xinjiang—and last year in Tibet—and a crisis of mistrust has been created. The increasingly active online community knows the Chinese news media cannot be trusted given their government control. But Western media, too, are systematically scrutinized for what is regarded as their biased reporting. In China, at least, I have observed that the Western press have lost the high ground of reliability they used to hold. Drastic cuts in funding for foreign correspondents have had an impact on the quality and diversity of reporting. Now, this force of online scrutiny cannot be stopped. Attempts to block it are answered with new, inventive ways around whatever barriers are constructed.

During the time of discord between ethnic Muslim Uighur people and the Han majority, reports from the region indicated that Internet access was interrupted. But China's leaders were not successful in stopping the flow of information online. Here a woman talks on her cell phone, a tool used by many to send news. *Photo by Ng Han Guan/The Associated Press.*

China's Response

Technically, a government can shut down the Internet. But there are reasons—economic and political—that trump censorship and help to explain why it seldom does. China could have closed the entire Internet in Xinjiang province in July after riots there resulted in nearly 200 deaths and more than 1,000 wounded. In fact, reports from the region indicated that the Internet was not accessible for some time. Because Xinjiang is a marginal part of China, the consequences of temporarily bringing its economy to a standstill are not huge for the country as a whole. However, when China and Iran, as nations, experience political crisis and citizen protest, they cannot afford to close down the digital highway of information given the impact this would have on commerce and the economy. North Korea is the only country that has fully controlled the Internet, though few countries seem to be willing to follow its example.

Throughout the rest of China, the response of the telecommunication operators was more moderate during the Xinjiang crisis. Twitter, YouTube, some local clones of Twitter, and a few other sites were shut down for a time. I watched as the number of tweets from China was reduced a bit, but after three hours they were up to speed again. Although the information flow was more limited—and most of the Western and Chinese media mostly stuck to the same story lines they'd been reporting since the start of the riots—a flood of fresh video clips, digital commentaries, and blog posts made it around the government's Internet barriers.

This situation was described in the China Digital Times in early July:

> Nevertheless, many Chinese netizens are still managing to access outside information and publish their views on the situation. For example, photographs taken by foreign journalists are being spread online; people are finding ways to post on Twitter despite the site being blocked; and netizens are still finding ways to post their views to BBS forums. Overseas Chinese Web sites and communities are also playing a role by posting information and discussions, many of which can find their way back into Chinese cyberspace.

Stories from Xinjiang, some true, some not, kept arriving in my computer. Some Internet users shared information about ways to work around the Internet blocks, helpful to those who had not yet discovered such tools. This was testimony to the ineffectiveness of what some in the Western media were describing as an Internet "crackdown." In the meantime, Chinese officials, with years of experience in filtering the Internet, were practicing well the lessons they've learned: Use their force sparingly since this prevents a new generation of Internet users from discovering the numerous ways netizens have figured out to thwart their efforts.

Every now and then, however, one of China's senior leaders panics and suddenly the country finds not only Twitter, but even Google has been blocked. Earlier this year, this happened for a short while. Such measures prove to be not only ineffective in terms of stopping the flow of information, but the economic effects of such a closure, if it was to last for some time, would be massive. Because of this, even these impulses to undertake larger scale Internet blockages disappear after a short while. Additionally, the Chinese have learned, too, how to use the Internet as their watchful eyes and ears.[1] At times, the government's public relations officials improve even their spin as a result of using the Internet as a vehicle for disseminating information. Shutting down or restraining the Internet, especially in times of crises, would make it impossible for those eyes and ears to pick up information about what's happening, and it would shut down the government's channels for countering with their own messages.

In these ways, the Internet presents a very different medium from radio, TV and print in terms of how governments respond in times of severe crisis. Whereas a government takeover of broadcast stations or print publications is a fairly straightforward operation, this isn't so with the Internet. As the Internet is teaching, conversation rules. Those who want to share information will employ whatever digital tool can be used to keep the flow of information going. Platforms still matter, but they can be replaced if they are shut down. And shutting them down isn't as simple as it used to be. ■

Fons Tuinstra, who now directs the China Speakers Bureau, was a foreign correspondent in Shanghai.

[1] In the Winter 2006 Nieman Reports, Tuinstra wrote about how the Internet can strengthen the power of China's central government in "Puzzling Contradictions of China's Internet Journalism."

Engaging Youth in Social Media: Is Facebook the New Media Frontier?

A research project creates experimental applications for Facebook to learn whether the news habit can be fostered online and lead to civic engagement.

By Christine Greenhow and Jeff Reifman

Like many young people her age, Jackie, who is 18, admits that she's not one to put pen to paper, turn the pages of The New York Times, or devour a paperback on a lazy summer afternoon. Yet on a Thursday morning before school, she logged into Hot Dish,[1] a youth-oriented Facebook app that serves up "the hottest climate news." For Jackie, it's a go-to social media site within her Facebook network. She goes there, she told us, to "check in to see what articles other people had posted and to read their comments" on thoughts she had shared. Once there, she reads stories about climate change, comments on them, and easily shares news with her friends. She calls this site her "everyday RSS habit," a place she goes to read and post.

Counter to the decline in young people reading anything printed on paper—whether news or books—is a notable increase in out-of-school online reading and writing through fanfiction (at fanfiction.net, for example) and social networking sites.[2] Yet, accord-

[1] Hot Dish can be found at http://apps.facebook.com/hotdish.

[2] A report entitled "To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence," issued by the National Endowment for the Arts in November 2007, explored these issues. The report can be read at www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.pdf.

ing to The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, more than one third of people under 25 get no news on a daily basis. Yet, teens spend many hours each week online—a recent British study estimated the number at 31—especially on Facebook, which is the most-trafficked social media site in the world.

We wondered if young people could be persuaded to critically engage in reading news and conversing about it on Facebook. Would doing this provide them with a sense of community? Furthermore, would their involvement translate into real-world actions or consist solely of virtual activism? And, if we understood better how young people decide how to handle, produce and talk through information online, would we be any closer to knowing how to develop successful media-rich and educational environments?

With these questions and goals in mind, in 2008, with a generous grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, we embarked on a pioneering social media experiment. Our goals were:

- To create and launch two cutting edge Facebook news community applications
- To discover which strategies work best to engage 16- to 25-year-olds in current events and information
- To understand how to deliver educational materials in innovative and effective ways
- To build community through social media.

The Experiments Begin

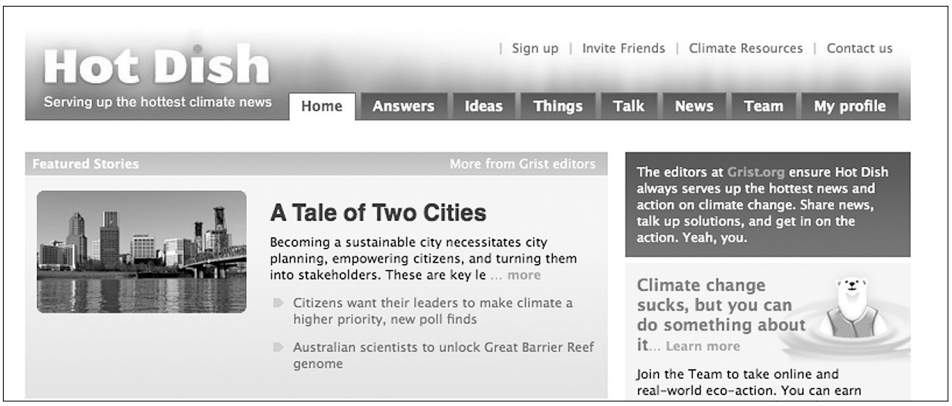
In previous research (done by Greenhow) on young people's learning and literacy within social network sites,[3] it was found that teens and tweens are Facebooking for more than just informal socializing, pet photography, the occasional "thumbs-up," tag, or diatribe. They are also "Faceworking," a term that Neil Selwyn, a sociologist at the London Knowledge Lab, coined this year. The word describes what happens when people intentionally put their social networking site to work, for example, when they seek or promote information, problem-solving, peer-sharing, and creative inspiration.

If we want to inform, educate and mobilize an engaged citizenry—as the vision for active participation in solving 21st century challenges—then we need to make sharing news and experiences fit easily into young people's lives. Most importantly, we need to measure the success of our efforts.

In a meet-them-where-they-are spirit, we developed Facebook applications to provide young people with the ability to easily do the following:

- Post news stories and articles they write to a niche network within Facebook.
- Vote up stories that others write.
- Write blog entries and comments.
- Interact with other users on online discussion boards, chats and Twitter.
- Earn points for engaging in these and other activities.

As a way to observe community involvement and patterns of use and to collect information for our research, we developed software to track, record and archive the users' activities. When all of this was in place, our two community-focused Facebook applications were launched—Hot Dish and MN Daily. The MN Daily was created to supplement the University of Minnesota's student-run paper, The Minnesota Daily, and its Web site, mndaily.com.



Using grant money from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Greenhow and Reifman developed Hot Dish, a Facebook application focused on news about climate change. Users receive points for sharing stories and blog posts; the user with the highest point total wins a trip to the Arctic.

Hot Dish

Climate change issues garner international attention. But as fewer youths engage daily with current affairs than did a decade ago, there are questions about how to engage them in keeping up with news about these issues. So we created Hot Dish, an online community where those interested in environmental issues can share articles, learn about climate change, take action online and in the physical world, and win eco-conscious prizes.

Launched on February 27, 2009, Hot Dish's features encourage reading, writing and sharing information and experiences. The Seattle-based online magazine Grist.org provides environmental stories daily. Those who come to Hot Dish participate in challenges where they can earn points for civic

[3] Greenhow's research studies are available at www.cgreenhow.org/research.

engagement and local activism, such as writing a letter to the editor, writing lawmakers, starting a recycling program, or recycling old electronics. The most active user wins a trip to the Arctic.

At its peak, Hot Dish attracted about 5,000 active monthly users, including 150 Facebook fans. By midsummer, it had 1,157 registered members, and in a two-month period between March and May, 346 Hot Dish participants (ages 16-25) joined its action team. During this time, users posted and shared 3,600 news stories, wrote more than 2,200 comments and blog entries, and completed 1,800 eco-challenges.

MN Daily

Launched on March 29, 2009, The MN Daily on Facebook is a place where users receive campus-related stories from The Minnesota Daily and other sources. Here they can sign up to become members of the Daily Action Team, earn points for reading, writing and sharing online or for participating in their community. As with Hot Dish, users can redeem those points for prizes. As of midsummer, The Daily on Facebook had 1,123 registered members and 155 had signed on to the action team. A bump in membership is expected when classes resume in the fall.

Learning What Works

In both cases, we've been steadily collecting data from surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, and online usage patterns. Our analysis of these data is ongoing, with results from these Facebook experiments expected this fall and publication anticipated in the spring or summer of 2010.

Here are two insights based on our preliminary findings and review of other studies:

1. General agreement exists that there might be efficiencies in locating niche media-sharing communities within existing social networks, such as Facebook.
2. Findings indicate that niche social media are doing a better job than other sites and forms of online community in catalyzing youth-initiated conversation.

As part of a research study to find out if young people would read news, converse about it on Facebook, and be motivated to get involved, MN Daily on Facebook was launched in March 2009. It can be read at http://apps.facebook.com/mndaily.

As we analyze our findings, we'll discover how much they adhere to or expand on this previous research. For now, we have more questions than answers. What forms of digital media literacy do young people need to fully and critically participate in opportunities for engagement? Does the existence of new ways of transmitting news and information within existing social networks encourage habits of news tracking and civic engagement among young people? If so, how and what can we learn from tracking the patterns of sharing within their community of friends? How might insights from youth-initiated public dialogue and debate be fed back into the framing of these issues? How could these online youth experiences inform the ways that the news media produce and distribute their content to make it more engaging for those who are growing up in the era of Facebook?

These are key questions that both educators and journalists might be asking themselves as they think about how to connect their job of informing with the notion of transforming the ingestion of news into the actions of public engagement. ■

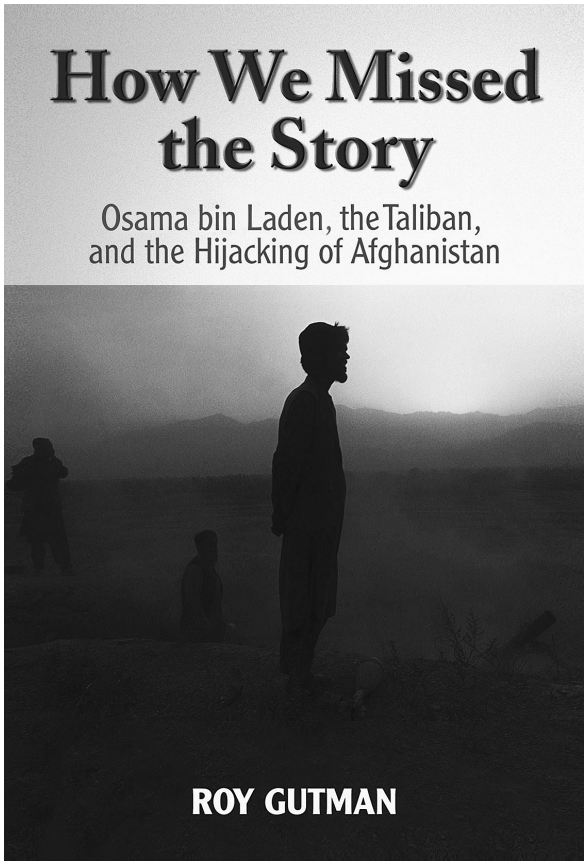
Christine Greenhow, a Harvard-trained learning technologies researcher affiliated with the University of Minnesota, is a visiting fellow at Yale University's Information Society Project and member of the Harvard-MIT-Yale Cyberscholar Working Group (www.cgreenhow.org). Jeff Reifman is the founder of NewsCloud.com, where he works on news aggregation and community technology. He is also a freelance writer and former Microsoft and MSNBC group program manager (www.reifman.org).

