

Ryan Kunz, Mason Stoddard, and Alexis Lee

English 252

Research Paper Proposal

Brother Murduck

Freelancing in a Blogging World Proposal

The digital age has proven both a service and a hindrance for the news media. As more and more avenues appear for would-be writers and true journalists alike to publish their versions of the news, the face of journalism is changing.

According to *Project for Excellence in Journalism*, newspaper ad revenues have fallen 23 percent in the last two years. Some papers are bankrupt, and others have lost three-quarters of their value. Nearly one in five journalists working in 2001 lost his or her job by 2009. Credibility of the news has also suffered.

On the other hand, new ways to publish news have benefited the industry. News has never been more available to a larger number of people.

In order to ensure future for the news in which journalists use the tools at their disposal responsibly, we must examine both the pros and cons of the Internet's effect on journalism. By looking into the background of the printed word and the development of the blogging world we hope to understand the information world we are in today.

Background Information

The first form of the printed word came from scribes and monks who were dedicated to copying the Bible; however they were rare and only the rich could afford them. In the late 1450's the printing press was invented. By the 1500 printing presses had circulated around Europe. This development allowed the printed word to become available to everyone. News and knowledge spread easily among the common man. Illiteracy dropped

making way for a rebirth of knowledge known as the Renaissance. It was not until centuries later that a new form of print was invented, thus making way for another movement of knowledge. This new invention was the internet.

The internet was a 1969 U.S. Defense Military program set up as a communication function between institutes and research units. It was confined to professors, researchers and doctors. In 1995, Netscape went public and ordinary people were able to access the internet. This allowed ordinary people to send emails and to search information. Computers became common in every house hold people were able to study current events within the comfort of their own homes (A. Batra 57).

With people searching for information on their own, a new branch of journalism was started. Online freelance writing known as blogging “a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events” (wiki). Because the internet is open to anyone’s opinions, blogging has allowed personal opinions to be shared and news to be discussed. This type of communication grew in popularity in the late 1990’s and is still rapidly expanding.

[New Heading]

In journalism the internet was first used as a database. Martin contributes the usage of databases to lose of jobs. The large amounts of workers in the news room were getting replaced. As more people were able to log on to the internet this database was open to more people. Newspapers needed to keep their information classified. By making a web

site that was only open to subscribers they were able to achieve to keep their articles private. In the late 90's the only form of open journalism was blogging, but that information was objective.

As the technology continued to change, blogging was no longer the only form of online journalism. In the 90's only reputable news sources, such as the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, started to put their articles on web pages. The articles were only available to subscribers. The idea grew so popular that other Newspaper and Journals put their articles online as well.

“... online news service success in attracting subscribers may very well be because of the reputation the newspaper has across the country. As more newspapers provide online news services, there may be an assumption by those using the services that the material found online is exactly what would have been found on the same day in that news organization's newspaper (Martin 64).”

This source of news has become so popular in the last decade that subscription are no longer required, the paper is open to everyone. Newspaper companies now need to distinguish then selves from the rest of the news pile.

A major way for newspapers to separate themselves from the pack is their web sites. The presentation of the website is a major aspect of drawing reader in. The writing has not changed a lot from the traditional article in the Newspaper. What has changed is in the

presentation of the articles. “The news content accessible and acceptable in one medium format is not necessarily so in others. Many news professionals are beginning to reassess news values as their content is moved from format [paper] to format [internet] (Martin 64).” The reader needs to be drawn in by format of the web site, and articles need to keep the reader in. Without this aspect of online writing, it would not be successful.

Shannon E. Martin also mentions that editors and designers are hired by the newspaper companies to keep their website looking fresh. With the new technology offered today editors need to be aware of the rapid changes in formation. In websites that feature “Breaking News”, the site needs to be up dated periodically. Journalism websites don’t need to be updated as frequently; they are usually updated once or twice a month, posting only the essential items.