Afghanistan-ism: An Apt Metaphor for Foreign News Reporting

When independent judgment isn't valued in the work journalists do overseas, the consequences for the nation can be devastating.

By John Maxwell Hamilton

How We Missed the Story: Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan
Roy Gutman
United States Institute of Peace Press. 304 Pages.



In newsroom argot, "Afghanistan-ism" is shorthand for stories about distant places that editors dismiss as irrelevant. In looking for the roots of 9/11 or our current war in Afghanistan, the dismissive word is now grimly ironic.

The starting point for any such inquiry, Roy Gutman, foreign editor for McClatchy Newspapers, tells us in his book-length exploration, is with our political leaders. In true bipartisanship they adopted the concept of Afghanistan-ism, if not the term itself. President Bill Clinton walked into the White House hoping not to be distracted by foreign affairs. He was, said former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski in 1994, "the most disengaged president in my lifetime." His administration vaguely understood and never formulated a sophisticated response to Osama bin Laden's efforts to build a base in Afghanistan for his anti-American jihad.

As we are now painfully aware, the Bush administration was happy getting its hands dirty abroad. Even with this mindset—which assumed so much American power—it did not heed warnings that anticipated al-Qaeda attacks on our home soil. After being attacked and overreaching, the Bush team was outmaneuvered by bin Laden and the Taliban, who retreated into Afghanistan's rugged mountains.

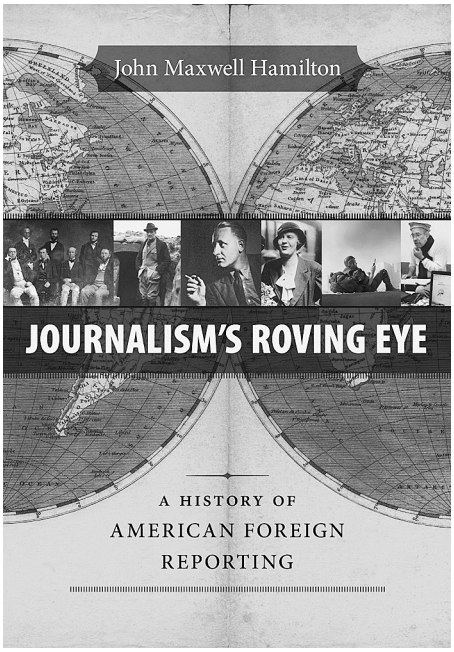
But Gutman does not excuse the press in his aptly named "How We Missed the Story: Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan." The press's failure, he argues, is "one of the greatest lapses in the modern history of the profession." As the editor of Nieman Reports suggested when she asked me to write this essay, those lapses lend themselves to a broader discussion of foreign reporting and the increased potential for more of the same.

Gutman has a distinguished career—a Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting and a George Polk Award for foreign reporting—in covering difficult-to-report stories, such as his "ethnic cleansing" reporting in Newsday after the breakup of Yugoslavia. He uses those same skills in this book to surface poignant examples of news media failure.[1]

One of the most telling is the bin Laden-supported massacre of some 2,000 villagers in

[1] In the Spring 2007 issue of Nieman Reports, Gutman highlighted information from a chapter entitled "Silence Cannot be the Strategy" as part of the magazine's collection of articles about the challenges journalists confront in reporting from Afghanistan.

Foreign News Reporting: Its Past Can Guide Its Future



America's tradition of foreign affairs reporting is on full display in John Maxwell Hamilton's "Journalism's Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting," published by Louisiana State University Press.

"Since the first days of colonial newspapering, when printers hustled down to the wharfs to collect mail and European periodicals from incoming ships, the processes of gathering foreign news have been a work in progress, although not every step has been a step forward," Hamilton writes in the book's introduction. To that end, he details both the successes and the failures of the foreign press, as technological, ideological and other impairments got between them and the story.

Particular attention is paid to the evolution of war correspondents through time, from the battles and wars of the nation's earliest days on through the multimedia blitzkrieg of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hamilton peppers his work with anecdotes from the diverse cast of characters who inhabited the various eras of foreign coverage, demonstrating their techniques and hindrances.

"In this evolution troubling mutations appeared," Hamilton writes. "Richard Harding Davis, whose talent for reporting and flair for self-promotion solidified the image of the knowledgeable, swashbuckling correspondent during the Spanish-American War, morphed into Fox News's buffoonish Geraldo Rivera, who covered the post-9/11 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan toting pearl-handled pistols and looking for any opportunity to appear macho on camera."

As much as the book deals with the history of foreign correspondence, it is also aimed at educating the next generation of globetrotting scribes. While not configured as a step-by-step, how-to guide, the book uses the trials of the past to illuminate the many scenarios that can plague the future. ■—Jonathan Seitz

Mazar-i-Sharif, a portentous event. Finding out what actually happened was a challenge that almost no journalist took on. One of the very few who did provided Newsweek with a well-documented story that editors squeezed into a brief in the "Periscope" section. In that issue of the magazine, the focus was on Clinton's problems with Monica Lewinsky.

Foreign Reporting and Government Policy

"News organizations are free agents," Gutman writes, "able to decide what to cover and how to cover it." So, why do journalists find it so difficult to use that freedom to challenge government leaders who are reluctant to address pressing issues or, worse, are using all their powers to push an errant policy?

This isn't a new problem. Basically stated, the executive branch has enormous control over the news agenda in foreign affairs, where public expertise is relatively limited. It sets policy and generally gets the last word in any debate. When the White House and Congress are mostly on the same page, as in the run-up to the Iraq War, journalists are constrained in introducing alternative points of view into their stories. Reporters never have to justify quoting an official. But quoting nonofficial naysayers starts to fall into the category of subjectivity. Why this naysayer and not that one?

Going against the official consensus thrusts journalists into the role of crusaders and, in the case of war, unpatriotic crusaders. "A great newspaper is to some extent a political institution," former New York Times Managing Editor Turner Catledge once said. "To maintain its power it must use it sparingly."

Journalism has inspiring examples of those who've bucked authority. One is the Times' Harrison Salisbury with his reporting on the United States bombing of North Vietnam. His Pentagon-rattling stories revealed that, contrary to government pronouncements, the bombs hit civilian targets and that this only stiffened the enemy's resolve. But Salisbury had to fight headwinds in his own organization and was denied a deserved Pulitzer Prize because he was seen as a traitor.

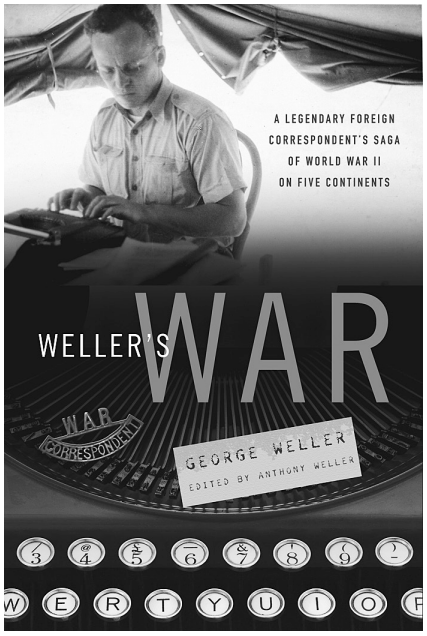
To understand why it might be more difficult now to deviate from the government line, it is useful to draw a comparison with the years between the world wars. Then, a wide range of media had an interest in foreign news—magazines, newspapers, several news services and, by the end of the period, fledgling radio. Correspondents, many of them freelancers who earned good livings, stayed overseas for years, acquiring expertise and operating with a great deal of independence. One of the best correspondents of this era was Vincent Sheean. In foreseeing the impending World War II, Sheean observed, "International journalism

George Weller Reported on World War II From Five Continents

George Weller was a highly praised novelist who was fluent in a number of languages when the Chicago Daily News sent him overseas in 1940 at age 33 to cover World War II.

His name is not well known today, but it should be. As Walter Cronkite wrote, Weller was "not only one of our best war correspondents but he had that quality that imbued his copy with lasting importance. He wrote in the present tense but always with the recognition that he was writing the history of his time."

Fortunately, Anthony Weller has put together and edited a collection of his father's war reporting. The hefty "Weller's War: A Legendary Foreign Correspondent's Saga of World War II on Five Continents" was published by Crown in the spring. As Anthony Weller writes in the foreword, "Having begun as a novelist, [my father] had more literary style than most reporters."



A 1948 Nieman Fellow, Weller demonstrated a flair for human interest features as well as on-the-battleground accounts. In 1943, he won a Pulitzer Prize for Reporting for his gripping account of an emergency appendectomy performed in a submarine by a U.S. Navy pharmacist's mate consulting a medical manual.

Weller was captured. He was censored. He fell deathly ill. Yet he remained firm in his belief that reporting on the war was the best way for him to serve his country. ■

—Jan Gardner

was more alert than international statesmanship."

Today, there are few Sheeans. Correspondents go abroad in smaller numbers and tend not to stay as long. Some have great expertise, but the number of those who do is relatively smaller than it was. As important—and this development has not received enough attention—correspondents operate on a much shorter leash.

Until recently, The (Baltimore) Sun was one of many newspapers with distinguished if modest-sized foreign services. Part of the tradition, embodied in one of its well-respected managing editors, Buck Dorsey, was that correspondents were on their own. He typically responded to requests for guidance this way: "Please stop asking me to write letters. Love, Dorsey." This attitude of giving foreign reporters a freer rein was typical of many newspapers.

Correspondents considered such editorial independence a perk and affectionately remembered the editors who granted it. In reality, though, editors had little choice. They could not have controlled correspondents if they had wanted to. International telephone lines did not work well enough.

The New News Cycle

Now, with modern satellite communication and the ability to file stories instantly, correspondents can be in touch with the home office all day long, if the editor wants them to be—and typically they do. "We now live in a nanosecond news cycle," David Hoffman, assistant managing editor for foreign news at The Washington Post, explained to me recently. Reporting from afar now means being an "information warrior." The Post's correspondents write first and often for the Web and then for the paper. In view of space shortages in the newspaper, stories destined for print must be carefully crafted. Unless the news from overseas demands scarce real estate in the next day's paper, Hoffman has to plan to get foreign news into the paper. Each day he tries to have phone conversations with two of his correspondents. And he expects a Monday memo outlining their plans, which he will modify. It's not like the old days, he said, when whatever a correspondent sent in was published.

The result is that the agenda for correspondents is more frequently set by editors, whose agenda is set by other news media ("quick, match that") and is collectively more in tune with Washington than, say, Kabul. The Washington Post's Jonathan Randal described how, during the first Iraq War, his paper's "top brass … convinced themselves they had a better overall grasp of events than their men on the spot and wrote the overall lead story from Washington," among other things overstating the accuracy of so-called "smart" bombs.

"I unashamedly pine for the old cable office or the telex in the Third World that shut down at nightfall in the 1950's and 1960's and allowed me to get drunk or read poetry without fear of an editor's intrusion until the next morning," Randal added. "That free time also allowed me time to meet and read about the people I was covering."

The improved ability to communicate has pluses. Editors create

better-coordinated packages of foreign reporting. No longer do they need to worry that free-roaming correspondents will trip over each other, as happened during the 1950s when three of the Sun's foreign correspondents assigned themselves to cover the same Geneva summit meeting. Better communication also has facilitated the rise of new types of correspondents who offer some promise for improving the flow of news. A prime example is GlobalPost, a Boston-based enterprise that recently began to deliver articles, photographs, video and audio over the Web by drawing on contract correspondents on the ground around the world.

Some of these freelancers are foreign journalists, which is part of another trend. With increasing frequency, traditional and new media are relying on local journalists who have deep knowledge of their country. But it is far from a given that these new approaches will automatically override the power of editors to manage news to fit a preconceived agenda. To make a decent living, freelancers and stringers need to be particularly sensitive to editors' expectations.

The problems presented by improved communications are as old as the telegraph. In the mid-19th century, William Howard Russell foreshadowed the laments of modern reporters who must first write quickly for the Web. "I cannot explain to you," Russell wrote his editor at The Times of London, "the paralyzing effects of sitting down to write a letter after you have sent off the bones of it by lightning." Speed and efficiency, a hallmark of assembly-line production, do not produce the most profound journalism.

Foreign news reporting is not predictable in the way White House news briefings are. Gathering news entails a trial-and-error process of ferreting out facts and impressions. Having independence and the time to exercise it are especially critical for foreign correspondents whose job is to make sense of a wide range of issues, bearing in mind the cultural and political context of the place and time, and then figure out how to convey this information to an American audience. It is essential—really a matter of national security—for correspondents to test government assumptions by independently gathering facts and analyzing trends that policymakers might have missed or may ignore.

"Obscure, faraway conflicts have given rise to the evils of this era ... as well as the seeds of far bigger wars," Gutman warns in writing about the perils of Afghanistan-ism. The precipitous decline in the number of correspondents reporting for traditional news media should concern us, but as Gutman's book reminds us, it is also the content of this reporting that has been worrisome in recent years. As we look ahead, those journalists sending foreign news to an American audience—whether they work for newspapers, TV, radio or digital media—need to do their work independent of pressure from political forces back home. What serves us best is when these men and women are not domestic reporters working abroad but true foreign correspondents. ■

John Maxwell Hamilton is a longtime journalist and dean of the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University. His latest book, "Journalism's Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting," was published in September.

The Netroots: Bloggers and the 2008 Presidential Campaign

From their position in the 'outermost reaches of the campaigns and the daily news cycle, [bloggers] managed to break into that once-impenetrable world.' What difference did they make?

By John McQuaid

bloggers on the bus: How the Internet Changed Politics and the Press
Eric Boehlert
Free Press. 309 Pages.

George W. Bush's presidency launched a million liberal bloggers. As Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney pursued many dubious projects—the Iraq War, "harsh interrogations," warrantless eavesdropping, excessive secrecy, retrograde approaches to climate change and emergency management—Democrats, liberals and former political agnostics took to the ever-expanding blogosphere to express their outrage. Over time, the liberal blogosphere became a force to be reckoned with, incorporating diverse voices and arguments, reporting and some investigative journalism, vast fundraising and organizing capabilities, and influential online communities.

The netroots—a catchy combination of Internet and grassroots—is the largest and most cohesive segment of this political movement, and it emerged out of Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign. Its organizational DNA, and even more its basic sensibility, proved instrumental in Barack Obama's 2008 victory. Netroots bloggers were

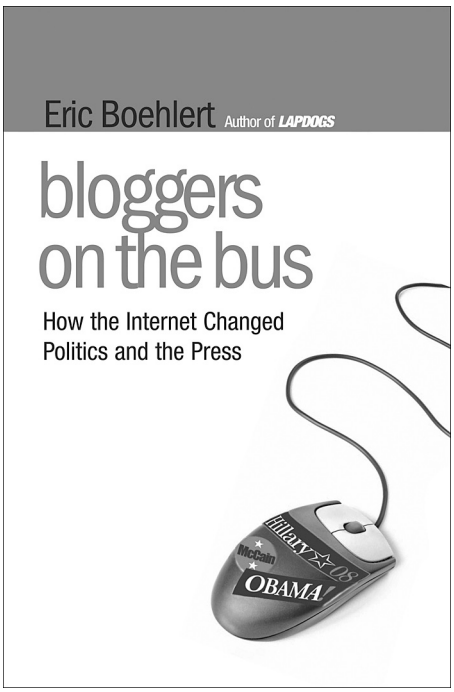
unapologetically liberal and skeptical (and, at times, contemptuous) toward the ideological compromises Bill Clinton made to get support. Yet, they were pragmatic about winning elections and passing legislation.

Journalist Eric Boehlert, a senior fellow at the liberal watchdog group Media Matters for America, spent much of 2008 hanging out with influential netroots bloggers and others who, through their use of various digital media, had an impact on the campaign. He profiles them in "bloggers on the bus: How the Internet Changed Politics and the Press," a book self-consciously modeled on "The Boys on the Bus," Timothy Crouse's urtext on modern campaign coverage about the 1972 presidential race.

Crouse's book is justly influential, portraying for the first time the odd customs of the modern media bubble. Interestingly, Boehlert's effort to take us inside the online bubble bears only a superficial resemblance. Crouse's insider journalists belonged to a professional clan; Boehlert's book is about outsiders, most with little or no political experience. Many of the personalities will be familiar to those who read political blogs or followed the 2008 campaign: influential bloggers Atrios, Digby, Jane Hamsher, and Glenn Greenwald; Internet mogul Arianna Huffington; Mayhill Fowler, The Huffington Post's citizen journalist who reported Obama's remarks at a fundraiser on how rural voters "cling to" religion and guns. Some make a living on the Internet; others were randomly drawn into the campaign orbit and then swept along, doing what they do for love or enjoyment. Operating in the outermost reaches of the campaigns and the daily news cycle, they managed to break into that once-impenetrable world.

Expanding the Conversation

Presidential campaigns have limited numbers of players: the candidates, consultants and pollsters trying to influence the voting public and the reporters and producers who follow them. The Internet creates the potential for more dynamic—and unpredictable—conversations between campaigns and the public.



One memorable moment occurred in March 2007, when a video, "Vote Different," was posted anonymously to YouTube. It was a tweaked version of Apple's "1984" commercial, in which numb, gray-clad masses listen to an authority figure drone on from a giant screen, until a runner bursts in, hurls a hammer, and smashes it. In this version, Hillary Clinton had replaced Big Brother. The clip ended with a link to Obama's Web site. At the time Clinton was a strong frontrunner, and this video captured some of the incipient dissatisfaction with her campaign. And it went viral—moving first through the netroots network, then into the establishment media.

Then, traditional campaign etiquette kicked in. Who was the creator? Was he or she working for Obama? Was Obama attacking Clinton? It turned out to be a 33-year-old computer graphics tech named Philip de Vellis. He'd done the clip on his own but was a contract worker for a media firm employed by the Obama campaign. He was outed and promptly fired, though said he had no regrets.

This awkward insider-outsider dynamic is a recurring theme. Boehlert devotes a chapter to Joe Anthony, a 28-year-old paralegal who set up a MySpace page for Obama and carefully built it into an important and popular portal for the campaign, with its approval—until campaign officials exercised their legal rights and took over the site, locking him out in the process. Anthony was left angry and disillusioned about politics.

A story like this one raises an interesting question: How should campaigns handle the work of volunteers when they build something useful online? But this is hardly the kind of revolutionary change the book purports to be documenting. In fact, it underlines how fleeting the accomplishments of many of Boehlert's subjects are. They involve feeding frenzies of one kind or another, in which the establishment media briefly go nuts over something that appears online. But these don't last, and we don't get a sense that they really change the electoral fundamentals. Meanwhile, liberal bloggers spend a lot of time warring among themselves about whether Obama supporters' attacks on Clinton were sexist or merely nasty politics. (Boehlert unconvincingly sides with the "sexist" camp.)

The Internet and Politics

So it's hard to tell, at least from the format that Boehlert chose to tell his story and despite his ambitious-sounding subtitle, precisely how the Internet is changing politics and the press. And it obviously is. For one, bloggers provide a compelling critique of traditional media coverage that has begun to have an impact. Another big change is the advent of the expert blogger, exemplified by Boehlert's writing about lawyer Glenn Greenwald, whose blogging on the political maneuvering over wireless eavesdropping laws explained what was happening far better than any journalist. Inexplicably missing from "bloggers on the bus," though, is Nate Silver, writing at fivethirtyeight.com, named for the number of electoral votes. His was the breakout Web site of campaign 2008. With his innova-

tive crunching of poll numbers and dispassionate analysis of the daily trend lines, Silver's words became required—and obsessive—reading for the entire campaign world, insiders and outsiders alike.

But here's the intrinsic problem in evaluating the Internet's impact on politics through Boehlert's character-based stories: The Web is the exact opposite of the self-contained world of Crouse's bus. Individuals are important, but the broader panorama is more so. The Web is, after all, everywhere in a way even Walter Cronkite never could be.

For instance, I'd like to know how influential bloggers really are. Polling shows that the vast bulk of the American electorate doesn't read political blogs and votes a party line. How many readers do the netroots, along with sites such as The Huffington Post, have? Who are they? How much influence did netroots and other liberal bloggers have on voting itself, and is that influence felt mostly among Democratic Party faithful or the less-differentiated center of the political spectrum? How does the reach of liberal voices compare with that of their conservative/Republican counterparts? (Boehlert contends that the conservative blogosphere hasn't kept pace in influence or technical sophistication.)

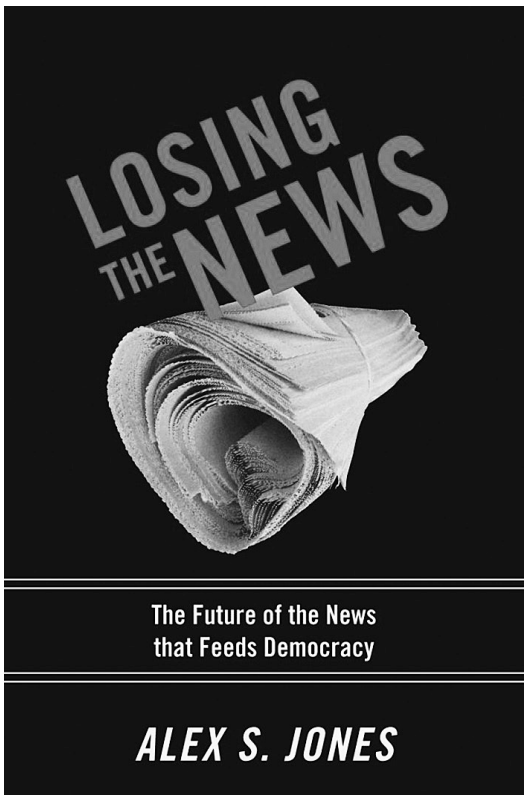
The 2008 campaign made it clear that the old model, in which journalists interpret campaign events for the masses, is kaput, and that the new model is more chaotic and interactive. But in other ways, it didn't change much at all: Boehlert writes that as the Obama campaign built its own online movement, it mostly ignored the netroots. Campaigns, after all, still aim to put out a consistent and controlled message. We'll have to wait to see if 2008's changes are truly the first rumblings of a bottom-up revolution. ■

John McQuaid, a Washington writer, covered two presidential campaigns. He is the coauthor of "Path of Destruction: The Devastation of New Orleans and the Coming Age of Superstorms." He blogs at http://johnmcquaid.com/blog.

An Argument Why Journalists Should Not Abandon Objectivity

'... objectivity does not require that journalists be blank slates free of bias. In fact, objectivity is necessary precisely because they *are* biased.'

In "Losing the News: The Future of the News that Feeds Democracy," published by Oxford University Press, Alex S. Jones, a 1982 Nieman Fellow and director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University, describes in its prologue his purpose and intent in writing about the "genuine crisis" in news. "It is not one of press bias, though that is how most people seem to view it," he contends. "Rather, it is a crisis of diminishing quantity and quality, of morale and sense of mission, of values and leadership." In this excerpt from the chapter "Objectivity's Last Stand," Jones reminds readers how objectivity assumed its role in the tradition of American journalism, what "authentic journalistic objectivity" looks like when practiced well, and why it matters so much to the future of news reporting.



To my mind, a great deal of what makes journalism good is entwined with what I would term authentic journalistic objectivity, as opposed to the various flavors of phony or faux objectivity. I believe it is essential that genuine objectivity should remain the American journalistic standard, but we may be living through what could be considered objectivity's last stand.

I define journalistic objectivity as a genuine effort to be an honest broker when it comes to news. That means playing it straight without favoring one side when the facts are in dispute, regardless of your own views and preferences. It means doing stories that will make your friends mad when appropriate and *not* doing stories that are actually hit jobs or propaganda masquerading as journalism. It sometimes means doing something that probably is not done nearly enough—betraying

your sources! A journalist uses charm and guile to help extract information that can benefit the public, and then spills the beans to the public. And sometimes the source of the information feels betrayed. Objectivity also means not trying to create the illusion of fairness by letting advocates pretend in your journalism that there is a debate about the facts when the weight of truth is clear. He-said/she-said reporting, which just pits one voice against another, has become the discredited face of objectivity. But that is *not* authentic objectivity.

After describing what critics of objective journalism find as its faults and detailing the historical roots of objective journalism, Jones returns to a discussion of how journalism—with objectivity at its core—has been thought of by those who set forth its principles.

But what, exactly, *was* objective journalism? Were all-too-human journalists supposed to stop being humans and somehow expunge all the prejudices that they carried inside them? Were they to *be* objective, meaning that they would approach each new subject like a blank slate without opinions? Enemies of objectivity argue that because journalists must be free of bias to be objective, and because this is impossible, it follows that objectivity is a false ideal. As a group, journalists probably have more opinions than most, and it is very rare that a reporter starts working on a story without having some notion as to what happened—in other words, a point of view. But objectivity does not require that journalists be blank slates free of bias. In fact, objectivity is necessary precisely because they *are* biased.

In their book "The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect,"[1] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel describe what they call "the lost meaning of objectivity."... As [they] point out, "In the original concept, in other words, the *method* is objective, not the *journalist*." It was *because* journalists inevitably arrived with bias that they needed objectivity as a discipline to test that bias against the evidence so as to produce journalism that would be closer to truth.

But what, exactly, *was* objective journalism? Were all-too-human journalists supposed to stop being humans and somehow expunge all the prejudices that they carried inside them? Were they to *be* objective, meaning that they would approach each new subject like a blank slate without opinions?

They argue that the quickening of objectivity as the American journalistic standard was born of a desire to have a more scientific way of approaching news. The nation's faith in science was surging, and the scientific method seemed suited to journalism. Scientists begin their research with assumptions. They have expectations of what will happen, but they don't *know* what will happen. They have, in other words, their own opinions and beliefs—their point of view or even bias—about what is likely the truth, and they do their research to *test* those assumptions. Their objective, scientific inquiry is not one that is without bias, but one in which bias has to stand up to evidence and results.

This is the sensible and realistic approach to objectivity that might be termed *genuine objectivity*. It begins with the assumption that journalists have bias, and that their bias has to be tested and challenged by gathering facts and information that will either support it or knock it down. Often, there is information that does both, and that ambiguity needs to be reported with the same dispassion with which a scientist would report variations in findings that were inconclusive. If the evidence *is* inconclusive, then that is—by scientific standards—the truth.