The Fall of Traditional Journalism

The advent of the Internet has had many negative effects on journalism.

One way in which the new face of the news has hurt the industry can be found in the economic impact on traditional news venues. Devices such as laptop computers and smartphones have made the Internet accessible in a wide range of places and situations, and the relative ease by which news from such a medium is accessible has caused many people to regularly go online to find the news. The number of Americans who regularly go online to seek news rose 19% from 2007 to 2009. In 2008 alone, the top news sites reported a 27% increase in traffic (*The State of the News Media*).

As such traffic increases, more and more people leave traditional news venues behind, causing such venues to undergo financial difficulties that ultimately result in the loss of many long-standing jobs.

The Pew Institute's Project for Excellence in Journalism's *State of the News Media* contains grim statistics that chronicle the decline of traditional news outlets. Perhaps the most iconic of the traditional news outlets, the newspaper industry, reported bleak numbers.

Newspaper circulation fell 4.6% daily and 4.8% Sunday from 2008 to 2009. They've fallen 13.5% daily and 17.3% Sunday since 2001. Newspapers' stock prices fell 83% in 2008. News giant Hearst announced that it would have to sell, close or somehow reorganize papers in Seattle and San Francisco. Another company, E. W. Scripps, closed its paper in Denver. The Tribune Company went private in 2007, and the debts acquired from that transaction caused it to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Other papers, including the Minneapolis Star-Tribune and the Philadelphia Inquirer, went into bankruptcy in the last two years.

Ethnic publications like *AsianWeekly* and the African-American *Chicago Defender* suffered. The former publication folded in 2009, while the latter converted from a daily to a weekly publication cycle.

With such hardships, journalists have struggled to keep their jobs. Nearly one in every five journalists working for newspapers in 2001 lost his or her job by 2009.

Some of the most dismal news came from the American weekly news magazines. According to one survey, less than a quarter of American adults said they read a magazine of some kind the day before — a figure that dropped from a third in 1994. Of the eight publications that Project for Excellence in Journalism tracks as news magazines, circulation dropped 4.8%. *U.S. News & World Report* announced it would no longer be a print news weekly, converting instead to a monthly focused on its popular rankings of colleges and other consumer topics.

Late in 2009, several news magazines announced a substantial amount of layoffs, on top of cutbacks in staffing and resources already made earlier in the year. *Newsweek* saw some of the biggest cuts, both in manpower and bureaus. Buyouts eliminated 160 employees, and one-correspondent bureaus in Chicago, Detroit and Mexico City were eliminated.

Television news have fared little better. Local television news staffs, already too small to offer adequate coverage of their communities, are facing trouble. In 2008, their revenues fell by 7%. This occurred during an election year, which is almost unheard of. Even network news' rare programs whose ratings increased saw revenues fall.

Many of journalism's economic woes could be blamed on the global recession that arose in recent years, but traditional news outlets' futures looked grim even before that. As early as 2004, *The State of the News Media* reported that sectors of the traditional news media were losing audience (*The State of the News Media*).

The Rise of New Journalism

Non-traditional news media, however, are flourishing. Though this surge of voices across the Internet is not necessarily a bad thing for the industry, it does present some particular problems.

With a computer or smartphone in the hand of anyone who witnesses the news and wants to report it, nearly anyone can post something online and call it news. As a result, the overall credibility of the news media has suffered.

To say that the new forms of journalism, like blogging, will be the death of the industry is exaggeration. “We know [blogs and other new media are] journalism—sometimes. They’re even capable, at times, and perhaps only in special circumstances, of beating Big Journalism at its own game.” Bloggers and other carriers of the new media are now included under the label of journalism as “citizen journalists” (Rosen).

However, the rise of such citizen journalists presents unique challenges.