But journalistic objectivity is an effort to discern a practical truth, not an abstract, perfect truth. Reporters seeking genuine objectivity search out the best truth possible from the evidence that the reporter, in good faith, can find. To discredit objectivity because it is impossible to arrive at perfect truth is akin to dismissing trial by jury because it isn't perfect in its judgments.

In concluding this chapter, Jones writes:

My sense is that most Americans want the same thing—that their news should be rooted in a verifiable reality that can be confirmed and that faithfully represents the ambiguity that reality usually includes. The national conversation is the means we have for interpreting and analyzing that core of objective news, and it is inherently subjective and opinionated. But if a fundamental confidence in the iron core disappears, if it is viewed as just another collection of facts assembled by someone with a political agenda, then one of the most important supports for our democracy will weaken, and the conversation may well become more of a cacophonous Tower of Babel. ■

[1] See Nieman Reports' special issue, "Essays About 'The Elements of Journalism,'" at www.nieman.harvard.edu/assets/pdf/Nieman%20Reports/ProfCorner/elements.pdf.

The Newsroom's Disdain for Revealing Reporters' Political Leanings

A journalist argues that maintaining 'the veneer of political impartiality devalues reporting and marginalizes the press's fundamental role in our democracy.'

By Reed Richardson

At this year's White House Correspondents' Association dinner, the President introduced himself with a not-so-subtle poke at the Washington press corps: "I am Barack Obama. Most of you covered me. All of you voted for me." The joke elicited hearty laughter, but it also cut uncomfortably close to the bone at a time when many people regard the news media as politically biased, inaccurate and out of touch.

This dour assessment of journalism's credibility—documented in the 2009 "State of the News Media" study by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism—follows a nearly 20-year-long decline in the public's esteem for the press. Myriad reasons exist for this collapse, but a factor consistently overlooked involves the ethical dilemma—and a dispute among journalists—that lies at the heart of the President's joke: Where do journalists draw the line between objectively reporting on how well our democracy is functioning and personally participating in it?

Those who favor a more inclusive and engaged personal approach, melded with greater transparency, are still in the minority. "What this new ethic asks the reporter to do is to be honest in disclosing his or her point of view, his or her biases, his or her affiliations. Then in writing or producing his or her story, make it very clear that is the perspective from which it has come," explains Marc Cooper, a journalism professor at the University of Southern California.

This approach departs from the way most newsrooms operate today. Broad restrictions are reserved for conduct outside of the newsroom that is either unethical or illegal, while behavioral rules, such as those involving conflicts of interest for specialized beats, tend to be narrowly drawn.

Journalists' Free Speech

In handling editorial employees' right of free speech, nearly all major news organizations regard employment and political activity to be mutually exclusive. An extreme minority of journalists even swears off voting, yet no newsroom forbids reporters to vote. And in the era of Facebook and cell phone cameras, newsrooms are adopting a siege mentality as they further circumscribe what is acceptable behavior for their editorial employees. Pennsylvania State University journalism professor Gene Foreman, author of the 2009 book, "The Ethical Journalist," supports such efforts: "We have to be as restrained as we can in getting involved in community life," he says. "You're kind of giving [the public] a stick to hit you with" by divulging political opinions in today's environment.

However, this notion of certifying journalists' neutrality by concealing political opinions seems shortsighted and hypocritical because it creates a distorted ethical landscape. A White House correspondent can cast a vote for Obama and socialize with administration officials without questions being raised about the independence of his reporting. Yet, if this reporter discloses his vote or drives a car with an Obama bumper sticker, his work is considered to be tainted.

In our digital times, news consumers increasingly seek news that is filtered through the partisan lens of cable TV and the blogosphere. Given this, these newsroom ethics rules appear anachronistic. "The way journalism is moving, I think people are much more interested in having a strong point of view in their news," says Eric Alterman, City University of New York journalism professor and media critic for The Nation. "A much better question is how does it affect the journalism, because you can be an incredible partisan and still be very fair."

In June 2007, MSNBC.com investigative reporter Bill Dedman identified 143 working journalists—out of a total of roughly 100,000 nationwide—as having made campaign contributions during the previous four years. He made almost no effort, however, to find evidence linking these donations to biased coverage. Neither did the Detroit Free Press, which tried to ban all political donations by employees after two of its journalists' names surfaced in Dedman's story. An independent arbitrator struck down the newspaper's new ethics rule as unnecessarily broad and pointed out that despite the claim of harm to the paper's reputation, Executive Editor Caesar Andrews had conceded that the paper "did not possess or even look for evidence that [the donations] compromised the Free Press's integrity."

Dedman told me that to focus solely on the fairness of journalistic output misses the point. "An umpire only has to cheer for the Red Sox during the game once to call his objectivity, his independence, into question," he contends, in drawing the analogy that many make of the press as serving the role of an impartial umpire. "It matters how he performs his job, yes, but it also matters that he appear not to take sides."

Over time, the veneer of political impartiality devalues reporting and marginalizes the press's fundamental

role in our democracy. This stance leads to artificial "balanced" reporting and sound bite symmetry ("he said, she said") rather than what the reporter's role ought to be—seeking and conveying what is found to be true.

The Digital Push

Earlier this year, on his blog PressThink, Jay Rosen wrote "He Said, She Said Journalism: Lame Formula in the Land of the Active User." He observed that "Any good blogger, competing journalist or alert press critic can spot and publicize false balance and the lame acceptance of fact-free spin. Do users really want to be left helpless in sorting out who's faking it more? The he said, she said form says they do, but I say decline has set in."

In Rosen's view, the Web's decentralized and horizontally connected ethos provides a healthy counterweight in giving citizen-generated reporting and partisan bloggers the same potential reach as established news organizations. As these unrestrained voices build audiences and gain legitimacy, newsrooms adapt; many now invite contributors from outside of the newsroom to post stories and images to their Web sites.

As this happens, tensions inevitably develop between the newsroom's strict ethics rules and the absence of similar standards for contributed content. This disparity was on display when Mayhill Fowler, The Huffington Post's citizen reporter who broke the Obama "Bittergate" story last April, got her scoop; as an Obama campaign donor, she was attending a private fundraising party closed to the press.

A demographic imperative will accelerate this change as those who've grown up with the Web's ethos of interactive opinion sharing, much of it political in nature, get involved in reporting news. Given this trend, news organizations ought to figure out ways to be more accepting of journalists' civic engagement and develop strategies to be transparent about it. Doing so would also help in repairing the press's tarnished reputation.

Mechanisms and platforms exist, even if the willpower doesn't, to facilitate this ethical shift. On the Web, bylines link to short bios; in these, personal disclosure statements could appear to reveal a reporter's work history and educational background. If such a declaration is especially pertinent to a story, it could be prominently displayed in much the same way online corrections are now handled.

Embracing transparency is not an endorsement of an ethical free-for-all.

Embracing transparency is not an endorsement of an ethical free-for-all. "Common sense would rule out clearly unacceptable situations—a newspaper's political writer working on a campaign, say," wrote Will Bunch, a senior writer at the Philadelphia Daily News, in an American Journalism Review article on this topic.[1] "But transparency would clear the way for reporters who wish to work in a battered women's shelter or maybe even that technology writer protesting the war in Iraq." In essence, newsrooms would treat editorial employees' political activity no differently than other public behavior, such as attending religious services or investing in real estate.

News organizations should realize that what sets their content apart is not their staff's eschewing of a campaign yard sign, but how they employ their skills to produce better reporting. Credibility is the press's authority; reporters having a personal point of view should not prevent them from doing fair and accurate coverage.

With an operating ethic of protecting reporters' free speech, the tradeoff for journalists would be forgoing some measure of personal privacy. When they divulge information about their personal political engagement—or other potential conflicts of interest, for example—the public will be able to assess the full dimensions of the news it receives.

Letting go of this fear of public awareness of reporters' political engagement and leanings won't be easy. This spring The Washington Post fired Dan Froomkin, whose White House Watch column, the paper's ombudsman wrote in 2005, made the Post's political reporters uncomfortable because it was "highly opinionated and liberal." Froomkin argued that he was just doing what journalists should do. Now, as Washington bureau chief for The Huffington Post and at the Nieman Watchdog Web site, Froomkin has observed that "the sense that if you have a belief that you publicly espouse you can no longer be fair about reporting a subject is problematic. Reporters have beliefs, they have values—the key is for them not to let those beliefs unduly affect their reporting." There are principles, he says, that journalists should stand for—accountability, transparency, fair play, human rights—and "there's nothing wrong with journalists wearing those values on their sleeves." ■

Reed Richardson is managing editor at Touchpoint Media. He was a U.S. Army officer and voted for Obama. Gene Foreman, former managing and deputy editor at The Philadelphia Inquirer from 1973-98, generously shared portions of his recently published book "The Ethical Journalist" for this article.

[1] Bunch's 2008 article, "Disconnected: As embattled news organizations try to safeguard their futures with intensely local coverage, there is often a wide gulf between journalists and the communities they cover," can be read at www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4584.

Spies and Journalists: Taking a Look at Their Intersections

Moscow recruited journalists for their access, insights and confidential information.

By Murray Seeger

Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America
John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev
Yale University Press. 704 Pages.

Spies and journalists, journalists and spies: Is there a difference? Tightly embraced, the two disciplines historically played off each other in the search for foreign news and information.

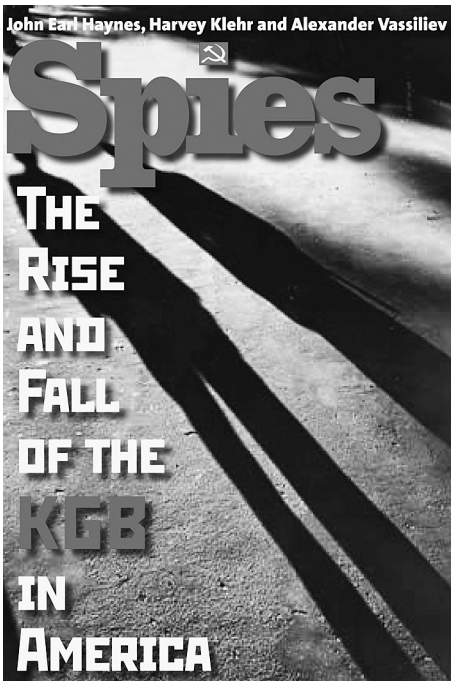
Sometimes there were no degrees of separation. U.S. agencies used journalists as covert agents until the reforms of the Vietnam era. As a Congressional committee reported in the early 1970's, "Full-time correspondents for major U.S. publications have worked concurrently for the CIA, passing along information received in the normal course of their regular jobs and even, on occasion, traveling to otherwise non-newsworthy areas to acquire data."

The agency also had stringers and other freelancers who collected information and rumors and planted stories in foreign media that were fed into the international news traffic and sometimes appeared in U.S. print and electronic outlets.

Of course, the rationale was, "everyone does it." The British certainly did. Kim Philby, the most notorious double agent in modern times, was placed in Beirut by British intelligence as correspondent for three icons of the London media, The Times, The Economist, and The Observer. He ran to Moscow with the wife of an American colleague after London finally discovered his higher allegiance.

Still, the grand champions at mixing the two trades were the Russians with their ubiquitous KGB and GRU, the military intelligence arm. In this new, encyclopedic book about Soviet spies, one of the authors, Alexander Vassiliev describes how he was recruited for the American division of the KGB.

He was "clean," meaning no Jews in his family; he had high grades and good language skills, and he was politically loyal and sober. "Plus, I was going to get a degree in international journalism, and that profession was considered the best cover for an intelligence officer."



After a year of honest presswork to assume his disguise, Vassiliev went to work for the KGB until the agency was shut down by the collapse of the Soviet Union. By chance, the post-Soviet security agency assigned Vassiliev to collect information from secret files on espionage for publication in the United States. These files provide the core of "Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America."

This book is a thorough documentation of the recruitment and operation of Moscow's spy networks. It follows three previous essential books also produced by John Earl Haynes, a historian at the Library of Congress, and Harvey Klehr, a professor at Emory University: "Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America," "The Secret World of American Communism," and "The Soviet World of American Communism."

"Spies" has received greatest attention for closing the cases of Alger Hiss and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg as genuine Soviet agents and clearing any remaining doubts about Robert Oppenheimer, who was not a spy.

No, this is not a rerun of the McCarthy hearings. These are nonpolitical case studies that produce clear verdicts of individual culpability. And the authors do not pretend to have exhausted the subject. The notes that Vassiliev collected are not complete. His access was cut off after the reform government was replaced and former Communists took charge of the SVR, the successor to the KGB.

The new material has made it possible for the authors to close the headline cases, delve deeper into the entire range of Soviet espionage, and devote a chapter to spies and journalists. One conclusion they reach is that everyone's favorite leftist journalist, I.F. Stone, was a paid Soviet agent in 1936-38 and that he kept close contact with Soviet intelligence for at least six more years.

The authors discuss the disagreement among those who believe Stone was only a Soviet sympathizer and those who think he was an active Soviet agent. The use of a specific Russian phrase in his files is what led Haynes and Klehr to conclude that Stone was paid to spy for the Soviets. The file states that Stone entered "the channel of normal operational work" in 1936. This term was reserved for paid agents. (Others who've written about

"Spies," such as Nicholas Lemann, are not persuaded; he wrote in his New Yorker review that the authors were not able to "establish that Stone was paid or had more than occasional contact with the KGB.")

Under his birth name, Isidor Feinstein, Stone was given the undercover name "bliny" or pancake and asked to supply tidbits of information and to recruit or identify other possible agents or informants. The authors claim that he acted as the intermediary between at least one recruit and the KGB.

His name disappeared from the files after 1938, presumably because, like many American leftists, Stone resented the notorious 1939 pact between Stalin and Hitler. Now known under his new byline, I.F. Stone was again in contact with KGB sources in 1942 and, in 1943, he employed the wife of Stanley Graze, a KGB source, as his personal secretary. In 1944, a well-known KGB agent, Vladimir Plavdin, tried to re-enlist Stone, but was rebuffed because Stone, the father of three children, feared he would be identified by the FBI.

Still, dear old "Izzy" has outspoken defenders. Myra MacPherson, a skilled journalist who wrote the 2006 book, "All Governments Lie: The Life and Times of Rebel Journalist I.F. Stone," published a blog post in May for The Huffington Post that admitted Stone was myopic about Russia, "But being misled and naive does not make one a spy."

Stone had been recruited by Frank Palmer, a labor journalist and KGB agent who ran Federated Press, a leftist news agency that supplied material to union newspapers and radical publications in the 1930's. Palmer also signed up Louis Budenz, who became managing editor of the Communist Party paper, the Daily Worker, and later reappeared as a rabid anti-Communist.

The KGB in 1941 counted 22 journalists among its American agents, plus 49 engineers, four economists, and eight professors. While Moscow had a priority for technical information, it recruited journalists "for their access to inside information and sources on politics and policy, insights into personalities, and confidential and nonpublic information that never made it into published stories."

Dozens of other American journalists met regularly with Russians who identified themselves as journalists but were KGB or GRU officers. Only Soviet citizens with the highest security clearance could meet openly with foreigners. The Americans thought they were getting inside information from these contacts, but the Russians peddled dross. The gossip Americans offered had higher value to the Kremlin and sometimes earned them cover names for the files.

Ernest Hemingway had enough contacts to be given a KGB code name, "Argo," but he was written off after he attacked the Soviet Union in print. The KGB was fascinated by the well-connected columnist, Walter Lippmann, a liberal whose position in journalism has never been replicated. The KGB called him "Imperialist," but only penetrated his office by planting Mary Price, a Communist, as his secretary.

Pravdin, the agent who failed to re-enlist Stone or seduce Lippmann, was ostensibly a TASS correspondent, but actually was number two in the New York KGB station. He was the complete KGB agent; in 1944, in Switzerland, he assassinated Ignace Poretsky, a KGB defector.

Whittaker Chambers, a GRU agent who was later a highly respected writer for Time, and Helen Bentley, operator of a KGB network, reported for PM, a short-lived New York tabloid that employed many leftists. She recruited Bernard Redmont, one of the best-known reporters named in this book, who was called "Berny" in the Communist Party and "Mon" in the KGB files.

Redmont supplied marginal material to his handlers until he was cut off in 1945. He always denied his Communist connections through a long career with U.S. News & World Report, CBS and Westinghouse Broadcasting, and Boston University.

Among other names identified in "Spies," Winston Burdett was called "Eagle" by the KGB, since he was a foreign correspondent for the former Brooklyn Eagle, who contacted foreign agents in his European travels. George Seldes reported from Moscow for the Chicago Tribune and later joined the Communist Party and published a left-wing newsletter with Bruce Minton, a KGB contact. Robert Allen, best known as Drew Pearson's partner in the hard-hitting column Washington Merry-Go-Round, was paid $100 a month by the KGB early in his career.

The journalist chapter is only a small part of this massive study that melds together the new material with the research from the authors' three previous books. Many of the journalists here were marginal to the trade, but there are enough of them to affirm the conclusion the authors reach:

> Unlike government employees or scientists who broke the law by turning over classified material to the KGB, most of the journalists profiled ... violated no statute of that era. Few had any access to secret data. Members of a profession dedicated to openness, however, they covertly enlisted in an organization dedicated to deception.
>
> They used their access to information to deceive their employers, their colleagues, and their publics about their loyalties and veracity. They betrayed confidences and pursued political agendas while pretending to be professional journalists.

Citing Stone, the authors pointed out that some reporters "wrote prolifically about issues of subversion and espionage without ever acknowledging that they knew far more about how the KGB operated than they cared to express." ■

Murray Seeger, a 1962 Nieman Fellow, covered the former Soviet Union, Eastern and Central Europe for 10 years for the Los Angeles Times. He is the author of "Discovering Russia: 200 Years of American Journalism."

Learning About China's Changes While Teaching Journalism

A U.S. journalism professor returns to China—after two decades—and discovers from his students all that has changed and what remains the same.

By James Ross

Before she started graduate school in journalism at Nanjing University in the fall of 2008, Xu Xu was a government official in Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province. Xining, 27 hours west of Nanjing by train and close to the Tibetan border, has a large Tibetan population and has been the site of protests over China's occupation of Tibet. As part of her job, Xu Xu helped organize lectures and community activities to promote nationalism and patriotism.

During orientation as a Fulbright lecturer, as I prepared to teach two graduate journalism classes, I'd been warned to avoid the "Three T's"—Tibet, Tiananmen and Taiwan. But during the first week of class, after a student wrote a profile of Xu Xu and her work in Xining, I couldn't resist asking her a question.

"Did you find that any of the people there had any negative feelings toward you and other Han Chinese?" I said, referring to the Han who comprise more than 90 percent of China's population.

"No," Xu Xu said firmly. "They all want to be like us."

Shared Learning

On the surface it seemed not much had changed since I'd taught journalism in China two decades earlier. The government requires journalists to have licenses, and the state owns news media companies. Journalism education at most universities, including Nanjing, focuses on communication theory, though a few universities emphasize the practice of journalism. And students rarely question their government, at least in the presence of foreigners.

Like nearly everything that has to do with China, however, the reality is more difficult to discern. While economic reforms provide some newspapers with more independence, the Internet, reaching an estimated 300 million Chinese, has released a flow of information that exposes corruption, criticizes government officials, reports on protests and arrests, and chronicles health and safety issues. Changes such as these have pushed even Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, to report in 2008 that nearly all of the nation's 3,220 billionaires are children of senior officials. Journalists are still subject to censorship and prosecution, but the information genie is out of the bottle.

My journalism students were bright and worked hard, as did those I taught in Shanghai in the summers of 1985 and 1986. Back then students had access only to official sources of information. Now they read online The New York Times, CNN.com, investigative stories from Southern Weekend in Guangzhou, and blogs, many of which are based on solid news reporting. They join Web portals and chat groups to share gossip and comment on rumors. Although the government occasionally blocks some Web sites—the Times' site was blocked at times—many Chinese use proxy servers to get access to blocked sites. (The recent government attempt, subsequently dropped, to require monitoring software on all new computers sold in China indicated that censorship has had limited success.)

For nearly all of my students, who came from provinces throughout China, I was their first foreign teacher. They spoke and understood English well and wrote assignments in English. But most of them, like the students I taught in the 1980s, were reluctant to speak in class. I encouraged them to break down stereotypes and deal with broad themes. In return, their reporting provided remarkable insights about a rapidly changing society as they wrote about new life trajectories for ordinary Chinese people. One student profiled a migrant construction worker and ended the story with this scene:

> It was time for lunch and I invited Yang to join me, but he refused. "My clothes are so dirty. If we have lunch together, you will be laughed at by others," Yang said shyly. "There is no choice as a worker."
>
> "Never mind," I said, "Nobody will do so."
>
> He still disagreed. When I proposed that I go buy fast food so we can have lunch on the construction site together, he refused my offer.
>
> "Whether your family is rich or not, your money comes from your parents as a student," he said. "I have earned money by myself on earth, so I should pay for the lunch." He spoke to me like a parent, although he is three years younger than I. Finally, I had to give up my plan for us to have lunch together.
>
> When we left the construction site and walked through the campus, it was very crowded, as usual. Yang looked uncomfortable, and walked carefully so that he wouldn't knock into the students. "Walking on campus, I feel particularly self-conscious," he said. He seemed embarrassed.
>
> "It does not matter," I said. "You will open your own company, won't you? At that time, college students may be working for you."

I smiled. Yang scratched his head, and laughed. The smile spread on his face, bright and warm.

My students also investigated China's milk powder scandal that dominated the news that fall when thousands of babies became ill, and at least six died from milk powder tainted with melamine. They interviewed families with sick children who were overwhelmed with medical bills and a doctor at Gulou Hospital in Nanjing who was among the first to discover why so many children were getting sick. The students also wrote travel stories about picking tea leaves in Xishuangbanna, trekking in Tibet, visiting the springs in Jinan, and feature stories about a successful training center for autistic children in Sichuan Province and "rehabilitation" colonies in Guangdong where recovered lepers are isolated.

James Ross with his journalism students at Nanjing University.

I edited their stories, correcting English usage and suggesting ways to dig deeper into the story. As I e-mailed the first set of stories back, I was apprehensive about their response. I'd put red lines through much of what they'd written with "awkward" and "vague" next to nearly every paragraph. I'd been baffled by words like "intelligential," which emerged from computer translators some students used. Yet the students welcomed my editing, and I was touched by their sincerity. "Professor Ross," one student wrote. "I've rewrited my travel story according to your postil. My poor English must have cost you a lot of energy to read and amend it. So sorry for it. However, I was shocked and moved by your dense amendments on my story. Thank you so much! Always best wishes!"

In my journalism ethics class, I lectured about freedom of speech in the United States, the failure of the mainstream American news media to question the march to war in Iraq, and the obsession with gossip and celebrity. In our final class, we discussed the ethics of blogging. We discussed ways to tell if blogs are accurate and reliable. Does the blogger cites sources, dates, names? Do other blogs or sources support the information? Has this blogger been reliable in the past? Are the writer's biases and reporting methods transparent?

Then I projected some blogs from China translated by and published on Global Voices Online. One dealt with corruption in Nanjing's housing administration. (The director was later dismissed.) Another told the story of a peasant from Shandong selected to represent his fellow villagers who had lost their homes due to the sinking of a local mine and had been denied compensation from the local government. His son was beaten, he was jailed twice (once for more than a year), and finally held in a mental institution and injected with drugs for more than three months.

I expected at least some of my students would be shocked or surprised by what we were learning from these blogs, but most were familiar with such stories from their reading of other blogs and participation in chat groups.

Only a handful of my students plan to become journalists. Most hope to find a stable job in government so they can help support their families. In China, the social status and pay for journalists is relatively low and there are few jobs. Yet, as protests erupt (as they did in July in a Muslim region of China), government corruption continues, unemployment rises, and public health and safety controls deteriorate, it will be vital for China to have journalists who are capable of moving past stereotypic coverage and sorting truth from rumor so that the public can rely on their reporting. It might take decades before what we'd recognize as a free press exists in China. But the Chinese people's well-being depends on them having a freer flow of accurate information as they confront the challenges of the tumultuous times in which they live. ■

James Ross is an associate professor of journalism and director of the Jewish Studies Program at Northeastern University. He is the author of three nonfiction books and coeditor of "From the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to Holocaust Denial Trials: Challenging the Media, the Law and the Academy," published by Vallentine Mitchell.

Adapting Investigative Reporting Skills to Policy Advocacy

'My motto remains what it was when I reported on immigration: always hard-headed, never hard-hearted.'

By Jerry Kammer

At the end of 2007 I took the now-familiar buyout route as my organization, Copley News Service, began a slide toward oblivion. A year later I began a new job, with a title that feels elaborate to someone who for three decades was happy to list "reporter" as my line of work. I'm a senior research fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), a Washington think-tank that advocates reduced immigration.

It's a big shift to be an advocate. But I approach my work here with the same fundamental goal that animated my reporting. I want to help inform public discussion about a complex, rancorous issue that is important to the future of our country. My motto remains what it was when I reported on immigration: always hard-headed, never hard-hearted.

I began observing immigration in the late 1980s, when I was northern Mexico correspondent for The Arizona Republic. Later, as I lived in Phoenix during the huge illegal influx that followed the 1994 peso collapse, I developed an appreciation of the immigrants' struggles and of the anxieties often felt in receiving communities.

I believe that the scale of immigration has become overwhelming. Two decades ago, illegal immigration was mostly a matter of people leaving seven or eight states in Mexico and heading to five or six U.S. states. But in the aftermath of the amnesty that Congress provided in 1986 to some three million illegal immigrants, immigration has exploded. Now immigrants are coming in large numbers from all regions of Mexico and from many other countries to all regions of the United States. There's no telling how many millions more, now plugged into immigration networks, intend to come.

I have two principal concerns. First, that the influx of mostly poor people from desperate parts of the Third World is importing a new permanent underclass to the bottom rungs of an economy that is losing its middle rungs. This threatens to bring us the social structure of Latin America.

Second, immigration is the demographic engine that is driving the United States toward a doubling of its population by late in this century. The social, political and environmental consequences would be enormous. Yet, immigration demographics receive scant attention in the press. Meanwhile, environmental groups like the Sierra Club have retreated from the issue, muzzled by political correctness and liberal coalition politics.