Consider one example of new journalism: *The Drudge Report*, created by Matt Drudge, is a conservative news aggregation site, where Drudge posts links and original articles (based on tips). According to NielsenNet Ratings, *Drudge Report* had 3.4 million unique visitors in February 2009. James F. Broderick and Darren W. Miller, in their book *Consider the Source*, have this to say about the site:

The Drudge Report offers a comprehensive glimpse into the very best and the very worst of Internet-based news sites. It is,

in equal measures, timely and premature, informed and purely speculative, user-friendly and totally unwieldy. How can one site represent both the extremes of both heroic “citizen journalism” and irresponsible rumor-mongering drivel? ... Drudge is not so much a reporter as he is a carrier pigeon, flying around the world, pecking at everything, squawking about it, leaving you to figure out what it all means and whether it’s true or a case of mistaken identity (he’s been named in some high-profile libel suits) (Broderick and Miller 72).

The Drudge Report offers a look at some of the dangers of citizen journalism: primarily, the lack of a check on what is presented as news. While unrestrained online journalism may offer many options for the earnest seeker of truth in the news, it also presents many pitfalls for the unwary.

The advent of the Internet has had certain negative effects on the journalism industry, including the economic impact on traditional journalism and the possible lack of credibility in the emerging trend of citizen journalism.

All Rolled Into One

However, not all effects have been negative. The Internet age has provided many new opportunities for journalists and news aficionados alike. In fact, the new ways of getting news appeals to many people.

Though literature buffs constantly raise their voices about the death of the printed book, very little is said about the death of the printed news. In fact, most readers are excited about the idea of catching the latest stories while they check their email, saying nothing of the low (or free) cost of accessing newspapers online. Some still long to turn the pages and see the ink smeared across their fingerprints. But journalism's move to the internet provides several positive opportunities for writers and newspaper companies. The internet is becoming the premium media outlet. As David Carlson writes, "An online journal can have the depth and breadth of newspapers, the immediacy of radio, television's ability to make us "eyewitnesses" to events, and the typography and resolution of slick magazines" (Carlson 53).

Congress Approves New Form of Government Healthcare. Such an important headline would be read in the papers, heard on the radio, and seen on the television. Each of these media offers a unique way to learn the news. The newspaper can give several columns of information about the event, detailing how the reform will affect single parents' healthcare payments. But this form of news is slow, taking time to be printed and delivered. The printed news also forces the reader to decide how to dispose of the read paper; should he or she go through the annoyance of recycling or just put it in the trash? Such questions soon become moral and environmental concerns, not being solved without guilt or hassle.

The radio can offer a direct and concise summary of the event without the distracting scrolling text that sometimes accompanies news networks' reports. But the radio cannot

actually show us what happened; we can't see the faces of the government employees as they're interviewed.

The television can show the Senate Majority Leader giving his statement, or show us charts of how the changes will affect us. But the television's timeslot, which is allotted to the story, will be interrupted with commercials and weather reports. One who wishes to know the full details of a news story must consult all of the sources to fully grasp the event.

Newsweek.com offers free news to the whole world. A story will include links to similar stories, photographs, video clips, and audio files to make sure that the reader fully understands the story. An internet news site takes what is best about newspapers, radio, and television and combines them onto one screen. The page is usually free, or relatively cheap, and is updated multiple times daily. News makes its way to the web instantly, from the moment the writer finishes his work, and doesn't go away. Sites will generally keep an archive with old stories, all available for quick access by the reader. A newspaper is thrown away when it is read. Maybe a reader will hang onto a clipping for future reference, but thousands of papers add up quick.

Ben Scott, of *Television and New Media*, points out another pro, "Users can drill down into the depths of a story by following intertextual links to find follow-up and related material from the day or from previous days" (Scott, 93). On CNN's page devoted to a story about James Cameron's adapting his own *Avatar* into a novel, a link is provided which takes us to a story about *Avatar* watchers being depressed that the sci-fi world from the film doesn't actually exist. Such a connection between stories isn't possible in the other news forms. Both articles are from CNN and both have margins filled with advertisements for cell phones and television programs.

Many Options

A reader living in a small town has limited possibilities when it comes to choosing a newspaper. An online reader living in the same small town has nearly infinite possibilities when choosing a news source. This wide variety of sources may seem a negative factor, but the blogging world makes it a positive one. "Weblogs offer the possibilities of presenting a much wider range of points of view about information that would be possible in the traditional media" says James Stovall, a professor at the University of Tennessee on page 27 of his book *Web Journalism*. When reading online, a reader may choose to only catch the most important points or to dig deep into the complexity of the story.

A web page can hold nearly endless information by offering video clips and links to other sources. When looking at Fox News' "Entertainment" page, one sees the top stories with photographs next to them. The older stories are underneath in bullet-point format. On the right are the latest videos relating to entertainment. Below these videos is an advertisement for a survey on President Obama's first year. A box is also included which takes us to Fox's most viewed stories for the day. One page accomplishes several tasks in a streamlined, sleek manner.

Of course, when considering whether online journalism is indeed superior to traditional printing, the ultimate consideration is the money involved. According to David Carlson, nearly 80 cents of every dollar a newspaper company spends on its news goes to either printing, paper, or delivery (Carlson, 52). Only 20 cents remains for the cost of writers, photographers and designers. Online publishing does away with the 80 cents, requiring very little return before a profit is made. A news site relies mostly on advertising

for revenue. Some sights, such as espn.com will offer a limited amount of the sight for free but demand payment for full access of all services. To a reader, the choice is easy.

Video news has become and will continue to be an important factor in news media. John Pavlik, in his article for New Media and Society: Implications for the Future of Journalism, predicts that:

...digital video news utilizing MPEG-4 standards will enable journalists to layer in 'digital objects' containing on-demand (via a remote control or a mouse click) hyperlinks, synthetic content (e.g. a graphic or animation) or additional video.

Internet journalism will continue to take the strengths of previous news outlets and perfect them (56).

A new generation of journalists is coming onto the scene and more are needed. These contemporary reporters will need to be well trained in software usage, being able to design their own stories. They will also need knowledge concerning the power of video and visual aids. These writers have a far greater ability to communicate than has ever been known in the history of man. The last fifteen years have seen a complete revolution of the news media into a powerful and commanding force, free to the public and liberating to its creator.

Computer companies, such as Mac, Microsoft, Sony, Dell, Gateway, are helping making news and the development of news with advancing their technology. They are making it possible to access the news anywhere, on cell phones, I pods, and I pads. These

tools will be able to access the Wi-Fi internet and update automatically, keeping the owner updated on breaking news.

Airlines are providing internet on their flights. This will allow business men to continue working. This is a new development and still has a few glitches, it does not work 100% of the time.

Computer companies like Dell, and HP are making computers more affordable, so that they can be available to everyone. They can be custom made, so that they programs that are desired are available on the new computers. Internet has become standard on all the laptops and computers.

Conclusion

In this paper we have researched, and examined both the pros and cons of the Internet's effect on journalism. We looked into the background of the printed word and the development of the blogging world and gained a better understand of the information world we are in today.

Media has gone through the many changes as technology has evolved. The digital age has proven both a service and a hindrance for the news media. As more and more avenues appear for would-be writers and true journalists alike to publish their versions of the news, the face of journalism is changing.

There have been negative effects on Newspaper since the advent of the Internet. Newspaper ad revenues have fallen, some papers are bankrupt, and others have lost three-

quarters of their value, and the credibility of the news has also suffered. Nearly one in five journalists working in 2001 lost his or her job by 2009.

On the other hand the internet has helped journalism. The new ways to publish news have benefited the industry. News has never been more available to a larger number of people and is easier to access.

The technology world is still changing and will continue to change. We might not be prepared for what the Newspaper companies will come up with next, but we can hope that it will continue our development in a positive way.

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