My concerns are fundamentally progressive. But I believe that the late Richard Estrada, who worked briefly at CIS before he joined the editorial board of The Dallas Morning News, had it right when he wrote that "apologists for illegal immigration tend to be activists and ivory-tower academics who opposed any immigration controls from Day One; Hispanic advocates who worship at the altar of political clout based on numerical increases; liberals a generation or two removed from having to worry about competition for jobs in the secondary labor market; profiteering agribusinessmen (and certain other employers), and libertarians who do not care so much how things turn out in practice as long as they work in theory."

My work at CIS is allowing me to pursue stories with investigative depth that is increasingly rare at newspapers. For my first project, a report on the labor markets and working conditions at six Swift meat-processing plants in six states, I had the budget to spend four to five days in each community. It was the most intensive reporting I'd done since 2005, when Copley leadership made sure we had everything we needed to pursue the Randy "Duke" Cunningham bribery scandal.

The biggest difference in my new job, of course, is that now I am an advocate, helping present the case for reduced immigration. I disagree with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who effusively declares that expansive immigration is "who we are" as a

An Opposing Viewpoint: The Struggle to Be Heard

I have a bone to pick with The Washington Post, particularly the editorial page.

The Post has repeatedly opened its pages to the advocacy and analysis of former journalist Tamar Jacoby. She has advocated expansive immigration policy for several years, first at the conservative Manhattan Institute and now as a lobbyist for an employers' coalition. Since late 2003, she has had 14 bylines in the Post, including six op-eds, four Sunday Outlook essays, and four book reviews. All conveyed her views about immigration policy. Her input totaled 16,916 words.

In July, Jacoby and Jorge Castañeda, Mexico's former foreign minister, coauthored an op-ed for the Post. They called on Congress to admit large numbers of low-wage immigrant workers when the economy improves. They said that if the United States didn't let the workers in, they would come anyway, "no matter how much border and worksite enforcement is in place."

Hoping to offer a differing view, I contacted an acquaintance on the Post's editorial board. That led to contact with op-ed editor Autumn Brewington, who gave me the green light. She added that she would not make a decision on publishing until after she had read the piece.

I submitted a 743-word piece the next morning. In it I cited the Jordan Commission's statement that "Immigration of unskilled immigrants comes at a cost to unskilled U.S. workers, particularly established immigrants for whom new immigrants are economic substitutes." I noted Barbara Jordan's observation that "any nation worth its salt must control its borders." I ended with the observation that the Jacoby-Castañeda proposal "would benefit the interests they represent" but "would not serve the national interest."

Later that day, in response to an e-mail query, Brewington said she had received the piece, adding "I'll get back to you as soon as I can."

I haven't heard from her since. Such casual discourtesy, especially in the context of the Post's repeated accommodations to Jacoby's views, is not good for the broad and open discussion of immigration policy that our country needs. It is also not good journalism. ■—J.K.

nation. I think our immigration policy should be guided less by nostalgia for our grandparents and more by concern for our grandchildren.

Despite the claims of some on Pelosi's side of the debate, this does not make me "anti-immigrant" any more than efforts at careful management of the Pentagon budget make one anti-defense, or a program for responsible nutrition makes one anti-food. My guide star is the late Barbara Jordan who said in the mid-1990's, when she directed a federal commission on immigration policy, that we must get serious about stopping illegal immigration in order to maintain a commitment to legal immigration. Jordan spoke passionately of the need for policy that serves the broad national interest. She spoke of us as a society, not just an economy.

Our borders are chaotic because our low-wage labor market has remained, with a few exceptions, wide open. The bargain of 1986, when Congress declared it was combining the pragmatism and compassion of amnesty with a crackdown on rogue employers, failed wretchedly. Amnesty functioned with hydraulic efficiency. Enforcement became a farce as phony documents allowed workers to pretend to be legal and employers to pretend to believe them.

Congress set the stage for the current tumult in 1965, passing legislation that sought to broaden the sources of immigration beyond traditional areas in Europe. Journalist Theodore White called it "noble, revolutionary—and probably the most thoughtless of the many acts of the Great Society."

Every year brings examples of penetrating and vivid immigration reporting. But although immigration is now a story nationwide, few papers are up to the task. I think there are two major reasons, one straightforward, one subtle.

First, to massage a phrase: immigration isn't rocket science; it's far more complicated. To report fully about it requires some understanding of its historical, economic, political and cultural dimensions. A reporter needs also to understand the competing interest groups and coalitions, as well as the changes immigration brings to the workplace, schools, neighborhoods and health care systems.

The second reason is not just subtle; it's also sinister. It involves a campaign by immigration advocacy groups to delegitimize restrictionist organizations like CIS. It is an attempt to cast us beyond the pale of reasoned and civil policy discussion.

Led by the National Council of La Raza, the advocacy groups are working in tandem with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), whose complex includes both its admirable work in battling the Ku Klux Klan and its cynical inclination to stifle public debate in the name of promoting tolerance and fighting hate.

The SPLC's bona fides are wanting. A remarkable 2000 Harper's Magazine exposé revealed its habit of spending "most of its time—and money—on a

relentless fundraising campaign, peddling memberships in the church of tolerance with all the zeal of a circuit rider passing the collection plate."

Now that the Klan has faded, the SPLC is milking a new cash cow in the form of hundreds of "hate groups." It has attempted to cast CIS as part of a network of anti-immigrant animosity, using guilt-by-association tactics out of the Joe McCarthy playbook. Unable to find hatred in our work—which is reputable enough for the U.S. Census Bureau and Department of Justice to have contracted with CIS—the SPLC warns darkly that we are part of a network with "ties to white supremacy."

Despite the SPLC's long record of hucksterism, hypocrisy and greed—first exposed in a Montgomery Advertiser series that was a 1995 Pulitzer Prize finalist—major organizations like The Washington Post and The New York Times have cited it as an arbiter of intolerance. The damage the smear campaign has caused us is difficult to quantify. Shortly after beginning work here, I received a call from a friend, an immigration advocate who works for a Hispanic member of Congress. I suspect she is now a former friend because she informed me she was "appalled" at my decision to work for such a "hateful" organization. I've learned to consider such reactions part of my new territory.

I believe the smear campaign has the effect of making some well-intentioned people decide to avoid us for fear that they, too, will be found guilty by association. Conducted in the name of tolerance and civil discussion, the campaign is itself uncivil, dishonest and antidemocratic. A desire to fight it was one of the reasons I accepted my job at CIS.

I'd like to see the advocacy groups keep in mind a noble thought expressed by Janet Murguia, president and CEO of the National Council of La Raza. In 1995, when she was working in the Clinton White House, she talked to The Kansas City Star about a flaw in the culture of Washington. Said Murguia, "One basic thing that gets lost in Washington is to just have a common sense of decency when you're treating people. Sometimes it seems like it's a rare commodity in this town. That's one thing I hope I keep from my Kansas upbringing—a lot of it is a Midwestern sort of Latin American upbringing."

I would like to see the immigration debate conducted with respect for differing opinions. I'd like to see greater civility among the advocacy groups and greater professionalism among the journalists. I hope I can contribute on both counts. ■

Jerry Kammer, a 1994 Nieman Fellow, was a reporter for The Navajo Times, Gallup Independent, The Arizona Republic, and the Washington bureau of Copley News Service. He now works at the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, D.C.

1949

Grady Clay received the Athena Medal from the Congress for the New Urbanism in honor of his role in laying the groundwork for the New Urbanism movement.

Clay, the urban affairs editor of The (Louisville, Ky.) Courier-Journal for many years, was recognized for his influential writing about urban planning. In 1959, he established himself as an opponent of sprawl in an article in Horizon magazine called "Metropolis Regained." He wrote, "I can only say that all great movements start in murmurs, and that I hear murmurs. ... We believe in the city, they would say, not in tearing it down. We like open space, but hold that too much of it is just as bad as too little. We want that multiplicity of choice which the city has always offered, but is now in danger of losing."

1953

Robert Nielsen died on July 10th in a New Brunswick, Canada, hospital after suffering an aneurysm. He was 87.

Nielsen covered some of the world's major news stories, including the construction of the Berlin Wall, during the 33 years he worked for The Toronto Star.

In Nielsen's obituary in the Star, former Star publisher John Honderich called him "an acerbic, sharp contrarian who forced you to think things through." He added, "You always knew you were meeting someone who was smart and cared a great deal about getting things right."

Ineligible for military service because he was blind in one eye, Nielsen dropped out of the University of New Brunswick in 1943 to cover World War II for the Canadian Press. Two years later, he was hired by the Star where he held a number of positions, including parliamentary correspondent in Ottawa, bureau chief in London and Washington, D.C., and the paper's editorial page editor. Nielsen was the second Nieman Fellow from Canada.

He wrote one of his biggest stories for the Star while he was vacationing in New Brunswick's Victoria County in 1965. He reported that aboriginal students were barred from attending a local school. The story brought national attention to the attempt at racial segregation, and the ban was reversed.

From 1993 to 1996, he wrote a weekly column for the New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal.

Nielsen is survived by his wife, **Wilhelmine Estabrook**, a son, and a daughter. His former wife, **Elizabeth**, and another son and daughter preceded him in death.

1966

Dev Prasad (**D.P.**) **Kumar** died on August 9th of a massive cardiac arrest in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, India. He was 79.

Kumar was best known for his more than 30 years at The Statesman, one of India's oldest English-language newspapers, where he served as a reporter and correspondent throughout the country before becoming the resident editor, a position he held until 1992.

Bob Giles, Curator of the Nieman Foundation and a Nieman Fellow the same year as Kumar, said, "Dev brought an intense interest in India's relations with both China and the Soviet Union to his Nieman studies. He was particularly devoted to two renowned Harvard professors, Merle Fainsod, a scholar of Soviet affairs, and John Kenneth Galbraith, who had served earlier as U.S. ambassador to India. It was always an arresting sight to see Dev and Professor Galbraith walking together across the Harvard Yard, Galbraith being six-foot-eight and Dev at barely more than five feet tall."

Kumar is survived by his wife, **Bindi Sharma**, two daughters and a son.

1969

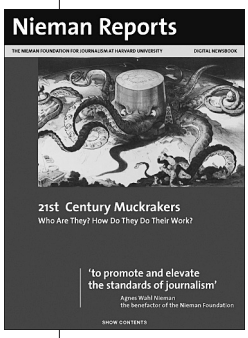
Paul Hemphill died on July 11th in Atlanta of cancer. He was 73. The longtime chronicler of Southern culture first gained recognition in the 1960's for his six-days-a-week column in The Atlanta Journal. In addition, he published 16 books, among them a groundbreaking look at country music.

As a young man, Hemphill dreamed of playing professional baseball but he didn't last long with the Graceville Oilers, a Class D team in Florida. He turned to writing about sports and graduated from Auburn University with a bachelor's degree in 1959. Five years later, he was hired as a columnist at the short-lived Atlanta Times. The Journal quickly snapped him up.

In Hemphill's obituary in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, journalist Lee Walburn said Hemphill's columns were "appointment journalism. You almost had to pick up the paper to see what he was going to write about that day."

Roy Blount, Jr., a colleague of Hemphill's at the Journal, wrote in an e-mail to The New York Times that Hemphill "was the kind of general newspaper columnist that hardly exists anymore. He'd go out and do things and talk to people and write 2,000 words, daily. He wasn't a talk-

Nieman Reports: Our Digital Highway



We've published Nieman Reports for more than six decades in the same form—or close to it—as you hold in your hands. What appears on its pages appears on our Web site, www.niemanreports.org, with links and an invitation to comment, along with ways to share stories with colleagues and friends using the tools of social media.

Now we present our new Digital Newsbooks. These offer topic-specific articles from Nieman Reports, selected and organized to highlight content useful for j-school faculty and students. Of course, these Digital Newsbooks are available also to anyone who'd like the experience of reading Nieman Reports—as a magazine—on notebook computers, mobile devices, and e-readers such as Kindle.

Digital Newsbooks provide professors and students with well-told, firsthand contemporary experiences of journalists. They offer j-school faculty alternative curriculum materials at a reduced price, especially when compared with the high cost of textbooks. Each Digital Newsbook contains articles and accompanying visuals from the magazine.

The first three Digital Newsbooks we've published are:

- The Search for True North: New Directions in a New Territory
- 21st Century Muckrakers: Who Are They? How Do They Do Their Work?
- Voyages of Discovery Into New Media

Each Digital Newsbook can be downloaded for $4.95:

- www.mbsdirect.net/newsbooks
- www.ereaderoutfitters.com (under RJI Newsbooks)

More Nieman Reports' Digital Newsbooks are planned.

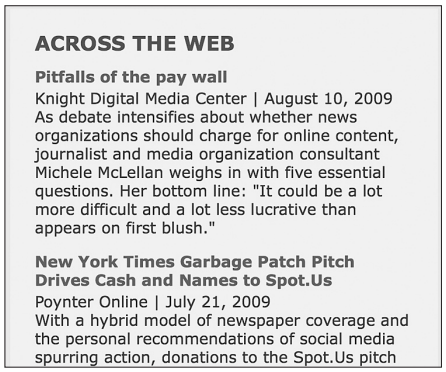
Nieman Reports is a member of the Digital Publishing Alliance,[1] and it is through this membership that the magazine partners with the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri to create and publish these Digital Newsbooks. ■—Melissa Ludtke

[1] http://rji.missouri.edu/projects/digital-publishing/stories/about/index.php

Nieman Reports: Across the Web

On the home page of each issue of Nieman Reports is a feature we call "Across the Web." Using Publish2 Web tools, we link to stories related to topics covered in that issue of the magazine. An "Across the Web" section can be found on Professor's Corner too, adding to the useful information we can provide to j-school faculty and students.

We invite you to join us in linking to articles, videos and blog posts that you'd like to share with other visitors to the Nieman Reports' Web site. It's easy to join Publish2 (we provide instructions on our homepage) and, once you register, you can publish links to our Web site and share the links with others in the Publish2 network. ■—Melissa Ludtke



ing head; he was walking ears, or listening legs."

Before leaving the paper, Hemphill spent two years filing columns from Vietnam. As a Nieman Fellow, he started working on his first book, "The Nashville Sound: Bright Lights and Country Music." Published in 1970, the book is still considered one of the best ever written about country music and one of his finest achievements as a writer.

In other works of nonfiction and fiction, Hemphill covered many of the subjects he had written about as a columnist, including stock-car racing, football and Southern culture. His last book, "A Tiger Walk Through History: The Complete Story of Auburn Football From 1892 to the Tuberville Era," was published in 2008.

In addition to his wife, **Susan Percy**, he is survived by three daughters, a son, and a sister.

1975

Ranjan Gupta died on April 27th in Calcutta, India of complications related to a heat wave that swept through the region.

Gupta, a political scientist by training, was a special correspondent for several years in Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan for the Indian Express. He also wrote for a number of papers, including The Boston Globe, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Irish Times. A regular contributor to CBS Radio, Gupta was author of "The Indian Ocean: A Political Geography."

In "Reflections on a Visit to Bangladesh," published in the March 28th issue of the New Delhi-based current affairs weekly Mainstream, Gupta, the son of a Bengali father, wrote about a recent visit to Bangladesh: "It is a country where the struggle for independence is still fresh in the minds of the people; there are reminders of death and destruction and it is only in Bangladesh that one realizes how bitter was the fight for independence. It was in the face of insurmountable odds that Bangladesh became free and whatever the differences, the people never forgot that."

David Hawpe stepped down as the editorial director of The (Louisville, Ky.) Courier-Journal this summer after working at the paper for 40 years.

Hawpe, a graduate of the University of Kentucky, worked briefly for The Associated Press and the St. Petersburg (Florida) Times before he was hired by The Courier-Journal to cover eastern Kentucky. In 1970, Hawpe covered the Hyden mine disaster, which killed 38 people and inspired a career's worth of columns criticizing the coal industry.

At The Courier-Journal, he was an editorial writer, assistant regional editor, managing editor, and editor before being named to his most recent post in 1996. Under Hawpe's editorial direction, the paper won four Pulitzer Prizes.

In announcing Hawpe's retirement to the staff, Courier-Journal Executive Editor Bennie Ivory called him "an iconic figure at the newspaper and in the state and region. Through his editorials and columns, he has been the voice and conscience of The Courier-Journal."

Hawpe also served as president of the Associated Press Managing Editors and was a member of the National Association of Black Journalists. He was inducted into the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame in 1994.

"This is the right time," Hawpe said in an interview with The Courier-Journal. "What a privilege this has been. I couldn't have asked for anything more in a career."

1980

Jan Collins has coauthored a book published in August called "Next Steps: A Practical Guide to Planning for the Best Half of Your Life" (QuillDriver Books). Written with elder law attorney Jan Warner, the book helps readers develop a detailed plan—and the necessary documents—for successful aging and retirement. "Jan Warner and I have written a weekly newspaper column called NextSteps since 1998, which is nationally syndicated by United Media out of New York," she writes. "The book is an outgrowth of the column." Jan is an editor and writer at the Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina.

Nieman Reports: Professor's Corner

In recognition of the incredible challenges involved in teaching journalism during these transitional times, Nieman Reports has relaunched "Professor's Corner," a home on its Web site where resources for j-school faculty and students are found.

At Professor's Corner (www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/professor.aspx), we've brought together valuable teaching materials connected to today's conversations about journalism. Our "Teaching Tools" section contains articles culled from issues of Nieman Reports and organized thematically. Featured topics change periodically and will be archived.

At its relaunch, Professor's Corner featured these topics:

- Journalists: Risks, Courage and Performance
- Entrepreneurial News Reporting: Digital Approaches
- Investigative Journalism: Being a Watchdog, Getting Paid
- Climate Change: Objectivity vs. Scientific Accuracy

Professor's Corner also contains "Teaching Glimpses." These Web-only essays are written by j-school professors who describe their courses and teaching experiences—from how they designed a new curriculum to how they taught a traditional j-school course using a fresh approach. Student work is highlighted, too.

Elizabeth Mehren, a former Los Angeles Times correspondent who created and taught "The Literature of Journalism" at Boston University's College of Communication, is an early contributor. Final papers from five of her students accompany her essay, as does a recommended reading list she developed.

Christofer Machniak described what it was like to lose his editor's job at a newspaper while starting to teach his first journalism class at the University of Michigan-Flint. He describes being a rookie j-school teacher passing on lessons from the ever-changing frontlines of journalism.

Other Web-only stories appear in Professor's Corner. For example, in our "Teaching Tools" collection of stories about reporting on climate change, readers will find the words of journalism educator and environmental reporter Bud Ward. He highlights recent books by journalists about climate change and other environmental issues. In doing so, he offers good ideas about how reporters might tackle such assignments.

If you teach now—or are contemplating a move into the classroom—take a look at what Professor's Corner has to offer. And pass word of Professor's Corner along to journalists you know who are teaching. If you'd like to write about your own time in the classroom, contact the editor of Nieman Reports at Melissa.Ludtke@niemanreports.org. ■—Melissa Ludtke

1985

Lucinda Fleeson has published a nonfiction narrative of her two years working for the National Tropical Botanical Garden on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. "Waking Up in Eden: In Pursuit of an Impassioned Life on an Imperiled Island" was published by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill in June.

Ever wonder what happens to journalists when their news organizations start downsizing? "If they're lucky," Fleeson writes, "they flee to Hawaii to work in a botanical garden for a couple of years." [See "Jobs Change or Vanish" by **Jim Boyd**, NF '80, in the Summer 2009 Nieman Notes for glimpses of how other Niemans are adjusting to such circumstances.]

Fleeson recounts how native plants are dying at an astonishing rate. "Hawaii is called the extinction capital of the world—and invasive species (plants, animals and humans) have imperiled this Garden of Eden," she observes. In her book, she accompanies a plant hunter into the rain forest to find the last of a dying species, descends into limestone caves with a paleontologist who deconstructs island history through fossil life, and shadows a botanical pioneer who propagates rare seeds, hoping to reclaim the landscape. Fleeson writes that her "grown-up adventure is a reminder of the value of choosing passion over security, individuality over convention, and the pressing need to protect the earth."

Fleeson wrote to let us know that her adventures have a happy ending: "As I explored the Hawaiian plant cri-

sis and hunted down garden history, I realized that I was, and always will be, a reporter at heart. The Hawaiian experience returned me to journalism, but in a new sphere. I spent several years training journalists overseas, in Eastern and Central Europe, Africa and Latin America. Settling in Washington, D.C., I freelanced articles for The Washington Post, Mother Jones, American Journalism Review, and others. Now I direct a program for international journalists at the University of Maryland College of Journalism and teach writing and reporting." Her Web site is www.lucindafleeson.com.

Zwelakhe Sisulu, former editor of the Johannesburg-based New Nation, has been appointed a director of Eastern Platinum Limited. Based in Vancouver, British Columbia, the company is a major producer of platinum group metals. It has an office in South Africa, where Sisulu is involved in the minerals sector as well as a number of other businesses. He was formerly CEO of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. In 1986, when Sisulu was editor of the opposition newspaper New Nation, he was jailed by South African authorities. He won the 1987 Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism. The award, named in honor of former Nieman Foundation Curator Louis M. Lyons, recognized Sisulu's courage and dedication in providing South African blacks with an alternative voice in the face of efforts by the government to quell dissension.

1992

George de Lama has joined the staff of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Washington, D.C., where he will serve as external relations adviser and will head the bank's strategic communications, Congressional relations, and cultural affairs office.

De Lama previously served as the managing editor of the Chicago Tribune, the paper where he spent his entire 30-year career in journalism. In his new job, he will assist the IDB in its mission to provide "long-term lending for economic, social and institutional development in Latin American and the Caribbean," according to a press release announcing de Lama's hiring.

"At a time when this region is back in the international spotlight, facing serious challenges, the IDB's mission to promote sustainable development and economic opportunity is more vital than ever," de Lama said in the release. "It will be a privilege to contribute to the innovative efforts the IDB is pursuing on many fronts to fight against entrenched poverty and other obstacles to prosperity."

1994

Sam Fulwood III is now a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, where he is examining the influence of national politics and policies on issues of race.

Covering race relations is not new territory for Fulwood, who frequently speaks at colleges and on television and radio programs. He has written two books, "Waking from the Dream: My Life in the Black Middle Class" in 1997 and "Full of It: Strong Words and Fresh Thinking for Cleveland" in 2004.

Fulwood has written for newspapers in several metropolitan markets over his 30-year career. Most recently he was a columnist for The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer. He also has worked for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (Baltimore) Sun (as the bureau chief in South Africa), The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer, and for the Los Angeles Times, where he worked in the Washington bureau and took part in the reporting on the Los Angeles race riots in 1992 that won the paper a Pulitzer Prize.

He is also a founding contributor to TheRoot.com, as well as a contributor to the Nieman Watchdog Web site.

Larry Tye's book "Satchel: The Life and Times of an American Legend," was published by Random House in June. Satchel Paige was the premier pitcher of the Negro Leagues. The book, Tye writes "is really the biography of two American icons: Leroy 'Satchel' Paige and Jim Crow.

"Satchel may have been the most overpowering and artful pitcher ever to toss a baseball. He threw so hard his catchers cushioned their gloves with beefsteaks and with control so precise he could—and did—knock lit cigarettes from the mouths of obliging teammates.

"The other half of his story, however, is what drew me to him. He grew up in the Deep South in an era when blacks and whites lived in separate universes—attending segregated schools, using public bathrooms marked COLORED or WHITE, and playing ball in the all-white Major Leagues or the all-black Negro Leagues. No player did more to bring the national spotlight to black baseball—and to the inhumanity of segregation—than Satchel. If Jackie Robinson was the father of baseball integration, Satchel was the grandfather."

Tye, who covered health and the environment at The Boston Globe for 15 years, is director of the Massachusetts-based Health Coverage Fellowship for reporters and editors.

2002

Roberta Baskin, a longtime investigative reporter, will apply her watchdog skills in her new role as a senior communications adviser in the Office of Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In the spring, she lost her position as an investigative reporter when ABC affiliate station WJLA-TV in Washington, D.C., shut down its investigative unit.

Baskin will advise the department on a joint venture with the U.S. Department of Justice called the HEAT Initiative—Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team—aimed at reducing and preventing Medicare and Medicaid fraud.

"As we increase the pace of our work in support of the HEAT initiative ...

we will be communicating more proactively with national and local press, as well as with public stakeholders," wrote Dan Levinson, inspector general, in a memo explaining Baskin's new post.

2005

Ines Pohl has been named editor of die tageszeitung, Germany's leading leftist newspaper. Known as "the taz," the cooperatively owned daily paper focuses on politics and social issues. Before joining the paper, Pohl served as a political correspondent for the Berlin-based Mediengruppe Ippen.

2007

Christopher Cousins has joined the Bangor Daily News as a reporter after spending the past year working for Statehouse News Service in Maine. Previously, he worked at The (Brunswick) Times Record for five years.

Cousins, a native of Maine, covers local news in Somerset and Penobscot counties for the Daily News. "Working for such a top-notch news organization was an opportunity I couldn't pass up, and one that I've been seeking for several years," Cousins said in an announcement on the Bangor Daily News Web site. "I look forward to learning everything I can about central Maine and its people, then turning that knowledge into a stream of must-read news stories and online presentations."

2008

Iason Athanasiadis was released by the Iranian government after being detained for nearly three weeks following the country's highly contentious presidential election on June 12th. He was accused of spying for the British government but was never formally charged.

Athanasiadis was arrested on June 17th, as he was preparing to leave Iran. A citizen of Greece and Britain, he was in the country covering the election for The Washington Times and other publications.

Writing in The Telegraph of London about his ordeal, he described being held in a room that was lit 24 hours a day and regularly interrogated about his actions during the elections. He wrote: "My questioning over the next three weeks was haphazard: my interrogators seemed puzzled by me and my grasp of Farsi, and wholly ignorant of my activities during the three years I had lived, with official blessing, in Iran. Gradually their questions became less specific and more philosophical—and, as the violence against me ceased, time became my greatest enemy."

Athanasiadis was released after the Greek government became involved. The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, and the Nieman Foundation were among the organizations that issued public calls for his release.

In the Summer 2009 Nieman Reports, Athanasiadis discussed the jailing of a fellow journalist in Iran, Iranian-American Roxana Saberi. He wrote, "What Roxana's case reminds us—aside from the great disservice it did to Iran's reputation—is that in our increasingly intertwined world journalists are not considered a protected species but treated as fair game."

Christine Gorman is teaching a course at New York University in press ethics focusing on the dilemmas and decisions that arise in covering science, health and environmental news. She remains a contributor to Time magazine, where she spent more than 20 years as the senior health and medical writer.

As part of her Nieman Fellowship in Global Health Reporting, Gorman spent three months in Malawi covering the country's nursing crisis. A photo essay appeared in the American Journal of Nursing. Then Gorman produced a story and video about what she had learned in Malawi, which was featured on CNN.com and can be seen at http://cli.gs/2EzaNQ. An additional video from her trip to Malawi entitled "Telling Stories, Saving Lives," appeared on blip.tv at http://cli.gs/rWv0g3.

2009

Guy Raz was named the host of National Public Radio's (NPR) weekend afternoon news magazine show, "All Things Considered," in July.

"The news doesn't end on Friday," said Raz in a press release from NPR. "It continues through the weekend. We'll cover it, but we're also a place where you'll hear new voices, interesting music, and compelling personal stories."

Raz was guest host for several months before being named the program's host. One of his first projects as guest host was to solicit from the public original short stories for a "Three-Minute Fiction" contest. Thousands of people submitted 500- to 600-word stories that can be read in three minutes or less. James Wood, The New Yorker's literary critic, selected his favorites and read them on-air.

Andrei Zolotov, Jr. has been named deputy director of RIA Novosti Foreign Service, one of the largest news agencies in Russia. The service has eight Web sites in seven languages and covers political, economic, scientific and financial news. Zolotov remains the editor of Russian Profile, the English language news Web site and quarterly publication that he helped found.

Zolotov appeared on the Russian News Service radio station's "Night is Short" program to discuss his experience as a Nieman Fellow. He writes: "Of course I had to deal with all those stupid questions, both from the host, who was trying to be provocative, and some call-in nutcases, about how I was being 'brainwashed' at Harvard and what America really has in mind giving out these fellowships to unsuspecting foreigners. Ultimately I got so sick of this recurring theme that I said: 'Yes, I was brainwashed and very happy to have had this brainwashing experience!'" ■

Embedding a Reporter With a Shakespearean Production

In moderating a blog and facilitating community reads and talkbacks, a journalist brings new voices and insights to arts coverage.

By Alicia Anstead

Galen Koch had her first Shakespeare moment the summer she was 14. She and two young friends were cast in "Romeo and Juliet" for the annual Shakespeare production at the Stonington Opera House on Deer Isle in Maine, and their excitement was uncontainable.

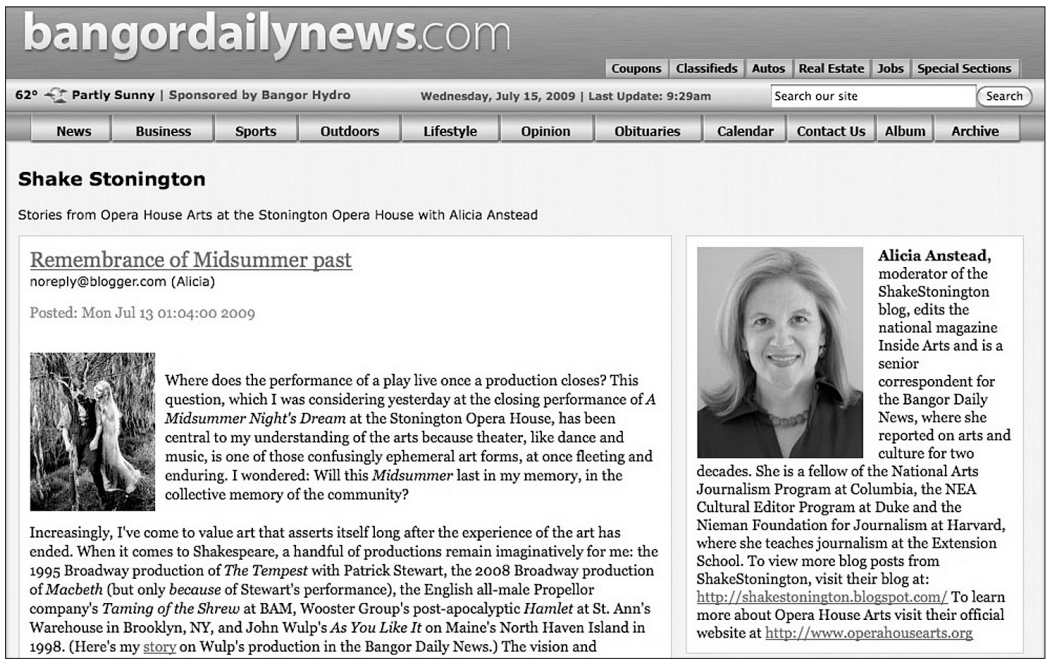
"We were totally in love with the love and the poetry of 'Romeo and Juliet,'" says Koch, who grew up on the island and is now 20. "And that was when I fell in love with Shakespeare, that was the 'aha' moment."

If you have an "aha" moment with Shakespeare in your past, then you know how lucky Koch is to have had such a revelation when she was just Juliet's age. For me, an "aha" moment came last year when my job as chief arts reporter and critic for the Bangor Daily News ended, and another possible use for my journalistic skills opened up with a previously unthinkable connection to a performing arts center.

Shakespeare in Stonington, where Koch got her start, is an annual event performed by professional actors from New York City and seen by upward of a thousand audience members who live in or visit this remote, rural fishing village once renowned for its granite quarries.

I regularly wrote about the Stonington Opera House for my newspaper and The New York Times—so I knew that not just the Shakespeare was excellent. The programming, in general, was among the best I had seen in Maine or any place else, frankly.

My first assignment at the Opera House was in 2001, a full two years after Linda Nelson, Judith Jerome, Carol Estey, and Linda Pattie, the founding partners of Opera House Arts, purchased the dilapidated historic building, an old vaudeville venue, hoping to rejuvenate both the structure and its cultural legacy in the community. The event was not Shakespeare but an art equally unlikely in such a far-off setting: jazz. Through the years I had attended many performances in rustic settings—barns, garages, abandoned storefronts. This is not unusual for Maine. And yet, something provocative happened that night, and it began as I rounded the corner of Main Street,


bangordailynews.com

Coupons | Classifieds | Autos | Real Estate | Jobs | Special Sections

62° Partly Sunny | Sponsored by Bangor Hydro Wednesday, July 15, 2009 | Last Update: 9:29am Search our site Search

News | Business | Sports | Outdoors | Lifestyle | Opinion | Obituaries | Calendar | Contact Us | Album | Archive

Shake Stonington

Stories from Opera House Arts at the Stonington Opera House with Alicia Anstead

Remembrance of Midsummer past

noreply@blogger.com (Alicia)

Posted: Mon Jul 13 01:04:00 2009

Where does the performance of a play live once a production closes? This question, which I was considering yesterday at the closing performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Stonington Opera House, has been central to my understanding of the arts because theater, like dance and music, is one of those confusingly ephemeral art forms, at once fleeting and enduring. I wondered: Will this *Midsummer* last in my memory, in the collective memory of the community?

Increasingly, I've come to value art that asserts itself long after the experience of the art has ended. When it comes to Shakespeare, a handful of productions remain imaginatively for me: the 1995 Broadway production of *The Tempest* with Patrick Stewart, the 2008 Broadway production of *Macbeth* (but only *because* of Stewart's performance), the English all-male Propellor company's *Taming of the Shrew* at BAM, Wooster Group's post-apocalyptic *Hamlet* at St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn, NY, and John Wulp's *As You Like It* on Maine's North Haven Island in 1998. (Here's my story on Wulp's production in the Bangor Daily News.) The vision and

Alicia Anstead, moderator of the ShakeStonington blog, edits the national magazine Inside Arts and is a senior correspondent for the Bangor Daily News, where she reported on arts and culture for two decades. She is a fellow of the National Arts Journalism Program at Columbia, the NEA Cultural Editor Program at Duke and the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard, where she teaches journalism at the Extension School. To view more blog posts from ShakeStonington, visit their blog at: http://shakestonington.blogspot.com/ To learn more about Opera House Arts visit their official website at http://www.operahousearts.org

Anstead moderated a blog, which appeared on www.bangordailynews.com/shake-stonington.html, for a project called "Shakespeare and the Journalist in the 21st Century."

with the churning harbor on one side of me and the craggy rise of earth on the other. There, in a space between, wedged into a steep wall of granite as if teetering precariously on a cliff, was the Opera House, corporeal and incontrovertible. What happened inside the hall was even more notable. Not to work the granite metaphor too hard, but this place rocked.

I knew that first night—and was bolstered in my opinion later that summer with a stunning production of "The Tempest"—that the Opera House had a vibe I had rarely seen at other performing arts centers in Maine.

Similar to the traveling theater companies that visited Stratford-on-Avon during Shakespeare's childhood, the Opera House troupers arrive in Stonington, where they board in the homes of island residents, eat lobster and fried clams, walk among the citizenry, march in the Fourth of July parade, and put a human face to theater—while also working indoors for 10 long days finalizing preparations for opening night.

As a complement to the stage work in the past two years, the Opera House has held community "reads" at local libraries: As many as 20 people sit around a table and speak the text out loud, occasionally stopping to explicate a line, word or thought. The process is always revelatory, and those who start out shy often end up stars. Or at least starry eyed. One woman was in tears toward the end of "Macbeth," when Macduff slays the king. She understood the flawed humanity behind Macbeth's tyranny, and it made her feel sympathy for, of all people, Saddam Hussein.

By the time of "Macbeth" in 2008, I had spent a year as the inaugural arts and culture fellow at the Nieman Foundation and, at the completion of that year, my full-time arts reporting position had, much like the Scottish king, been slain by a coup of another kind: technology over print, the news story over in-depth arts coverage.

That's when Opera House Artistic Director Judith Jerome and Executive Director Linda Nelson asked me to lead the library reads

Members of an island community in Maine read aloud from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at a read facilitated by Anstead. *Photo by Alicia Anstead.*

and to conduct a post-show talk-back with a Shakespeare scholar and members of the creative team. The professional ease and naturalness of the events sparked not only my imagination but Linda's, too.

Embedded Journalism

A journalist herself, Linda saw the possibility for another kind of "embedded journalism"—in much the same way the actors embedded, literally, in the community. The term entered the lexicon with reporters in Iraq who boarded tanks with soldiers and went out into the night wearing flak jackets and helmets while carrying notebooks and cameras. The result was an immediate, if controversial, connection to the action. Linda saw that same possibility for the arts. What if an arts journalist embedded herself in the community, applying her reporting and analytical skills to a production of Shakespeare?

I might not have considered doing this work with any other arts organization. It mattered to me that the Opera House upholds the highest standards for Shakespeare, convening auditions in New York City and scrupulously choosing theater artists—directors, designers, composers, actors—committed to reinterpreting Shakespeare, such as "The Taming of the Shrew" set in a women's prison, "Hamlet" with a silent movie patina, and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" as an Amazon's drugged dream.

Both the Maine Arts Commission, which awarded me an Artist Visibility Grant, and the Bangor Daily News, which distributed our content, saw the value in "Shakespeare and the Journalist in the 21st Century," the title for a project that revolved around a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Opera House this summer.

Notice I wrote "our content" because, while I moderated the blog, facilitated community reads, and led two talk-backs for this project, the administrative and artistic staff and even the audience contributed, shaping coverage with new voices and insights. They opened a window to the process, to the lives of artists

Anstead interacted with community members, summer visitors, and theater professionals as she put her reporting skills to use in new ways, in concert with a production of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Stonington Opera House in Maine. *Photo by Carolyn Caldwell.*

Photo by Alicia Anstead.

In pre-blog, pre-Facebook, pre-Twitter years, an editor might wave a reporter away from stepping this close to the flame of art and artists. But this was a test run for all of us, a potential model for arts reporting at a time when an estimated half of all the staff arts reporting jobs in this country have been eliminated.

and arts administrators and to the experience of art. For my part, I hoped to create access to perspectives the reader might not find in other places: videos of theatergoers' responses to the show, photos from the community reads and production, links to additional material about Shakespeare, and audio interviews with leading Shakespeare scholars and theater artists such as Harvard professor Stephen Greenblatt and Diane Paulus, director of the Tony Award-winning Broadway revival of "Hair."

All our voices mashed online. It was an odd and yet fulfilling relationship for me—the embedded journalist. In pre-blog, pre-Facebook, pre-Twitter years, an editor might wave a reporter away from stepping this close to the flame of art and artists. But this was a test run for all of us, a potential model for arts reporting at a time when an estimated half of all the staff arts reporting jobs in this country have been eliminated.

Frankly, it was more honest on some level: I have always believed the arts critic is more closely connected to the artist, more passionate about the craft than we openly admit. Oscar Wilde saw the critic as artist and while I won't go that far, I can see the value of giving up the seat on the aisle for a seat at the table. Despite the decisions of newspaper investors and publishers, we still need arts arbiters in the community to foster dialogue, to debate, to ask the questions, to think along with audiences about what they have seen and how they feel. We need dialogue about the arts because the arts help us understand private moments and global leaders.

We haven't found a magic formula for keeping the critic's voice and experience available and funded, but we've tested the waters for a new relationship, and it worked. I did my journalism. The Opera House had packed audiences. Shakespeare was in the drinking water. Do I continue to wonder about the evaluative role of the critic? Ah, there may be the rub. But I no longer wonder if there is a new possibility for creating a place for the voices that help us to understand, know, think about, and digest art. ■

Alicia Anstead, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, is editor in chief of Inside Arts magazine. She also is an arts consultant, freelance writer, and journalism instructor at Harvard Extension School. Her work with Opera House Arts is at http://Shakestonington.blogspot.com.

Nieman Reports
One Francis Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

NIEMAN REPORTS
VOL. 63 NO. 3 FALL 2009
LET'S TALK: JOURNALISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA
THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY