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Surfing the Wave of Flux:

**A Journey into How Conventional Media are Adapting to Meet the
Demands of the New Online Medium**

by

Mary Zingarelli

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Journalism

**School of Journalism and Communication
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario**

May, 2000

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**"SURFING THE WAVE OF FLUX:
A JOURNEY INTO HOW CONVENTIONAL MEDIA ARE ADAPTING TO
MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE NEW ONLINE MEDIUM"**
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Journalism

Thesis Supervisor

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May 29, 2000

Abstract

Present-day online news sources are in a state of flux because the online medium is growing quickly and existing media outlets have been unable to meet the unique challenges posed by the Web. Hence, what we see today is a large number of Web sites that are successful copies of their newspaper or broadcast form. The problem with this, however, is that online news sources do not offer the online reader anything that is different from their conventional product nor do they utilize the capabilities that are most remarkable about the Internet.

In order to examine the flux that exists, this thesis examines the advantages and disadvantages associated with the Internet as a news source and how to present information to an ever-changing audience. It also explores online advertising in terms of how it differs from conventional media as well as why problems exist with online advertising and how they may be resolved.

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Preface

Present-day online news sources are in a state of flux because the online medium is growing quickly and because existing media outlets have been unable to meet the unique challenges posed by the Web. When the Internet first exploded as a source of news, it was mostly regarded as an arena that encouraged rumour, allowed average citizens to become publishers, and stored a vast amount of information not found in conventional media.

When the media began putting their products online, they did so as a means of affirming a Web identity; in the beginning, it was enough to put that day's content online. Those days are gone because the news industry has discovered that the Internet has the potential to become a new form of media alongside newspaper, radio and television.

However, in order to achieve that potential, conventional media must learn to adapt to the Web, which possesses attributes and characteristics distinct from any other form of media. Issues of usability, trust, user preference, technical features, deterrents, hindrances, accessibility, content features, and monetary value all combine to paint a picture of what the Internet as a news source has the potential to become. These issues also tell us what the Internet, as a news source, has not accomplished to date.

What we see today is a large number of Web sites that are successful copies of their newspaper or broadcast form. We also see a large number of Web sites that are trying to move away from being a simple carbon copy. This is where the flux occurs. Online news sources occupy the space between the realization of what the Internet could be and the knowledge that no one knows how to package its potential.

Edward Greenspon, executive editor at the *Globe and Mail*,ⁱ called my thesis a moving target. If I had only known then how right he would prove to be! But regardless of the constant changes currently happening in the online media business, the goal of this thesis remains to examine the main issues that permeate online news sources and to identify the causes of the flux.

In an attempt to examine Internet news in its current state, I enlisted the aid of 10 sources from within the news industry. Each was selected as a sort of “expert” in terms of his or her experience with the Internet and the creation of news on the Internet. Excerpts from the interviews I conducted are peppered throughout the thesis. They support current academic research, lend credence to what exists on the subject, and illustrate my own observations and opinions. These sources are as follows:

- Edward Greenspon, executive editor at the *Globe and Mail*
- Nancy DeHart, executive producer at the *National Post Online*
- Paul Benedetti, executive producer of C-Health at *Canoe.ca*
- Seymour Diener, new media manager at the *Ottawa Citizen*
- Ken Wolff, executive producer at *CBC News Online*
- Lisa Stuart, director of sales and marketing at the *National Post Online*

- Wendy Sexsmith, chief web producer at Globe Information Services
- Blair Shewchuk, one of the senior writers at *CBC News Online*
- Martin O'Malley, writer at *CBC Online News*
- Wayne MacPhail, freelance e-journalist

The reader will notice that these people have been chosen from various media. The reason is that no one knows which medium is creating the best Web sites. As a result, a thorough examination of the topic could only be achieved if both print and broadcast media were considered.

By examining the Internet as a source of news and specifically by looking at areas that require adjustment, both print and broadcast media can achieve a deeper understanding of what they currently have, why they have it, and what is best suited to the Internet. There is no easy way to answer these questions because, as Greenspon suggested, the question keeps changing. But there can be a start to the examination even though the practice of online journalism is well underway.

Chapter One attempts to explain the Internet. From the beginning of news on the Internet to the disadvantages and advantages that it faces as a news medium, the first hurdle that must be jumped is one of comprehension. Without a clear understanding of how the Internet works, why we want it to work and why it could or could not work, there is no point in maintaining that it might become a successful news medium.

Chapter Two examines news on the Internet. Four Web sites - two from print and two from broadcast - will be explored for elements of design, advertising and content. This chapter is not meant to be the definitive study

of Internet news sources but only attempts to provide a glimpse of what works and what does not. The results of this study will be filtered through the remaining chapters as a point of reference to what currently exists.

Chapter 3, which I originally wanted to call “cosmetic”, looks at appearances. But it is not just a matter of cosmetics; it is a matter of knowing how to present information to an ever-changing audience. Here, issues of credibility, respectability, trust and many other topics related to moulding the Internet as a news source will be examined.

Chapter 4 concerns advertising. To start, it will be necessary to explore the history of advertising and the problems it has faced. Online, the advertising world is different from the conventional media because it is a new way of experiencing advertisements in a new medium that is still largely untrusted. Thus, this chapter will look at why problems exist and how they may be resolved in online media.

Chapter 5 turns to the future. I believe specific issues will emerge from the flux and come to the forefront of online media. These include issues relating to the personalization of news on the Web, the emergence of online classifieds, and the cataloguing of user profiles. This chapter ends with a brief overview of my preferred online news site and why I think it is successful in relation the Canadian Web sites studied in chapter two.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I will give a brief summary of how I see the Internet news source as it exists today and pit that in relation to how my interviewed sources see it.

Ottawa, May 2000

Introduction

Robert Byrne once wrote that "Everything is in a state of flux, even the status quo." When applied to the Internet, this quote brings up an important notion that must be examined before we begin our journey through cyberspace. That is, if the status quo is constantly changing, how will it be possible to paint a picture of current online news sources?

The answer, quite simply, is that it isn't possible. Both the audience and the medium are still experimenting with different forms of presentation and organization that would be best suited to the Internet. Hence, the picture of online news sources being painted within these pages may very well be out-of-date within a few short months because there are many different possibilities that come into play.

First, we must acknowledge that all forms of media - whether it be newspapers, radio, television, magazines or Internet - can be equally successful if they find the right audience. This means more than the car being best for radio, Internet the most accessible at work, and so forth. It must also take into account the needs of the audience. For example, a specialty magazine such as *Equinox* caters to a different audience than *Maxim* or, a person may find more use in checking stock quotes online than in waiting for the evening news or morning paper.

In terms of online news sources, the need to find the right audience has not been fully realized. There are Web sites that cater to particular tastes but for the most part, what you find on one news Web site, you can probably find on another. At present, this seems to be the rule rather than the exception. And, while the exception will be discussed, it is the rule that is most pertinent to this stage of the Internet revolution because that's what is typical of today's online news sources.

Second, the 'right audience' could give rise to new forms in the way that radio gave rise to the soap opera and television to the sitcom. This is already evident today when we think of success stories such as workopolis.com, e-bay, and amazon.com. What makes these three Web sites, and others like them, successful is that they take advantage of the Internet's interactivity. In other media, interactivity is not possible because of the static nature by which information is delivered and because it consists of an authoritative voice telling you what's important.

Also, all the above mentioned Web sites combine information with advertising (and in the case of workopolis and e-bay, the information is the advertising). This is a crucial component to the Internet because it is the first medium in which advertising can interact with potential consumers. Even Web sites that have historically not needed advertising to survive because they operated on a subscription basis - such as pornography, newsletters and high-end reports - are beginning to offer advertising. This trend is born from

the advertising model that alleges Web sites with the highest visibility are attractive because they have the highest potential consumer base.

Still, even though mixing content with advertising may be a model that exists in conventional media, it is just beginning to take root online. Hence, there is no current model that outlines how information and advertising can be successfully meshed on the Internet.

Third and finally, we can examine what is and is not working online today, but we must keep in mind that the situation is evolving rapidly. This is where the bulk of this thesis lies. In order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the new media, it is necessary to look at the most average or common examples to illustrate what is happening on the Web today. This thesis does not attempt to study the success stories because it is an attempt to analysis the average; those are the Web sites that represent the norm.

At this time, painting a picture of the success stories of the Web - those sites that have been able to successfully combine information with advertising - would be an inaccurate account of what the Web is really like. Mostly, the Web (as an information medium) is an accumulation of news sources that mimic their conventional news counterparts. But, what lies inside these average sites is what may shape the future of the Internet news sources.

In all honestly, my greatest hope is that this thesis will be outdated within a few years. If it is, then it will show that a model for news on the Internet has finally been adopted. It will also mean that the average Web site

-those depicted in these pages- are becoming the success stories of which we have only a few today.

Academic Inconsistency: The "Who Knows?" Phenomenon

Introduction

Considering the speed with which the Internet has become part of our lives, we could say nowadays it is more difficult to find a newspaper *without* a Web site than one *with* a Web site. Nancy DeHart, executive producer at the *National Post Online*, said that when the *National Post* was first launched in the Fall of 1998, it was automatically assumed that a Web site would accompany the newspaper's debut (DeHart, interview, 2000). Yet, it is not until recently that the *National Post* has begun to seriously put resources - both money and people - into its online division.ⁱⁱ

DeHart's experience shows that while an online presence is now expected in the news industry, it still has to be developed into a news resource of its own. By examining literature on this topic in conjunction with the personal input of Canadians working in the news profession, we will find that the online news industry has moved through a period of misconception and constant readjustment into a present of continuous change or flux, and that its future remains, in many important respects, an open question.

The speed of bandwidth and dialup activity is rapidly changing. So are the number of people online, the number of Web sites available, the speed at

which information is being sought online, and so forth. The medium will not sit still and, as a result, the news industry is finding itself in the position of reinventing a rolling wheel.

The Online Media Mill

In 1993, under a publication ban imposed by Justice Francis Kovacs in relation to the Bernardo trialⁱⁱⁱ, the Internet emerged as a forum for bootlegged information. One individual in particular, Neal Parsons^{iv} (otherwise known as 'Neal the Trial Ban Breaker') became the daredevil who, although he was not a journalist himself, fought the ban on a new playing field. Parsons explains:

It was originally begun on a lark. Someone else created the alt.fan.karla-homolka newsgroup, and they spent the first two weeks discussing the legal ramifications if anyone said anything. By happenstance, I was having lunch, and my source told me a brief vignette about the trial and I decided to post and see what happened (Friedman, 1997, 167).

With that, the rumor mill began. What started as a 'lark' ultimately became a stepping stone of Internet news in Canada. Matthew Friedman, author of *Fuzzy Logic*, explains:

For all its shortcomings, the alternative coverage of the Homolka trial reflected the emergence of an entirely new and interactive news medium. Parsons circumvented the press ban because he could, or more precisely, because the technology gave him the means to reach a potential audience of millions. Using the dominant Internet technology of the time – by 1994, the Web was only just gaining popularity among Net users – he published what was, in effect, a digital simulacrum of a newspaper. In many respects, the alt.fan.karla-homolka FAQ is indistinguishable from the thin broadsheets published by independent journeyman printers with aprons full of lead type in

the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. (Friedman, 1997, 168)

The Internet, which was once looked upon by the average surfer as a digital underworld of company Web sites, pornography and chat rooms, had put its proverbial foot in the door of an entirely new way of gathering and disseminating newsworthy information.

From that point on, the Internet began its emergence as a source of news for the consumer who was looking for information that conventional media could not provide. The Internet began to be seen by the other media as a hole in cyberspace that could be filled with news.

CBC Newsworld, for one, went online in July 1996. Ken Wolff, executive producer at *CBC News Online*, explains that the decision to put up a Web site was not necessarily a difficult decision to make because:

At the time it was becoming pretty obvious that the Internet was going to become a vehicle for distributing information and that news was a pretty important commodity on the Web, and we felt at the time that *Newsworld* was in the business of doing news. So therefore this was another outlet to do the news (Wolff, interview, 2000).

Wolff's organization realized quite early in the game that the Internet was becoming a significant vehicle for news.

Time magazine and the *San Francisco Examiner*, among many others, jumped on the new medium as well by offering in depth coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial. Friedman writes that:

Time's and the *Examiner's* trial coverage sites were easily the best information sources for those of us with nothing better to do than follow the minutiae (sic) of the trial. Users could read the latest trial transcripts, view photos of evidence and download Simpson-related news stories and features. The sheer quantity and depth of the information was astounding, and far exceeded the amount that could have been published in a daily newspaper or weekly magazine" (Friedman, 1997, 170).

The Internet gave these newspapers the opportunity to expand their coverage. Here, though, they were able to go outside their usual milieu for news and give their consumers more in a different sphere.

Also, *Time* magazine and the *San Francisco Examiner* did something that had not been seen in the newspaper business for some time; they recreated "editions" online.

Ed Greenspon, executive editor at the *Globe and Mail*, sees this as a mechanism to regain some of the newspaper's distinguished past. According to him, the Internet allows for instantaneous news at whatever time of day it breaks. He predicts:

...more people are going to turn to the Web for much more instantaneous news. One thing the Web does for newspapers particularly, is it takes you back to your past when we had editions. Many editions throughout the day ... the 7/24 aspect of it. It allows you to retake groups that have been lost to broadcast and television. We can be giving our readers all the news, all the time, as it's breaking, not necessarily waiting for when we can get the newspaper out. Something happened at noon and we can give it to our readers at noon (Greenspon, interview, 2000).

This possibility became quite clear during the O.J. Simpson trial especially considering that *Time Magazine* and the *San Francisco Examiner* were able to keep up with the trial, which was also telecast live.

The Online/Offline Distinction

On the one hand, we have a newspaper industry driven by content, delivery, and advertising involving journalists, editors, freelancers and wire services. Its mechanisms for delivery are trucks, carriers and sales outlets, limited mostly to a regional sales space in the case of local newspapers. And advertising, which is divided between retail and classified, accounts for up to 60 per cent of revenue (Palmer and Eriksen, 1999, 33-34).

On the other hand, Palmer and Eriksen give this account of the digital newspaper:

The availability of multimedia to support content results in a greater use of text, graphics, photos, audio, and video in the digital newspaper. The digital newspaper is typically available on a specific Web site and provides some or all of the paper version's content and in some cases expands the coverage with extended editorial content. Advertising includes both retail and classified, with the retail often a banner advertisement with a possible link to the advertiser's Web page. Delivery mechanisms vary, but can include access to the Web site and emailing of specific sections or articles. The ability to replicate existing newspaper content, including editorial and classified advertising, has been evident in the earliest incarnations of the digital newspaper. (Palmer and Eriksen, 1999, 34).

The same three basic ingredients – content, advertising, and delivery – characterize both print and online. Still, it has taken many years for Internet

news sources to find a foothold. In fact, it may be many years before Internet news sources are looked upon as a valid or trustworthy form of news alongside newspapers, radio and television. History has taught us that new communication technologies often take some time to secure a place in society. And this model can certainly be applied to the Internet.

History's Lessons Relived Online

In his article, "Which Communications Revolution Is It, Anyway?", Mitchell Stephens points to the fact that the two previous "communication revolutions" – the development of writing and the development of the letter press – have taught five important lessons relevant to today (1998, 9-12).

First of all, Stephens reminds us that it takes a long time to realize the potential of a new communication technology, normally longer than we who are living through the revolution expect it to take (9). For example, "it took more than a century and a half after the invention of the letter press in Europe before the first novels and first print newspaper appeared" (Stephens, 1998, 9-10).^v

Second, Stephens states that new forms of communication often imitate older forms (1998, 10). By this, he means that when a new form of communication is developed, such as the Internet newspaper, it takes on the look and feel of the newspaper version. This has been a historical phenomenon that dates back to the time when printing imitated handwritten manuscripts so that its type was a form of script (Stephens, 1998, 10).^{vi}

Third, Stephens says that new communications are always attacked during their early stages and that the assault often lasts up until the point that the form is itself replaced, at which time it becomes cherished (10). Stephens writes:

New forms of communications are attacked because they are relatively immature: In Plato's time the oral tradition was well developed, while writing was still a baby, its great work still in front of it. And new forms are attacked because their newness itself is disconcerting: They threaten old ways. In writing's case it introduced the possibility, shocking to Socrates and Plato, that wisdom might be dispensed without the benefit of a teacher's instruction (Stephens, 1998, 10)^{vii}.

Fourth, Stephens maintains that the changes a new communication technology introduces are often far-reaching and frightening because they contain the potential to upset our accepted perceptual patterns (Stephens, 1998, 11). It is often difficult to accept new ways of learning or comprehending a new medium. As with all new communications, the Internet brings with it new sets of problems.^{viii}

Fifth, and finally, Stephens states that people are not sure about what communication revolution they are currently experiencing (Stephens, 1998, 11). If there is confusion, which may certainly be the case, it is often worked out through study in hopes of finding a solution or an explanatory framework.

In the end, Stephens points to a number of lessons that are critical in the attempt to understand the current Internet revolution. He writes:

First, we might safely conclude, because the Internet and computers in general are still terribly young by these standards,

we haven't yet seen much of their potential... Second, we might note that the Internet and computers in general are still imitating earlier forms: borrowing, for example, models or "metaphors" from desktops and post offices...Third, we shouldn't be surprised that the Internet and computers in general are being attacked. Indeed we should expect more of it... The fourth lesson, the possibility that these digital technologies will change the way we look at the world, must be considered...[Fifth], people at the time are not always sure what "communication revolution" they are undergoing" (Stephens, 1998, 11).

With that in hand, we can begin examining the Internet as a source of news in terms of what is currently observable: a medium struggling for people's time, plagued by inconsistent measures of use or reliability, and an inability to break conventional media stereotypes.

Inconsistent Access Patterns: A Struggle for Time

A common argument used against the Internet as a source of news is that a large part of the population either does not have access to a computer or only has computer access at work. But a Statistics Canada report revealed that although many households have the opportunity to access the Internet from school, public libraries, cybercafés or the workplace, the most rapidly growing place from which to access the Internet is the home, which is quickly catching up to the workplace (1999, 10).

Paul Dickinson and Jonathan Ellison's Statistics Canada report entitled, "Plugged into the Internet", shows that between 1997 and 1998, the overall use of the Internet had increased by seven per cent. However, the most dramatic increase was in home use, which showed an eight per cent

increase compared to only three per cent in the workplace (Dickinson and Ellison, 1999, 9). This was an increase from 3.5 million households in which a minimum of one person used computer communications in 1997 to 4.3 million Canadian households with the same characteristics in 1998 (Dickinson and Ellison, 1999, 7). They also report:

Many people obtain access to the Internet from home. In fact, people were just as likely to use the Net from home as from the workplace, with home-use showing the largest growth between 1997 and 1998. Furthermore, those who used the Net at home did so frequently: 95% more than once a week (1999, 7).

Still, regardless of the location from which the Internet is accessed, one of the keys to its acceptance as a news source will ultimately depend upon its ability to give readers what they can't get elsewhere. In 1972, American communications scholar Maxwell McCombs established the constancy hypothesis, which maintains that "If one conceives of a mass medium as serving some social or psychological need of each individual in its audience, then the appearance of another medium which serves that need better ... will result in shifts among the audiences" (in Bird, 1997, 62). Consequently, we should expect to see shifts in time allocated away from older news media and towards the Internet.

Exploring Cyberspace: Pros, Cons and Unknowns

There are a number of problems that plague Internet news sources. The reasons seem to stem from one ineluctable fact; no one knows for sure what the future holds. Even Greenspon admits "I believe we just have no

idea.” (Greenspon, interview, 2000). As was already discussed, current online news is an extension of what already exists in print and broadcast. However, these simple extensions are not necessarily best suited to the Internet.

Matthew Friedman describes the creation of electronic newspapers as “re-inventing the wheel” (1997, 173). The bottom line, according to him, is that since online information is textual, it requires the basic skill of literacy (1997, 173).

Unfortunately, Friedman's bottom line is not the only one. In addition to the fact that no one knows what the future holds, no two people have the same opinion of what it should hold or what is most likely to happen. For example, while it is true that reading on paper is currently much easier than reading on a computer screen, we must be prepared to consider that this could change in the future. Indeed, as people become more familiar with reading online and as children become conditioned to do so, the divide between print and computer screen may become hazy.

Likewise, screen resolution will probably improve thereby making it easier to read online. Most of us have already seen this in our lifetime; the Commodore 64 of 15 years ago was dark with contrasting bright text while the 16-bit and 24-bit screens of today are much more comfortable to the eye. Also, we have the tools and knowledge to make long periods of screen reading more comfortable such as ‘anti-glare screens’, or the knowledge that sitting higher than a computer monitor keeps the eyes positioned downward,

which is a natural and relaxed state for the eyes. Hence, what today may look like an intractable truth -- that paper is superior to computer screens -- may turn out to have been nothing more than a cultural preference predicated upon habit and the then prevalent state of technology.

Still, even more evidence against Internet news sources seems to accumulate. While David Galloway, president and chief executive officer of Torstar Corporation agrees that the feel of a newspaper compared to that of a computer screen is one reason why people will not forsake newspapers for the Internet, he also maintains that online information will never become a substitute for reading the newspaper and that newspapers, in general, perform different tasks than Internet news sources (1998, 116-117). According to Galloway, the division between newspapers and Internet can be stated in three particular sets.

First, Galloway writes that people "look for immediacy. They want to know at 10:45 p.m. who won the hockey game." He says, "We can provide that information on the Internet, which means we are back in the business of "breaking news." We can give readers the score at 10:45 and a commentary on the game the next morning in the newspaper" (1998, 116). This "quick fix" of news complements newspapers by providing *some* information before *all* of the information becomes available in the newspaper.

Second, "there are those who want to study a subject in depth. They want access to newspaper archives and are willing to pay for it through the

Internet" (Galloway, 1998, 116). According to Galloway then, the Internet has the distinct advantage of being a reference source as well as an immediate information source. This is an advantage that cannot be found in print or broadcast without physically having to go to the library or source. Internet searching, on the contrary, can be accomplished quickly and without leaving home and people will, explains Galloway, see the advantage in this.

Third, writes Galloway, "there are some people who get all their information on-line. Using services like Pointcast and Timecast, they are presented with their own customized newspaper each time they log on" (1998, 116). It is the specific news people want when they want it. The advantage here, contends Galloway, is that "these people weren't regular newspaper readers. They are new customers" (1998, 116).

Nevertheless, Galloway strongly believes that what works today – the newspaper – will continue to work tomorrow. Galloway wonders if anyone would spend a Sunday morning curled up in a chair with a cup of coffee and a computer screen. He responds to his own question with an ardent "I don't think so. A newspaper in its present form works. It's already wonderfully interactive. You can pick it up and put it down whenever you want" (Galloway, 1998, 117). Galloway sees the two media as distinct in both the way they are consumed by readers and in the way they are accepted in terms of convenience and adherence to conventional patterns of news consumption.^{ix}

Galloway also mentions that Internet news consumption is not a threat to the newspaper industry because "The reality is that people use the Internet during the day for business information and in the evening for personal interest, and that hour spent in the evening cuts into television viewing, not newspaper reading. Very few people are on-line over breakfast" (1998, 117). This, however, may be overestimating the role newspapers play in the lives of consumers. As we saw above, the trend towards home use of the Internet is increasing and this may soon render Galloway's argument obsolete.

One possibility that Galloway overlooks lies in the possibility that consumers may not want to read the same news in different media. Once a reader gathers information, he will seek out additional information rather than read the same information over and over. Another is that display technology will so improve that it might actually become preferable to read the Internet over breakfast than to dirty one's hands with newsprint.

Carleton University professor Roger Bird, author of *The End of News*, maintains:

The forces changing the format, character and availability of information are also undermining the importance of news. News used to be the only game in town. The game was played by rich and poor, voters and non-voters, all races, educated and uneducated, thieves, priests, stockbrokers, prison guards and cabinet ministers. Today's information environment makes it possible for the global villager to pre-filter information to suit his or her established tastes... News is shrinking relatively in this ocean of information (Bird, 1997, 7).

What Bird is suggesting is that, with the growing number of news media, readers are likely to choose between what they want to read and what they do not. Hence, information becomes selective based on personal preference.

This holds true for every form of media. Most people have a preference for one of two sections/segments of a newspaper or broadcast. For example, people interested in sports will read the sports pages or watch any number of specific sports-related broadcasts. Those who are not interested in sports will likely ignore or throw out the sports section of the daily newspaper or change channels when the sports-segment of a newscast comes on.

CBC News Online writer Martin O'Malley is familiar with this phenomenon and shares this anecdote:

Sometimes I see people outside the store. They buy the *Saturday Star* and they're just sitting outside by the garbage pail taking all these sections out and throwing them away and then they end up with a newspaper about the size of a Monday to Friday *Star*. But, they just paid \$1.50 for it! People are going to get tired of that. All that dead-tree journalism I call it. That's what it is: You look at one edition of the *Saturday Star* and there's enough paper there to light 100 fireplaces" (O'Malley, interview, 2000).

If a consumer does not want a particular piece of news on the Internet, he doesn't have to follow the link. The online difference is that unwanted information can be disregarded altogether while in other media, it has to be actively ignored. Hence, the possibility still exists in newspapers and broadcast that a reader may be exposed to an interesting headline and

consume a sports story even though he is not actively seeking it out. News, in these cases, is received regardless of whether it is dynamically solicited or not.

Following the same logic, Jay Small, editor of the *Indianapolis Star-News Online* believes that print will continue to dominate the other media because it is easier to read, carry and dispose of; it is cheap; and it is more accessible (in Harper, 1998, 194). All these elements mixed together create a medium that satisfies the many rather than the few. In the end, it becomes easier for the consumer to find news in a newspaper than in any other medium.

As a result, the biggest selling point for the newspaper is that it travels. It's left on subways and buses only to be picked up by other passengers. It can be found in most waiting rooms and office lunchrooms. And it can be bought from numerous sources ranging from home delivery, to curbside stands, to corner convenient stores.

Nonetheless, Small does recognize that the Internet offers value and quality unavailable in print but maintains that once it does take hold, "Good reporters will still have a role. Good editors will still have a role. Good technologies will be a dime a dozen" (Harper, 1998, 195). In essence, Small hits on one of the most fundamental fears of Internet news, which is its reliability.

Is it possible to have a news source that isn't trusted and, if so, can it prevail as a reputable source of information?

The answer is no. While it is possible that the phenomenon of news on the Internet will spark the attention of readers, a news source without credibility is doomed to failure. Truth and trust are fundamental issues because:

If people do not trust or believe what they see or hear in the traditional media or from online media sources, they are less likely to pay attention to it. Lack of trust in information obtained from the Web could keep it from becoming a major source of news in the immediate future (Johnson and Kay, 1998, 325).

Trust applies not only to the information consumers read but also to the writers and the advertisers who are connected to a publication, as will be seen in the following chapters.

Clearly, online news sources have both good and bad qualities. Seymour Diener, the new media manager for the *Ottawa Citizen*, is in a position to see both. He says:

There's some good and bad things. I think we're seeing a lot of compromises through some of the online products in terms of 'zines and people like Drudge^x... everyone can publish now so it means that there are a lot of people publishing without the proper standards and proper checks and balances. That's a bad thing. There's also some of the purity that exists in good newspapers; the church and state, advertising and editorial living in different worlds, no special treatment for sponsors. Some of that I've seen eroded here and there in the online. Some of that is because it's a new game, a new medium. Some of that because it's not always core news people, journalists, who are calling the shots. On the other hand, in terms of extending the reach to community you can really open up community publishing (Diener, interview, 2000).

Greenspon also sees the faint glimpse of goodness that exists in the Internet and says: "It's in its infancy, it hasn't exploited any of its capabilities yet. But, I think it combines all of those existing media and more. Plus its own unique properties and that makes it very exciting" (Greenspon, interview, 2000). The future, says Greenspon, is there on the computer screen and the Internet's advantages as a news source are well worth the effort of exploring.

Blurring the Lines Between Online/Offline Media

Almost every new medium has been met with controversy. Print, the first mass medium, is often said to have a doubtful future because other media might replace it, but this gloomy prediction has never come to pass (Kesterton and Bird, 1996, 30). The simplest way to explain radio's survival following the introduction of television is by reference to the niche principle, which argues that when a new medium is introduced, the old adapts and finds a "niche" market; in the case of radio, it went from a network phenomenon to a local phenomenon and found its niche in music, talk, news, etc. (Levinson, 1997, 102). Finally, television is constantly criticized for its violence, especially in regards to children, but the plug has never been pulled.

Furthermore, despite all this brouhaha, news and information have prospered in all the media. Each has established its own "niche" and continues to flourish within a news-competitive sphere. The print medium combines in-depth coverage of daily news with entertainment, sports, weather and a slew of other interests to appeal to a wide range of tastes. Some radio

stations provide news snippets between music and talk shows while others provide all day news-as-it-happens. Television, which provides the same range as print in smaller doses, also provides viewers with images for a visual representation of current events.

In essence, the Internet is a perfect fit with news because it has the capability to deliver information with speed, thereby increasing its usefulness and timeliness (Reeves, 1998, 36). The difficulty to overcome lies not with whether the Internet can be a successful medium for news but with the fact that the Internet's difference from existing media raises questions of style and trust.

Herb Greenberg, columnist for *TheStreet.com*, said that "Someone had to make the leap, because this has been the first phase ... People have to get over this thought that it's an 'Internet thing'" (Napoli, 1999, 2). Greenberg also added that he believed it would not be long until the Web is considered just another medium that conveys news (Napoli, 1999, 2).

Friedman agrees with Greenberg and adds that the Internet is really just a computerized extension of what already exists. He writes, "every step in the production of modern newspapers up to distribution is almost completely computerized. News is just another information product that can be packaged and distributed on-line relatively easily" (Friedman, 1997, 169). As a result, Friedman argues that there is really nothing new online.

But what will spike people's attention and get them online, according to Friedman, is that "The Internet loves a good story" (Friedman, 1997, 169). Take the Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton scandal^{xi}, exposed online by Matt Drudge. That particular incident reinforced the notion that the Internet is a place to get news you couldn't get elsewhere either because it's too "risky" for conventional media or it's not considered to be "newsworthy" enough. Reporting such stories is not only a matter of the conventional media's ability to get the news "out there" but also of the desirability of so doing. The audience's trust in what it reads is clearly at stake.

In this regard, Bird explains:

Some people have argued that the new information environment provokes and encourages leaks and provides the means for the ordinary citizen to accumulate and use knowledge as never before. [Consequently,] Information is a two-way street, unlike the one-way newspaper street (Bird, 1997, 34).

Online news creates the opportunity for the average news consumer to become an active participant in the news he seeks out

On the other hand, the advantage that reputable news sources such as *CBC Online* and *National Post Online* have lies in their brand name. The need for people to distinguish what is true from what is not is reduced because they have more faith in the media corporations they are familiar with. More importantly, individuals don't have to constantly second-guess the information they're receiving because they have built up their level of trust in the media they are most comfortable with.^{xii} Indeed, media corporations

frequently expend great effort and energy in gaining the trust of readers by adopting professional attitudes, checking facts, eschewing rumour, etc.

Yet, is brand name recognition enough to survive as a news medium? Some people, such as *ABC News* vice-president David Burke, argue that network news is dead because the networks “offer news by appointment. The consumer has to meet us at a specific time, say 7 p.m. The new technologies will provide news on demand – what you want to know when you want it.” (Reeves, 1998, 30). Although familiar news sources may be comfortable for readers and viewers, they may be considered stagnant by those same readers and viewers who are seeking different, or faster, or more in-depth news coverage.

Friedman continues Burke's line of reasoning:

Television has never been more than barely adequate as an information medium. The realities of corporate control, sponsorship and scheduling have generally meant that news coverage can never transcend the superficialities of the fifteen-second soundbyte. It doesn't traffic in narratives, but in headlines, with 'pictures at eleven.' In information terms, it is an extremely low-definition medium, forcing viewers to interpolate their own experiences to fill the gaps in the information. More significantly, the dominant model of television interaction, in which a consumer reacts to pre-processed information, implies that the interaction is emotional rather than intellectual; it is reactive and cool rather than cognitive and hot (1997, 181).

According to Friedman, traditional media provide no interaction between news source and reader, which results in a one-sided flow of news, just as Bird said earlier. The individual who reads the newspaper, watches

television or listens to the radio has no control over the flow of information. Unlike Internet news, a two-way flow of information does not exist within conventional media.

Of the Internet as a news source, Friedman writes:

On one hand, it is a text-based, high-definition, data-rich medium in which the participant consumes without requiring any interpolation of additional information. Indeed, it is exactly this hot-ness that is being developed and promoted by corporate content providers and on-line publishers. On the other hand, it's cool because, as in television – a data-poor medium – the participant is involved in the information process; as much a producer as a consumer of information, filling in the blanks as if watching television, or actively seeking the background of, or context for, a newsbyte (1997, 182).

The Internet provides consumers with an opportunity to choose if they want to be part of the story or just consumers. Friedman utilizes McLuhan's theory of hot and cold to explain why the Internet is, at its most fundamental level, better suited to the news consumer than television. He says that the Internet is both hot and cold:

It is just this adaptability that makes the Internet the ideal medium for news. With its unique combination of hot text and cool interaction (not to mention community and social space) the Internet delivers an information consumption experience that is at the same time more interactive and of a higher information resolution than traditional television. The medium conforms to the user's information needs, providing a three-dimensional stage for the news, rather than a flat video proscenium (Friedman, 1997, 182).

Hence, adaptability becomes the key. It combines the hot, cognitive “best” of print with the cool techniques of television. More and more, we see

news sites that provide a video stream and/or text for consumers, depending on what they want at the time they log on. In a sense, this can be compared to reading a newspaper and watching television at the same time.

The matter of who will use what medium for how long is obviously related to individual motivation. In a 1996 survey entitled, "Profile of the American News Consumer", the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDA) found that, "The habit of picking up the daily newspaper religiously is found only among those over 50... Network television news is joining newspapers as a medium for older citizens ... TV network news may be in danger of becoming an anachronism of the next century" (Harper, 1998, 22). But this may not be just a matter of what medium is preferred. The survey also showed that of those who think it's important to keep up with what's in the news, seven out of ten were mostly over 50, four out of ten were under 30 and of those four, only three followed the news every day (Harper, 1998, 22).

What the Internet has to offer is a new medium that fits well with the habits of a younger, computer-friendly population. It contains the possibility of giving something new to those who seek it.

W. Russell Neuman says that the decline of family life, the alienating workplace, the decline of local community, the weakening of religious and ethnic ties, and the decline of participation in voluntary associations have resulted from the "rapid urbanization and industrialization of Europe and the

United States" (25). According to Neuman, "just as these social forces reach a stage of crisis, the evolving mass media technologies, including radio and television, become available to provide a new nationally centered identity for the isolated and rootless individual who seeks a sense of belonging" (Neuman, 1991, 25). The Internet then is but the newest medium to combat the social conditions we now face. If readership levels are declining among the younger population, then even the faintest ember of interest in the Internet as a news source is a good place to start.

Summary

What has been established in this chapter is that there is still much to be authenticated in terms of understanding the Internet as a news source. Every indication exists that this will happen but when and how remain ambiguous. The change may lie in consumer acceptance of the Internet; it could rest in readers' acceptance of new sources in general or it could simply be explained in the consumers' need to get a computer and be connected.

What is clear however – as will be examined in the following chapters – is that what already exists online, produced by existing media, is insufficient in the way news is delivered. Hence, issues of how Web sites should organize news and how advertising will play a role in producing news, must be addressed.

To start, we will examine four specific Internet news sources that also have a print or broadcast counterpart. In doing this, it will become clear what

specific elements of online news Web sites need to be adjusted in order to adapt to the new medium.

Gathering Sticks: Data Analysis of Four Canadian News Sources

Introduction

This survey has been adapted from Xigen Li's "Web Page Design and Graphical Use of Three U.S. Newspapers"^{xiii}, published in the Summer 1998 issue of *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. The main difference is that this study will pay special attention to Canadian news Web sites. In particular, it will examine two Web sites born from the broadcast media and two Web sites born from print. The reason is to show how each can be successful in its own right as well as the elements of each that lend themselves to good online news. The Web sites are:

- ***Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC):***
<http://www.cbcnews.cbc.ca>
- ***GlobalTV, Ottawa:***
<http://ottawa.globaltv.com>
- ***Globe and Mail:***
<http://www.globeandmail.com>
- ***National Post:***
<http://www.nationalpost.com>

Comparing the Web sites of two different types of media to determine what makes a successful news site may seem like comparing apples and oranges in order to get a pear. Nevertheless, that is exactly what online newspapers are; they are the pears of news media. It would be a mistake to claim that the

Internet resembles broadcast more than print or *vice versa* as that is precisely the kind of thinking that prevents its growth as a distinct medium. Indeed, the fact that neither print nor broadcast news sources possess a consistent format, even in their online incarnations, again illustrates the flux characteristic of the online news industry. For the purposes of this survey, the basics of both media (print and broadcast) should be examined for their highest qualities and studied based on which of those elements best serves the new medium.

Chapter one demonstrated that the Internet marks a period of transition in news because it is a new medium without any clear, defining features. With that in mind, broadcast-based Web sites will be compared to print-based Web sites in order to understand how each operates. Since there is no consensus on whether the Internet is more like print or broadcast, it would be useful to examine the best of both online media. Only then can we begin to understand how the Internet news source is used, or has the potential to be used, by readers, journalists and the news industry.

Li aptly concludes that although both newspaper publishers and consumers welcome the Internet and are rapidly assimilating it into their news experience, very little is known about the Internet “newspaper” (1998, 1). The Internet newspaper has for the most part emerged slowly as a distinct medium. While broadcast and print industries recognize the need to produce a Web version of their station or newspaper, few understand that it is not

enough simply to duplicate what is seen on TV, read in the newspaper or heard on radio.^{xiv} Indeed, why even bother to develop a different medium if it's going to be identical to what you already have?

In his article "The Evolution of the Newspaper of the Future", Chris Lapham points out that "The real beauty of the new technology is its ability to enable newspapers to not only enhance their researching and reporting capabilities, but also to deliver a better, more audience-aware product in an immediate and inexpensive way" (1995, 5). The key to this survey then is to determine what ways are currently being implemented. From there, we can attempt to point the way to a "better, more audience-aware product".

We should bear in mind, however, that this survey is by no means intended to serve as the definitive analysis of Web site content. With the Internet still in its ever-changing form, such a study would have only very short-term relevance at this time. This study does, however, offer a glimpse into what broadcast-based and newspaper-based Web sites are doing *today*. It is also meant to serve as a reference for the following sections, which will look more specifically at points of interest within news Web sites and why or how these require restructuring.

Let it not be forgotten that restructuring is necessary. The Internet news medium as it exists today is nothing more than a shadow of its industry mate. Media critic Jon Katz notes:

So far, at least, online papers don't work commercially or conceptually. With few exceptions, they seem to be just what

they are, expensive hedges against on rushing technology with little rationale of their own. They take away what's best about reading a paper and don't offer what's best about being online...The object is not to replace, or put into a different format, but to gain a toehold in cyberspace and even absorb some of its values. (Lapham, 1995, 5)

What this survey hopes to show, then, is the inconstancy relating to what makes a good Internet news site. Everyone has different ideas and ways of doing things but it's important to study these differences in order to adapt the similarities. It's time to put all the pears into one bushel.

Method

This content analysis was conducted by examining the Web sites of four major online news sources in Canada. In particular, three "pages" within each Web site were analysed for content. These were the front page (or home page), the top news story and the second top news story. Front page refers to the first page that would appear on a browser when the URL is entered. The top news story refers to the first news link that appears and the second top news story refers to the article immediately following the top story.

In order to create a level field of examination, this study probed the center-most part of the Web site. All four sites contained information on the sides of their pages, very akin to margins. However, these side links often related to non-news information such as search engines, job sites, surveys and feature articles. The purpose of this study was specifically to analyse

current news which in every case was located within the middle section of the Web site.

In the case of the *GlobalTV* Web site, only stories relating to current news topics that appeared center-page were counted. This is because Global, unlike the other three sites, placed additional non-news related links along with the news links. These included "Hotlinks", "Water Cooler Discussions", "Buylines" and "Global's Got It".

All four Web sites suggested strongly the traditional layout practices of daily newspapers in that the page remained sufficiently similar to itself from day to day for a physical personality of the news source was formed (Li, 1998, 357). Throughout the duration of this study, the Web sites examined remained visually as they had one-week prior to and one week after the study's completion.

The analysis covered six days from January 24 to January 29, 2000. All data from these Web sites were accumulated between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. The reasoning is that this would be the time of day when most updated news would be posted. All Web sites were again examined in the late evening for instances of change, mainly relating to the appearance of new articles.

The front page was examined for the number of links leading to news articles, links related to additional information about particular news articles, advertising placement, graphics related specifically to news articles and the

number of articles refreshed at end of day. The top two news stories were examined for links related to additional information about that particular article, advertising placement, graphics related specifically to that news article, word count of the article and number of quotations used within the article.

The following terms were defined to provide a stringent framework for data accumulation:

- **Front page (Home page):** The first page downloaded onto a reader's browser when the URL is called up. In all cases, the front page, which most resembled the front of a newspaper was also the home page. Home page is defined by *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* as the "computer screen that serves as an introduction to a network site, from which a number of options may be selected" (Barber, 1998, 676).
- **Links:** An underlined and/or highlighted phrase that transports the reader to a page other than the front page. In some cases, a new browser was opened when a link was clicked. For the purposes of this study, only links relating to news articles and sites related to the top two news articles were counted.
- **Advertising:** Any link on a Web page that sells a product or service and clicking on which would lead a reader to another Web site or to information pertaining to a product or service for sale. In all cases, advertising was either in the form of a banner or box that was clearly

labeled with the seller's company name. Ad placement was determined based on positioning at the top of the Web site, sides and bottom. There were no ads within the mid-section of the Web sites.

- **Graphics:** Any image belonging specifically to a news article, which was set apart from the text on the page. This included photos, graphs and boxes that were visible within the centre of the page.
- **Word Count:** All articles examined were copied from the Web page, pasted into Word and tallied with the Word Count function. Words were counted in the article text only and did not include subheadings on graphics or related links.
- **Quotations:** This included all attribution within the articles that were surrounded by quotation marks. Only direct quotations were used because these tend to be easily recognized without reading the content of the news article.
- **Refresh:** The number of new news-related articles that appeared on the Web site at the end of the day, which were not online at the beginning of the day.

All data were tabulated within a Word-base table. Once the survey days were complete and all information was counted, the data were entered into DeltaGraph 4.0, obtained through SPSS Inc. on their Web site and converted into graph- or pie- charts. The results of this survey, as well as the pertinent graphs and pies, follow.

Results

The data analysis revealed that each site had distinct differences in the way news was presented online. The *CBC* Website posted all links relating to Canada, World, Business, CP World, Sci-Tech (Science and Technology), Entertainment and Sports on the front page. This immediately presented an abundance of news-related links and laid out the topics much as could be found in a book-style table of contents.

GlobalTV – Ottawa's Web site took a much simpler approach by offering one link under "Top Story" and four links under "Latest Headlines". A "more stories" link was available immediately following the latest headlines. Other than that, links in the mid-section of the Web site related to "Hotlinks", "Water Cooler Discussions", "Buylines" and "Global's Got It" with contents such as, "Quiz: Master of Your Domain", "Need Some Horoscope Help?" and television show times. Only "Top Story" and "Latest Headlines" were considered for this survey.

By contrast, the *Globe and Mail* Web site was much more streamlined than either broadcast-based site. It contained five news stories, one each under the headings "National", "Report on Business", "International", "Sports" and "Globe Review". Further to this, each section had a link to "More Stories". At the top of the mid-news section, there was a graphic of about one square inch placed beside a news blurb. This blurb was not counted as a news story because it was not a full article of news. No other news-related

graphics appeared on the front page. Also unlike the broadcast-based sites, this Web site contained introductory segments of information under each heading that gave a good representation of what the article was about.

Finally, the *National Post* Web site contained an average of five to six stories a day, some of which had graphics and some of which did not and all of which had introductory segments. Unlike the other three Web sites, this site contained links to additional *National Post* coverage within the introduction to each article on the front page. Some stories had headings such as “Top Story” or “Sports”, and some did not

Turning the focus now towards the specific conclusions drawn from this study, we can start to look at each Web site in contrast to the others.

Articles, Links and Length

CBC ranked highest for amount of front page articles with an average of 51.8 stories over a total of six days. This was followed by the *National Post* average at 6.2, the *Globe and Mail* at 5.3 and *GlobalTV* at 5.0.

Obviously, there were many more story choices available on the front page of the *CBC* Web site, but there was little indication in terms of what information was contained within the links. Both newspaper-based sites, by contrast, offered readers a preview from which they could choose to read further or not. On the other hand, while the *CBC* site lays all its information out immediately, readers of the other sites would have to dig deeper for more articles and information.

Here then is the first example of conflicting variables. On the one hand, we have a Web site with too many links that clutter the page and don't offer the reader any indication of what the story is about, other than the title. Yet, on the other hand, the *CBC* site offers readers all the choices up front; there is no need to "dig"^{xv} for a story.

By contrast, what the *Post* offered more than any of the other sites was the opportunity for readers to choose links that would provide them with additional information, stories they missed, or related Web sites.

The *National Post* contained an average of 4.4 links within its top two stories over the six day period; 52 links in total, 28 in the top story and 24 in the second top story. This was more than double that of the *CBC*, which came in at 2.0 (24 in total, 9 in the top story and 15 in the second top story) and was also above *GlobalTV* at 1.5 (18 in total, 6 in the top story and 12 in the second top story). The *Globe and Mail* offered no links at all. Some news experts will argue that links take readers away from their Web site. Others will say that links are the nature of the Net and should therefore not be ignored. Whatever the case may be, it is still a raging debate and one that cannot be abandoned.

Some Web designers maintain that, "The Web without links would not be interactive, so now it is time to put the "hyper" into hypertext" (Stanek, 4). Others, however, claim that too many links clutter a page, lose surfers and misdirect readers to information they didn't want. Chapter three will look at issues surrounding links from both the reader and journalist perspective.

Intriguingly, however, although the *CBC* site had the most news links on the front page, when those links were followed, they lead to articles that were far shorter than those of either the *Globe* or the *Post*. Combined, *CBC* and *GlobalTV* had a text average of 294.1 words within their top two news stories. In contrast, the *Globe* and *Post* had an average of 870.45.

Presumably, this difference in word count is due to the fact that, by nature, broadcast stories are shorter than print stories. Additionally, broadcast stories must be rewritten for the Web, unlike newspaper stories that can be put online verbatim, because what is heard on air is not necessarily easy for people to read. In chapter three, Ken Wolff, executive producer for *CBC News Online* relates his experience with broadcast scripts that are put online.

Quotations

Within the top two news stories on the four Web sites, there proved to be a drastic difference in the number of quotations used. The broadcast-based sites had an average of 2.5 quotations per story while the print-based sites had an average of 4.9, almost twice as many as the later. Again, this may show the fundamental difference between the media. Broadcast stories tend to be more conversational and therefore require less attribution,

especially if sound or video bites are used. Print, being much longer and without the aid of sound or video, must rely on quoted attribution to validate stories. Still, this points to an interesting concept of trust and information acceptance by readers that should not be ignored if online news is to be believed.

John Newhagen and Mark Levy, authors of "The Future of Journalism in a Distributed Communication Architecture" write:

Collecting information and certifying its factual accuracy is central to journalism. Thinking back to the role of news as the presentation of survival-specific information, the demand for factual accuracy is obvious. The importance journalism places on verification can be seen in the practice of double checking sources or getting more than one source for a "story". Verification gives journalistic communication credibility and believability, characteristics which are critical if information is to be useful in survival-dependent decision making (Newhagen and Levy, 1998, 17).

There are, then, two issues to consider here; one from the perspective of the journalist who wants to lend credibility to his story and one from the perspective of the reader who looks for source attribution to validate the information. Chapter three will look more closely at this issue from both standpoints in order to determine why inconsistency relating to direct attribution exists between print and broadcast Web sites and how that affects the online news "story".

Refresh

In terms of refresh, *CBC* again led the way with an average of 44.2 new stories followed by *GlobalTV* at 4.7. Both newspaper-based sites remained the same at the end of the day. This indicates that if new articles or breaking stories are what readers are after, it is likely that they will turn to a broadcast-based Web site. In many cases, the information available on the *Globe* and *Post* sites would be stale news.

Of course, we cannot overlook the fact that refresh rates may be tied to resources available to update Web sites and write articles. Yet, this is another example of the division that exists online. As we will see in the following chapters, this is not so much an issue of not wanting to be in the business of breaking news but rather an issue of not having the resources or the product to keep up with Web sites that refresh often.

Graphics

Another element that cannot be ignored is graphics. All-text Web sites are boring and do not provide the visual aids to carry the eye down the page. It's hard enough to read on a computer screen; it's even harder without this eye-scrolling^{xvi} device. Yet, the use of graphics remained surprisingly low in all four Web sites. *CBC* used an average of only 1.7 graphics with the front page and top two stories over a period of six days. *GlobalTV* used only 1

within the same range and the *National Post* was slightly lower at .9. As with links, the *Globe and Mail* used no graphics at all.

Advertising

Finally, turning the focus towards advertising, the data analysis indicated that the *Globe and Mail* was the Web site with the most advertising totaling 137 ads on three pages within six days. Side-placement advertising appeared to be the most popular overall making up a total of 157 ads placed within the four Websites during the course and scope of the study.

CBC, being the exception, did not use side-placed ads.

Perhaps not surprisingly, advertising on the top of the screen was the second most popular with bottom advertising being the least favourite; on the *CBC* and *Post* Web sites, bottom advertising was not used. While side and top level advertising appears to be predominant, little attention is given to

bottom level ads, which may in fact be the key to catching viewers' attention. Just as readers are not likely to turn a page until they have read it to the end or finished the article (assuming they are not just browsing), they are also not likely to leave a Web page unless they have finished what they have come to see. In chapter four, Wendy Sexsmith, chief Web producer at Globe Information Services examines the issue of advertising placement in terms of how it should be presented to increase the hit-rate for advertisers.

The issue of advertising is important to this study because "Online publishing, until two or three years ago driven mostly by subscriber and access fees, is regarded by many as moving toward an advertising model" (Meyer, 1998, 31). But what that advertising model is, no one knows for sure. Within the continuous change of trying to create online news sources, news industries are also trying to make money. Still, with issues such as brand name, trademark infringement, and privacy also in a state of flux, it is difficult for the news industry to develop a successful model for advertising, as we will see in chapter four.

Discussion

It is important to note that if this survey were to be re-conducted in five or ten years, the results would most certainly differ. With that caveat in mind, the preceding results bring up some intriguing notions of what Internet newspapers should do while also providing an effective contrast between media and what they are currently accomplishing. Hence, the next few sections will delve into these notions and attempt to assimilate these results with what is currently being undertaken online.

Issues of primary concern, as pointed out in this survey, fundamentally amount to Web site composition and advertising. Under these two broad umbrellas, all the issues above will be addressed. But to begin, it is essential to start with the initiator: the journalist himself.

Trust and Technology: A Journalist and Reader Perspective

Trust within the Electronic Pages

Introduction

One of the most heated arguments involving online journalism concerns the issue of trust: How do readers know they are reading the truth? How can journalists compete with attention grabbing online writers such as Matt Drudge? Can Matt Drudge even be considered a journalist? Are “authentic” journalists even needed in a faceless, and sometimes nameless, medium?

Questions such as these add to the level of flux within online news sources in that news organizations need to revisit issues that might seem to have long been resolved in the newsroom. For instance, journalists must become increasingly aware of how they write, why they want to write and how source attribution contributes to the authenticity of their articles. Consequently, it becomes necessary to examine the emerging expectations of both journalists and readers as online news sources try to find their niche in the new news environment.

The Cybernetic Lou Grant

The Internet, for all its “freedom” to create publishers from home and turn the average citizen into a journalist, is only as reliable as the name attached to the story. Truth be told,

Digital cameras, tape recorders and the Internet let non-professionals publish and reach audiences previously available only to corporate or governmental entities that controlled the necessary production tools and distribution channels" (Millison, 1999a, 2).

Anyone with any know-how can create and publish a Web site that looks as though it has been professionally created. Nevertheless, in order for online journalism to work as a reputable news source, it must have reputable journalists working for it. Anyone can publish a Web page but not everyone has the qualifications to be a journalist.

CBC News Online writer Martin O'Malley, who for a number of years worked at *the Globe and Mail*, sees journalism, whether it be for television, radio, print or the Net, as requiring good writing skills. Good skills, he says, come from skilled writers: "I find one of the weaknesses of people who started right away with online, writing often suffers. They often don't rewrite as much and they might rely too much on spell check or grammar check" (O'Malley, interview, 2000).

Co-worker Blair Shewchuk agrees: "I'm not sure you can teach anyone to write. I think you can teach people about writing... some people don't hear the music in the language... in language there is music and that includes any sentence you want to string together" (Shewchuk, interview, 2000).

According to both journalists, writers are not simply created to fit a medium. They must be trained professionals who have an understanding of how to write which is appropriate to the medium for which they are writing.

Furthermore, journalists take their jobs seriously. In some cases, they have graduated from schools like Carleton University in Ottawa, Sing Tao School of Journalism in British Columbia, or Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto. These journalists spent the time and money to learn the skills necessary for good journalism. But not all journalists have a diploma to validate their career. Some spent years working their way through newsrooms and chasing stories that they could be proud of.

Shewchuk goes on to say that good writing is an acquired skill. He believes:

You should learn how to write before you try to master something else; writing for the Web or writing for television or writing for radio. Good writing is good writing. I honestly believe you should write clearly, one thought per sentence. If you do that, you could write for the *World at Six*, or the *National*, or the *Globe and Mail*, or *CBC News Online* tomorrow (Shewchuk, interview, 2000).

Not everyone, according to Shewchuk, has the basic skills required to be a writer. Yet he goes on to say that a good writer has the potential to be a good journalist. Is this really possible? It seems unlikely that the *World at Six*, or the *National*, or the *Globe and Mail*, or even the *CBC News Online* would hire a journalist today without any experience or training. This is what makes online publishing unique.

Online journalism has, in some ways, cast a shadow over the need for professional journalists. Anyone can assemble a Web page, put information on a site, and disseminate it. But does this mean we no longer need

professional journalists? This question, argues journalist Doug Millison, suggests that there is a fundamental misunderstanding in regards to what journalism is, how journalists work and, most importantly, why we still need real journalists in an online world (1999b, 1).

Journalists are not a dying breed nor are they likely to become so. That said, an online journalist could learn the craft at any stage of his career. O'Malley, for one, says he's called the "cybernetic Lou Grant" (O'Malley, interview, 2000) because he comes from a newsroom background but has turned to online journalism late in his career.

Still, we must keep in mind that no matter how advanced online publications become, journalism – real, reliable journalism – is a learned trade. It cannot be gathered by simply putting up a Web site and calling it news. It takes practice and perseverance.

The key word here is "learned" trade. While Shewchuk did say that being a good writer is the primary skill of a journalist, he does recognize that reporting must be learned as well. In Shewchuk's view, "You learn journalism out in the field reporting. You get to do more reporting, actually sleuthing, investigative work, walking around with your tape recorder if you're working for a newspaper. That's how I think you learn the craft" (Shewchuk, interview, 2000).

So then, not only is it a learned "trade", it is also a learned "craft". Journalism becomes more than writing, it also concerns organization, gathering and packaging. In essence, journalism is a lifestyle choice.

A study conducted by the *Columbia Journalism Review (CJR)* set out to find if journalists really do love their career choice. In the summer of 1999, 91 journalists were polled as to whether or not they would want their child to be a journalist and, if so, what kind of journalist they would want him to be. The results showed that 68 per cent, more than two-thirds of the respondents, disclosed that they would encourage their children to pursue a journalistic career (Hickey, 1999, 1).

But most surprising was the result that showed online journalism was a 58 per cent favourite as a medium of choice for children. This just about matched the 59 per cent who preferred newspapers. Magazines, television and radio trailed behind at 31 per cent, 21 per cent and 13 per cent (Hickey, 1999, 1).

In a world where journalists are looked upon as slithering snakes only slightly more respected than lawyers and politicians (Taylor, 1999, 1), it's surprising that these journalists would wish the same fate upon their children. In truth, the pay is lousy, the hours are long or unpredictable, and the glory is minimal.

Some journalists will argue, "Too much grief. Too little reward." While others maintain "the profession has changed", or that there is "too much

bottom-line pressure and not enough emphasis on good journalism, ethics, and quality.” And still others profess it “leaves a trail of disappointment” but in the same breath declare, “I love my job.” (Hickey, 1999, 3).

Understanding why this love affair with journalism continues and what the lure is of online journalism in particular comes from an understanding that, like in all great love affairs, the excitement is constantly rejuvenated. This is what online journalism has done on the whole.

Nancy DeHart, executive producer at the *National Post Online*, has been part of both the print and online worlds of journalism. According to her, it's not only about loving the job, but loving the prospects of the job as well. She says:

I've always straddled the print and online world. I love both and I wouldn't be in online if I weren't in news because I'm a journalist and I love what we do and how we add to a story. But I think you can tell a story much better online and it's because we can add in the extra context. (DeHart, interview, 2000).

For DeHart, online journalism provided the opportunity to take the skills she learned in one medium and use them in another.

This same view was voiced by one of the respondents of the *CJR* survey who said, “It's the future – and there's more money in it for beginners and apprentices, for those who can figure out how to make it work”. Another said, “Online opportunities are growing fast. The upside is practically unlimited. Good people with strong values and journalistic instincts will be sorely needed.” (Hickey, 1999, 3). So then, on the one hand we have a new

medium in which anyone can become an author but, on the other, it is a medium that still requires developed journalistic skills in order to establish its authority and hold readers.

Maybe this is the reason online journalism is the place to be and why it entices new journalism graduates (Hart, online, 1). Online journalism offers the opportunity to grow in an industry otherwise seen as stagnant in both its readership or viewership, and in its opportunity for growth as a journalist. It's not so much that current media don't offer challenges, it's that online media offer new ventures and possibilities that are only just beginning to be explored.

A reputable source of online news must come from respectable journalists working in an esteemed context. The two must go hand in hand, argues Wayne MacPhail, a freelance writer who has articles both in print and online. Without journalists working within the Web division of a news medium, what you will essentially have is a group of non-journalists producing the news. He says:

I certainly would argue that if you're going to do an online product, journalists should be involved with it. I think that's what happens now (too often and almost all the time for newspaper) is that the Web version is mechanically produced or produced by a team who aren't really in the newsroom or have a sort of peripheral relationship to the newsroom. (MacPhail, interview, 2000).

According to MacPhail, non-journalists can put up a Web site and call it news, but they lack the essential skills of trained journalists.

Like MacPhail, journalist Doug Millison believes that good writing will:

engage the audiences, guide them, pull them deeper into a site, and keep them coming back for more [because] graphics – photos, illustrations, charts, plus the basic graphical interface and navigation elements – are also important but because of resolution limitations, they take second place to the words” (Millison, 1999a, 1).

Regardless of how a Web site looks or functions, the most basic tool needed to produce a news source, says Millison, is the ability to write well. He goes on to argue that:

newcomers lack an essential component possessed by many professional journalists and the media outlets that employ them: trust, based on a track record of journalistic reports that have proven to be reliable, augmented by the frank admission of errors and mistakes that creep into the coverage (Millison, 1999b, 1).

Journalists have learned, through education and trained instinct, what makes good journalism. Journalistic trust is something that cannot be obtained from “John Doe’s” homepage.

Furthermore, online journalists know how to use the tools available to them – learned through newspaper, magazine, radio and TV reporting – and tap into strengths native to the Internet (Millison, 1999b, 1). Using hyperlinks, condensing reports, creating effective layout, and maintaining viable site navigation are additions to the skills they acquired as journalists.

Online journalism is currently experiencing a period of growth requiring specific online-related skills to be mastered. Still, says Millison:

Now more than ever, we need professional journalists to help distinguish the wheat of reliable news and credible opinion from

the chaff of information, rumor and propaganda that clogs the Internet, and to help create the next-generation vehicles for online journalism. (Millison, 1999b, 1).

With that in hand, creating a news medium out of the Internet becomes a matter of acquiring the skills trained journalists need to make the move to online.

Discerning Reader Assumptions

Interviewing knowledgeable people pertaining to a specific news items and attributing those items with relevant information gathered through the interviews is the foundation of journalistic writing. Without attribution, news stories may seem opinionated and groundless. The reader, in turn, may doubt the credibility of the news item. Whether it is news articles for print, radio or television, attribution validates the news piece.

This also holds true for online journalism. Benedetti says:

I think there's more latitude in writing for the Web and I've seen certain kinds of writing that probably wouldn't make it into a newspaper. Having said that, I think the best stuff still conforms to the highest standards of journalism and I'd put attribution properly integrated into that (Benedetti, interview, 2000).

The data analysis conducted in section two showed that the print-based Web sites far exceeded the broadcast-based Web sites in their use of quotations for attribution. Again, this has a lot to do with the print sites shoveling their print content directly online while broadcast sites adapted script.

While the print media rely on quotations to create validity within their articles, the broadcast media use sound and video bites. But translated onto the Web, sound and video bites must be converted into direct attribution. Otherwise, they become lost within the Web-adapted articles. Ideally, in order to be fully acceptable in terms of online reader expectation, there should be an average means used by all news sources.

For the journalist, quotations from sources serve three purposes. First, they are a means of obtaining background information. Second, they are a way to delve into specific topics to learn more about the subject. Third, which assumes a great deal of knowledge on the part of the reporter, they are a means of confirming facts or suspicions that requires the input of someone close to the subject (McKercher and Cumming, 1998, 79).

For the public, attribution creates a degree of trust. Facts, rumours, and information generally become legitimized because they have been confirmed by a source. As a result, sourcing has become an integral part of journalism in so far as a "truly newsworthy statement of fact is rarely if ever published if it is not properly attributed to a legitimate source" (Sundar, 1998, 56).

But is this really the case? In 1976, when Hugh M. Culbertson and Nancy Somerick published their article "Cloaked Attribution – What Does it Mean to News Readers?", they proclaimed that there was no apparent distinction in whether readers believed or did not believe a news story based

on whether it did or did not contain named sources. Sources – or the lack thereof – went virtually unnoticed and did not affect perceived truth within the news article (Culbertson and Somerick in Sundar, 1998, 57).

In a 1998 paper entitled “Effect of Source Attribution on Perception of Online News Stories”, S. Shyam Sundar attempted to verify these findings himself. He surveyed 48 undergraduate and graduate students in communication classes to determine their perceptions of online news articles that had attribution in the form of quotations and those that did not. In order to maintain a level of professional distance between subject and case study, Sundar insured that none of the respondents were journalism students, which would have been reflected in their awareness of professional news values (Sundar, 1998, 58).

To measure their reactions, Sundar subdivided his findings into four functions that quotations played in relation to the news articles. “Credibility” referred to the objectivity of a news article; “Liking” measured overall like or dislike reaction; “Quality” pertained to overall excellence; and “Representativeness” indicated the reader’s estimation of the stories’ newsworthiness (Sundar, 1998, 57). These four categories provided a general overview of readers’ reactions so as to determine which areas are most pertinent when source attribution is involved.

Sundar notes that the phenomenon of readers not paying attention to source attribution implies a psychological decline in the relevance of sources

in online news stories. “While sources constitute the backbone of a news story in traditional media like print and broadcast,” writes Sundar, “they may not be as important to users’ judgements of the veridicality of online news stories” (55). Ultimately, this can have profound effects in the way online journalists write their stories.

On the one hand, articles without source attribution can be written much more quickly and therefore presented to the public much sooner. On the other hand, while this may be a current phenomenon, it may not be so a few years down the line. At this time, some might assume that the lack of attribution in some areas of media makes up for the overabundance of attribution in others. Or, put another way, if a story is attributed in one medium, and people have read it, they are then more likely to believe the same story when they encounter it online even if it doesn’t contain attribution.

Once more, the data analysis in section two revealed that attribution in print-based sites was more frequent than in broadcast-based sites. The interesting element is that one medium’s overabundance seems to balance the other’s lack.

This relates to an equivalent matter that comes from Sundar’s study which he calls the “I-read-somewhere-that” phenomenon. He maintains that even if readers do not believe what they read online, whether it is for lack of attribution or for other reasons, they are still likely to carry that information on in the “I-read-somewhere-that” word-of-mouth fashion. Sundar’s concludes:

It is likely that news received from various online means will be forwarded, both literally and figuratively, to other consumers based on factors external to source attribution – factors such as perceived enjoyability, liveliness, importance, timeliness, and relevance (Sundar, 1998, 64).

In the same vein, a reader is just as likely to read attribution in one story and then, upon reading the story without attribution, still find it credible because it already satisfied the issue of validity. Yet this cannot last forever. To begin with, there is no telling which article a reader will see first. If it happens to be the story without attribution, this could adversely affect his sense of validity in relation to the story. Also, it may happen that eventually, if readers feel that they are not reading the truth – as some do, even today – attribution will be demanded. Further to this, Sundar's finding showed that there are instances in which giving credit did make the difference.

Not surprisingly, Sundar's study revealed that articles containing quotations were perceived by readers as being more credible than those without attribution. Thus, news stories with attribution were rated significantly higher in terms of quality (Sundar, 1998, 61-62). Interestingly, what was not influenced was the newsworthiness of stories or whether or not the subjects liked the stories online versus offline (Sundar, 1998, 62). In summary:

The study reported in this article found that quoted sources clearly mattered on two out of the four areas of news perception. Highly significant effects for the quote manipulation were obtained on Credibility and Quality, but not on Liking and Representativeness. Receivers estimated the credibility and quality of stories with quotations to be significantly higher than identical stories without quotations. That is, they found the stories with source attribution to be significantly more believable

and objective than comparable news stories with identical content but without source attribution. They also rated the writing caliber of stories without source attribution. However, they did not seem to think that quotations made a difference to either the representativeness of – or their liking for – news stories (Sundar, 1998, 63).

Unlike the Culbertson and Somerick report, Sundar maintains that his findings show that attribution is an important part of news stories.

It may seem almost ludicrous to question the need for source attribution in terms of journalistic writing, even when it pertains to the Internet. But one of the main arguments against the Internet is that it produces unfounded and misleading information. In some cases, this is true and that is why attribution must continue to play a vital role. Sundar's study shows that readers of online media do not simply process the information they read as true and reliable but instead use quotations as a means of validating what they read (1998, 63). Consequently, even though news articles must be shorter online, as previously stated, they should still contain the elements which make them authoritative.

This also lends itself to breaking stories, which are wonders of the Internet and a perfect use of online news. Benedetti says, "I think that will be – is currently now and continues to speed up – the bar everyone will have to reach. If you're sitting around and not updating your site for half or three quarters of the day, you're not even in the game." (Benedetti, interview, 2000).

Even breaking stories, which must be written quickly, must contain elements of research and interviewing. Otherwise, readers will note the lack of attribution and possibly discredit the story thereby affecting the reputation of the news medium that carried it as well.

The Technical Deterrents of Online Media

Aside from reader and journalist issues pertaining to how writing is conducted online, another prevalent issue is how news looks online. Both readers and journalists have become accustomed to certain types of media that prescribe certain standards of information presentation, i.e, top news stories always lead a newspaper or broadcast. Online, however, the line between how the editor or producer lays out news and how the reader consumes it is blurred.

News industries and individuals alike have not come up with a successful way to present news in a consistent manner. In online terms, consistency is not an issue of having all Web sites look the same. Rather it's an issue of presenting news in a format that is easy to navigate and comfortable to read while still being able to capture and maintain the reader's interest.

Tools to Increase Readability

Mindy McAdams, who was the first content developer at Digital Ink, the *Washington Post's* first online news source, and who now teaches at the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida,

suggests two modes that will increase the readability of online text. The first is to keep paragraphs short, thereby making them easier to read and 'scannable'. Short paragraphs also break up the page and facilitate reading, meaning that long paragraphs which work for print should be broken into two or three shorter paragraphs online (McAdams, online, 1-2).

McAdams believes:

Boldface headings enhance the reader's ability to scan text rapidly. In print, too many headings make a page look clunky and disjointed, but online headings disappear off the top of the screen as the reader scrolls down. As a rule of thumb, one heading per screen of text within a document works very well (McAdams, online, 1).

Kilian refers to this easy-to-consume format as "hit and run retrieval" (1999, 8). Screen-sized blocks of text allow readers to take in news in smaller bits, which increases the likelihood that they will read the chunk rather than skip through long passages of information.

The second mode suggested by McAdams is to make use of headings and boldface text more so than in print because they will serve as visual aids to lead a reader down the page. Furthermore, headings save readers time by telling them what information is below, which will allow them to read only the information they are most interested in (McAdams, online, 1-2):

In print a reader can flip a few pages and read the last paragraph (or read all the headings, or look at all the photos). A long article formatted as a Web page takes more time to load -- to come onscreen -- than a shorter one. Because of the linear scrolling path from top to bottom, the user's ability to scan a very long article is reduced online (McAdams, 3).

Essentially, the shorter the article online, the more likely it is to hold the reader's attention. It is not feasible to put the same amount of information online as in a print article because online readers seem to have a shorter attention span. The use of hyperlinks, in combination with shorter paragraphs, can serve as a way to provide readers with the information they need, in small doses rather than all at once, as in print.

Hyperlinks are words or phrases in documents that will transport a Web browser to a different area within the Web site or to another Web site altogether. "Links", as they are also commonly known, are often of a different colour from the surrounding text and are underlined so that they can be recognized easily.

Within a Web site, they can be used to direct a reader to different "sections" of the news source. Depending on the amount of information available on any particular Web site, links can range from few to many.

This front page of the *Ottawa Citizen*, for instance, uses a format in which all links are presented to the reader up front with little information as to their content. Some readers may find this daunting because it provides too many choices for which the outcome is uncertain.

Nonetheless, O'Malley concludes that links are an essential part of online journalism because they allow further information to be found quickly. Furthermore, additional information is self-contained on the Web; you don't have to look to dictionaries, encyclopaedias or "further reading" that may not be available online.

O'Malley also believes links are "important because they add something other media don't have, like a magazine story or a newspaper story. They don't seem to have the instant archive you can pass on" (O'Malley, interview, 2000).

As O'Malley points out, links also have the ability to give more information to readers. Links are commonly used in online news sources as a way of referring readers to a related story. This is an aid to provide readers with additional information usually unavailable in print format. If links to related stories are not available, Web sites commonly provide search engines to do so, which is again unique to the Internet.

DeHart is resolute in her belief that all Web sites should make use of links. She says, "We do a lot of link packages with top stories. I don't know why other people aren't doing it." (DeHart, interview, 2000).

DeHart also adds that readers appreciate the *Post's* use of links:

I find we get really good feedback from readers and we get a lot of readers submitting [related links for online stories]. I think they really appreciate that. They know they're not going to get breaking news on our site... when they come to us, they come for the analysis and the depth. (DeHart, interview, 2000).

It's not, however, common to find links that direct a reader off the Web site and onto another unrelated site. Except for advertising, which will be discussed in detail in the following section, Internet news sources will most likely only link to pages within their own Web site.

DeHart full-heartedly believes this is not the best way to deal with links on a Web site. She says:

This is the Web, that's what it's all about. That's something I worried about four years ago but we're beyond that now. Anyone who thinks that they can control where users are going is crazy. What you've got to do is create compelling and interesting enough and useful enough content that they're going to want to stay on our site or return. Those link packages, and having us sift through the surrounding interest and context on the issue of the day is going to be an attractive force that compels readers to come back to our site because they know they're going to get that. They're going to find that useful. All they have to do is click the back button. And one thing we've done is to create target links so it opens a new window so they can close the window of the next site instead of actually having to use their back button so our story stays open and they can compare (DeHart, interview, 2000).

Regarding links, Web expert Robert E. Horn believes that notions of reader freedom and the reader's desire to jump around the Web are just hype. He says most readers want easy to find, accessible and organized information (Kilian, 1999, 22). If information – be it either text or links – is easy to recognize in terms of content and is inviting to navigate, the reader is likely to spend more time on that Web site.

According to McAdams, the cardinal sin of any Web site is to use links ineffectively. For one, links should be used sparingly, otherwise readers will

ignore them altogether. She also suggests making links informative; so, rather than have a link that reads “Click Here”, have a link that says “Contact Information” because it tells readers exactly where that link will lead. Similar to the idea behind small paragraphs, telling links will not waste readers’ time by bringing them somewhere they don’t want to be. Finally, links that take a reader away from the site may keep him away and pages that have too few links may bore the reader and stifle interactivity, the essence of the Internet. (McAdams, online, 3).

Overall, the data analysis survey in section two showed that the *National Post* used twice as many links as the other news media. While broadcast-based sites followed in terms of numbers of links used, the *Globe and Mail* used no links at all. The diversity in numbers suggests that a consensus has not been reached in terms of how or when to use links. But as McAdams and DeHart point out, links are an intrinsic part of the Web and should be used. The key is to use them correctly and in a way that informs readers without losing them.

Catching the Eye of the Beholder

An obvious clue that the Web is regarded as an extension of what readers are already familiar with lies in the fact that we still refer to “pages” when in fact they are not pages at all (Kilian, 1999, xvi). A Web site is a continual scroll of information presented in one place – there is no flipping of pages as with newspapers. But as was already explained, the Internet is still

in its infantile stage and readers are more comfortable with new technology if it embodies elements of an older, more trusted technology.

This not only applies to the Internet as a whole but to the words we read. Crawford Kilian, author of "Writing for the Web" says:

By combining text, graphics, and sound, the World Wide Web gives the Internet some of the qualities of familiar media, such as print, television, movies, and radio. When we recognize those familiar qualities, we respond to the Internet as if we were dealing with print or television or radio (Kilian, 1999, xix).

Thus, a journalist writing for the Web, as well as editors responsible for content, must write for the audience they are trying to capture. At the same time, they must be aware that readers expect to see something familiar.

The problem that occurs, however, is that some online news sources are trying to cram too much information onto their front page because, as in a newspaper or broadcast, they want to present all pertinent information to the reader up front. Paul Benedetti, executive producer of *Canoe's* health and travel sections, says this is a way of saving people from having to click through a hierarchy of stories to get to the one they want. Still, he recognizes that this may not be the best way to achieve the goal:

You may want to think about a newspaper. It's a bit subtle ... editors are telling you that this story 'A' is more important than this story 'B'. On the Web that tends to get a little bit watered down. I don't think we've worked all that out yet. I think people are still struggling with whether to keep the homepage lean and then let you click into areas (Benedetti, interview, 2000).

Benedetti also points out that if you don't put it all, or most, on the front page, then readers might not understand what they need to do. A hierarchy

of news^{xvii} is sometimes overlooked by readers, which is more a usability issue than anything else but one that still must be considered. It is also an issue that has yet to be fully understood.

Once again, the flux that exists within the online news media becomes glaringly apparent. Editors of the print and broadcast media have not figured out a way to present information online in the order they want readers to see the articles. But, more importantly, they haven't yet understood that the Internet may be a medium in which readers *could* decide for themselves what *they want* to read first.

Kilian eloquently summed it up when he introduced his book with, "The glory and the curse of the World Wide Web in its first decade is that no one truly understands it" (xv). Never before has this been as true as it is today, especially in relation to Internet news sources. While in the beginning it was simply enough to *have* a Web presence, it has now developed into a medium of its own.

Some argue that readers who "tune in" – or rather "log on" – to the Internet do not want the same things they can get from the printed source. Kilian describes online media as "newspaper pasted onto the side of a packing crate" (xv), which is precisely how it has been treated. People see the medium, they recognize it as a news source but they consider it as something they have already seen or read elsewhere. It's overlooked as a medium that can offer more than they can get elsewhere.

John King, director of editorial production for the *Globe and Mail*, wrote, "Almost all the material on globeandmail.com is edited for the newspaper and automatically posted on the Web. Apart from some coding that is part of the newsroom routine, web stories get no special treatment" (King, email, 2000).

Within the industry, this is called "shovelware". It is the practice of taking news directly from the newspaper and putting it online. For newspapers, this was the easiest way to get their content online, says Ken Wolff, executive producer for *CBC News Online*, who adds that he would have done it the same way, if he'd been in print. He says, "They already had a product that existed. They already had stories that were already written, so their first venture – and for very good reasons – was to just take material and reuse it on the Web ... I would have made exactly the same decision" (Wolff, interview, 2000).

In terms of time and money, Wolff is probably right in his explanation of a newspaper's decision to put its contents on the Web in its original print form. But for television and radio scripts, the issue is entirely different. What puts broadcasters ahead in this regard is that their stories cannot go online without having been edited. Wolff believes:

I don't know if you've seen broadcast copy, you can't put that on the Web. Broadcast journalists don't know how to spell, they don't know grammar and they don't know sentence structure very well. So we had to actually start from the beginning (Wolff, interview, 2000).

Writing for the Web, says Wolff, is a “new style of writing” (Wolff, interview, 2000).

Kilian agrees with Wolff and concurs that Web writing has to be different. This does not mean better or worse, only different in the sense of how it is perceived by its audience. He says, “Effective Web site creation doesn’t mean only cool video, graphics, and sound. It also means text that will halt impatient surfers and make them read what you’ve written” (xvi). Hence, the word on the page becomes the true means by which readers consume news, as with print, but those words must be presented in a fashion that lends itself to a different medium.

This new fashion of writing online, says MacPhail lends itself to a medium that encourages quick, sample-like writing. He believes:

In online, people tend to scan and pick as if they’re at a buffet table rather than a full meal and sample information. So you have to write with that in mind and also give people an opportunity to discover the stories for themselves rather than having it delivered to them à la carte. (MacPhail, interview, 2000).

O’Malley adds that online readers lack the patience of newspaper readers. Nevertheless, it’s still up to the writer to get hold of whatever attention he or she can get. O’Malley says:

You still write sentences and paragraphs and you look for funny or poignant or serious ways to express yourself. There it still remains writing but it’s a little more economical. You’ve got to understand that the reader doesn’t have the patience of the old newspaper reader. They want quicker hits. It’s evolving quickly and it’s more colloquial, more conversational. (O’Malley, interview, 2000).

Online writing, then, must be economical, engaging and not like print writing. MacPhail adds to O'Malley when he says:

If you start writing long for the Web, it starts to feel like a non-Web experience. You really want to give people a chance to go somewhere else, move on, to explore a different pathway. Otherwise, you might as well just write for print. Then you're just doing shovelware (MacPhail, interview, 2000).

What They See is What They Get?

A study by John Morkes and Jakob Nielsen revealed that rather than read a Web page word-for-word, most online readers will only scan a page. In fact, their study found that only 16 percent of readers read the entire page compared to 79 percent who scanned it (Nielsen, 1997b, 1). Their study was aimed specifically at examining Web writing and how users read Web pages.

Yet there's another element to be considered. Benedetti says:

People are saying they scan the Web and it's different. But people scan newspapers... very few people read newspaper stories. So the kind of pressure writers feel to write effectively, sentence by sentence, is even more dramatic on the Web (Benedetti, interview, 2000).

According to Benedetti, the pressure to write effectively is heightened online because people are looking for shorter, more concise articles that still provide them with the details they need to be informed. But Benedetti believes skimming stories is not reserved only for the Web but that Web writing is expected to be scannable.

Wendy Sexsmith, chief web producer at Globe Information Services (part of the *Globe and Mail*) also believes that skimming is not exclusive to

the Web. In fact she says, it's that very need to scan *all* stories that prompts people to keep up with their newspaper subscriptions.

Sexsmith says people "like the Web for its quickness and staying up-to-date and maybe looking at articles they may have missed three days ago but they love to be able to get a hold of their newspaper because they can skim so much better" (Sexsmith, interview, 2000). In part, this may be due to the fact that Web layout differs from print, at times making it easier to skim the newspaper.

Among their findings, Morkes and Nielsen discovered that users preferred highlighted keywords (which included hyperlinking, typeface variations, and colour), headings or subheadings, and one idea per paragraph (which translates into smaller paragraphs because readers tended to skip over ideas that were not presented immediately within the paragraph) (1997b, 1).

Graphics play a large part in this as well. While newspapers usually only have one or two pictures per story, the Web can offer much more. Macphail says:

You've got the ability on the Web in a way that you don't have in print. To have, essentially, an unlimited amount of graphics and graphics that can do more than just sit there ... Graphics are extremely important and I think that you need to, as an online writer, be very aware of what's possible with graphics (MacPhail, interview, 2000).

The data analysis survey conducted in section two indicated that the *CBC* used more graphics than the other three news sources polled. In fact,

the broadcast-based sites generally had more graphics than the print-based sites. One reason to explain this is the fact that broadcasts tend to use more graphics. Since information is currently being “shoveled” onto the Net, the print-based sites have found themselves falling behind. They don't have as many graphics available to use as the broadcasters.

Keeping in mind that readers read about 25 percent slower online than from paper (determined by studies conducted by Nielsen in the 1980s (Kilian, 1999, 3)), the attitude of the reader to reading online must also be considered. It is not enough simply to cut print text by 25 percent and put it online, there must be even less because “it's not only a matter of reading speed but also a matter of feeling good” (Nielsen, 1997a, 1). The comfort level of users is essential to understand in order truly to be able to develop a product that suits their needs.

Section two's data analysis survey revealed that the two print-based Web sites had the highest word count within the top two stories. The reasons for this are obvious. First, the print information is being shoveled online and no editing is done to shorten the content. Second, the broadcast information is being developed through television and radio scripts, which tend to be shorter to begin with.

Still, these are not the only reasons. Keep in mind that:

The biggest difference between reading online and reading printed text is that online, text moves. You're scrolling up and down. As you scroll, you tend to scan the document. The environment urges you to speed-read, so if you don't see

anything but plain text, you're likely to lose interest (McAdams, online, 1).

Even though it may be the same amount of text that appears in print, it looks like a lot more online and this may be daunting for a lot of online readers. If the page scroll never seems to end, the reader will put an end to it himself.

Summary

This section attempted to demonstrate the need for online news sources to pay attention not only to what they put online but also to how they do it.

Let's not forget that the current set-up of newspapers or the format of television and radio broadcasts did not happen overnight. It took years of learning, adaptation and user surveys to determine what people wanted. Nonetheless, a conclusive answer may never be found and the process of change will continue.

The same holds true online. The simple fact is that no one has a definitive answer as to how a news Web site should look and act. As in current media, an answer may never be found. However, there are certain elements that can be addressed, based on what we currently know. If a news-related Web site hopes to be viewed as a reputable source of news, it is crucial that it begin to look at issues of authenticity, design and reader expectations.

Lisa Stuart, director of sales and marketing for the *National Post Online*, pointed out that in Canada, an understanding of how the Internet

works, especially in terms of online news, is lagging behind the United States. This is clearly seen in the lack of vital statistics relating to online media. Consequently, she said jobs associated with this field are currently booming in Canada because skills are needed that combine an understanding of both conventional and online media (Stuart, interview, 2000).

Across the continent, however, one element of the Internet that is in constant debate is how to use advertising effectively to generate revenue. The following section will look at advertising both offline and online in order to touch upon issues that are central to all media but heightened on the Internet: Making money and gaining an individual's trust.

To Earn or Not to Earn: Producing Revenue through Advertising

Introduction

Advertising is the backbone of the newspaper industry. Without it, newspapers would collapse under the financial strain of production and distribution. The same is true of broadcasting. But now that newspapers and broadcasters have begun to produce Internet versions of themselves, an important question remains arises: What will be their economic base? Can online news sources use advertising to create an economically feasible industry separate from their print or broadcast counterparts? Several factors must be considered if online news sources are to become self-sustaining.

The desire of advertisers to be online is indisputable at this stage of the Internet's development. The bottom line though is that few have a clear idea of how to proceed. Wendy Sexsmith, chief Web producer for Globe Information Services, maintains that Web advertising is currently in an embryonic state and is only beginning to be understood by advertisers and news sources alike:

We haven't nearly explored the possibilities that lie ahead," says Sexsmith. "All of them [advertisers] see this as something they've got to get experience in, they've got to dabble ... it's not where they're putting the most serious part of their budget yet. But all of them want to get experience (Sexsmith, interview, 2000).

Of course, the desire to reach larger advertising markets is not new. Marshall McLuhan once wrote, "Advertising is a very considerable part of our total culture. It is not separable from any of the other activities in our world" (McLuhan, 1990, 72). In October 1994, Zima, a clear-malt beer brand, placed a commercial message on top of the *HotWired* homepage (Warner, 1999, 1). Since then, banner ads that sit, flash and sometimes do tricks have become standard on Web sites. We may now be more aware of their absence than of their presence.

However, advertising on the Web is not as time-grabbing as conventional advertising; a print or broadcast ad still requires that the reader move physically to a location outside the home in order to follow-up details or go to the place advertised. Web advertising, on the other hand, can link the reader directly to the advertised product without much effort at all.

In this same respect, however, Lisa Stuart, director of sales and marketing for the *National Post Online*, questions whether online advertising can produce its own advertising niche or whether it is inevitably tied to other advertising forms. She adds: "From a marketing side, integrated is the way to go and people who are saying you only need online -- well, there's a huge community online -- but those people also get into their cars, listen to radios, catch TV while they're at the gym" (Stuart, interview, 2000).

Nonetheless, before delving further into the topic, it may be useful to recall certain aspects of the history of newspaper advertising in order to see

how it transposes to online news sources. The history of both conventional and online advertising will help create awareness about the role advertising plays in our lives and how our relationship to it has been formed.

Ultimately, says Sexsmith, "This business is like anything else, we need advertisers" (Sexsmith, interview, 2000).

History of Newspaper Advertising

Without advertising, the newspaper industry could be anything from non-existent to owned and manipulated by the government. Newspapers cannot make money without advertising and subscriptions pay less than 25% of the cost of publishing a newspaper (Brill, 1999, 160). The fees associated with running a newspaper include salaries, overhead costs (rent, printing costs, distribution costs, etc.). To pay for all this, most of the money that a newspaper generates comes from advertising sales, which covers a majority of production costs (Brill, 1999, 160).

What this produces is an affordable source of news mostly paid for by advertisers but in which editorial content also makes advertisers credible and readers more informed. This is not a new phenomenon. In many regards, advertising and news have gone hand-in-hand for some time. Once the printing press was established, thereby creating a quick method to manufacture news, the need to learn more -- accurately, fairly and quickly -- created an unending wave of information processes. For merchants, it resulted in the publication of information regarding their products, which

helped them by spreading the news of what they sold and eventually led to the establishment of the advertising industry. In turn, merchants also needed “accurate reporting of events, and how they relate to markets and business, [they] created pressure for a press that was not merely an arm of royal propaganda” (Levinson, 1997, 34).

The late 19th century saw the rise of commercial dailies over labour dailies for the very reason Levinson describes. The independent dailies, who sold newspapers on the street rather than by subscription, depended on advertising to keep the cost of individual copies low. They were therefore “operating primarily to make profits through the dual transaction of selling news to readers and readers’ attention to advertisers” (Hackett & Zhao, 1998, 25).

Labour dailies were unable to draw the attention of advertisers because they did not appeal to advertisers who wanted to sell “either brand-name mass products to a mass readership, or luxury items to affluent consumers” (Hackett & Zhao, 1998, 28). Just as a newspaper today could not survive without capital investment, neither could the newspaper of yesteryear. Labour markets were simply not desirable enough to attract advertisers to labour newspapers. These newspapers catered to a specific market in a way that did not suit the needs of advertisers, although the advertisers were desirous of reaching that very market. Advertising-supported newspapers

provided the right context and ultimately spawned an industry that is still thriving today.

In Canada, mass media advertising began in 1752 when the *Halifax Gazette* featured notices by a lawyer and a teacher, an advertisement by a stationer and one by a storekeeper selling butter. But it was not until the 19th century, when media technology advanced and a mass press was created, that advertising began to take on the form it has today, backed by the advertising agency (Singer, 1996, 123). Advertisers began to push for brand-name recognition. In 1889, Anson McKim opened A. McKim and Company, Canada's first advertising agency, and a new era in advertising blossomed. For the first time, there was a business whose sole aim was to place advertising for clients. Such a specialization in mass promotion ultimately led the way to the penetration of the brand name in the 19th century. Once again, for the first time, manufacturers with brand name merchandise were able to carry their message directly to the consumer. The system was less and less overseen by small retailers and more and more controlled by giant mass merchandisers (Singer, 1996, 123).

The role of the advertiser, then and today, is to create the greatest exposure for clients by placing ads in newspapers that will provide clients with the greatest number of eyes to see them. Consequently, not only do advertisers hold the key to a newspaper's success or failure, they also dictate the "news-hole" (Brill, 1999, 162). Basically, this refers to the amount of

space available for news coverage after advertising space has been assigned. Since it is unlikely that a newspaper would opt to lose money, it is fair to say that within the newspaper industry, the advertising department plays as vital a role as the news department.

Newspaper advertising takes on two forms. The first is classified advertising. It is relatively inexpensive and affordable to most people, takes up only a few lines of text and is usually located in a specific section of the newspaper. The second is display advertising. It is much more expensive than classified ads and is usually sold to organizations rather than individuals. It takes up inches rather than lines and is dispersed throughout the newspaper. Both these types of advertising also function within online advertising. The importance of naming them here is to understand the similarities between print and online media.

As any other industry, advertising has both its critics and supporters. Critics argue that advertising increases the cost of goods, manipulates the masses into buying products they don't really need, and wastes money that could be used for the social good (Singer, 1996, 124). Another major criticism is that since editorials are linked to advertising and they are shaped to create an atmosphere attractive to particular advertisers, thereby resulting in editorial bias (Brill, 1999, 160). On the other hand, supporters see advertising as a stimulus to economic growth that creates jobs, reduces cost through mass production, and encourages a larger economic base (Singer,

1996, 124). In response to the bias criticism, supporters acknowledge the influence that advertising plays on editorial content, but feel that it nonetheless keeps news affordable, thereby producing the greatest good for the least amount of harm (Brill, 1999, 160).

Of course, online advertising has only rejuvenated the debate. Supporters of online advertising might say that Web advertising creates better exposure for the merchant and more selection for the buyer, thereby stimulating economic growth, creating jobs, and reducing cost. But critics might argue that online advertising only increases download times, loses surfers when they click on an ad, distracts from page content, manipulates surfers, and invites Web designers to tailor content to the interests of advertisers.

The following section addresses both critics and believers. It looks at how Web advertising has come into existence, what role it plays in the online industry, and what is being paid to share a piece of the commercial pie.

History of Online Advertising

The greatest benefit to Web advertising is probably the fact that online news sources can publish more than once a day. Bernard Gwertzman, editor in chief of *The New York Times* contends, "The nature of the beast is that these people expect news as it happens, not several hours later" (Kirsner, 1997, 1). This is precisely what excites advertisers. With conventional

newspapers, once a page is read, the reader might not return to it. Under those conditions, the advertiser has only one shot at exposure.

However, the Web gives advertisers the opportunities to take multiple shots at exposure. And for that privilege, advertisers are willing to pay big. The *Times* should know. It was able to sign up Chemical Bank, Fidelity Investments, IBM, Maxwell House and Toyota for an annual fee of \$150,000 each. Advertising on the *Times* Web site costs other advertisers a minimum of \$30,000 for 857,000 hits or impressions and up to \$120,000 for 6 million impressions (Brill, 1999, 169).

While this may seem like a lot to spend on a banner, it is only a drop in the bucket compared to the Internet Advertising Bureau's data, accumulated by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. That study shows that online advertising revenue reached \$934 million in the second quarter of 1999. Indeed, ad revenues for the first six months of 1999 were more than double the amount collected at the same time last year (Lake, 1999, 1). In Canada, Ernst & Young's NetCommerce Solutions team concluded that in 1999, ad revenues received by publishers would reach \$55.5 million, which is a 127 per cent increase over 1997 (IAB, 1).

This does not mean that Internet ad spending surpasses conventional spending on newspapers ads. Such a contention would be far from the truth for while Internet ads generated \$1.9 million in 1998 -- putting them ahead of outdoor media at \$1.6 million -- newspaper advertising earned \$44 billion

(Thompson, 1999, 1). But then again, conventional newspapers have been in the advertising business for much longer.

Furthermore, Stuart warns that Canadian statistics are not necessarily an accurate depiction of what's really being sold. She says:

There are a lot of industry leaders that would counter [the Ernst & Young statistics] because that includes all ads seen and a lot of them are contra or no-charge. There are a lot of deals going on and a lot of barter and banner-exchanging going on. So it's hard to tell who's actually getting cash for their banners" (Stuart, interview 2000).

While it seems like banner ads have been around for a long time, in actuality it has only been within the last few years that Web sites have begun to sell products. Before that, they had to sell "space" -- let people know who they were and where they were on the information superhighway (Warner, 1999, 4). In any case, online spending has dramatically increased, even in just one year. There was a total of 1.3 million orders placed online during the 1999 American Thanksgiving Day, as reported by BizRate.com. This is up tenfold over the same day last year. The Nielsen NetRating suggest that this represents approximately 4.6 million home surfers, up 30 per cent from just the week before (Dalton, 1999, 1). Advertisers cannot ignore statistics like this. Nor have they.

Probably the most interesting aspect of online advertising is the fact that it is dealt with in a way remarkably similar to newspapers. Classified

advertising and display advertising follow the same pattern online as in their print counterpart (Brill, 1999, 162).

By examining any online news source -- the *Ottawa Citizen* will be used as a case in point -- what becomes apparent is that display ads are peppered throughout the news content while classified information occupies its own specific Web page. For example, on December 11, 1999, the front page of the *Ottawa Citizen* sported banner ads for HMV and Future Shop. The city section contained ads for Dewar Audio and IPC Personal Computers. Classifieds, in comparison, had their own link and, even though display banners were present, the classified advertising was not placed in conjunction with any other form of news.

It will be recalled that the data analysis reported in section two showed that overall, side placed advertising was most predominant, followed by top-placed ads and bottom-placed ads. The *CBC* used only top-placed ads, while *GlobalTV*, *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* used varied placements.

Top Section, National Post, January 16, 2000

Still, both *CBC* and the *National Post* did not use bottom-placed advertising. These data were accumulated from the front page and top two news stories of each online publication. The placement of advertising on a Web page plays an important role in determining the likelihood of a reader clicking onto its contents.

In terms of editorial placement, a 1996 analysis of online news sources found that advertising in editorial sections followed three placement patterns:

(1) ads that appear at the top of the screen as a banner, but did not infringe on the editorial material, (2) ads that were placed to the side or top of editorial material within the context of the page, or (3) ads that were located in the midst of a page, breaking into the editorial content (Brill, 1999, 165).

What this indicates is that online news sources are still trying to mimic their print counterparts. Consequently, a huge question arises. Why are newspapers even going online if all they are simply copying the print version?

According to Ann Brill, author of "Online Newspaper Advertising: A Study of Format and Integration With News Content", newspapers are

creating online versions out of fear and greed. Brill believes “fear comes from seeing their circulation numbers stagnate among older readers and decline among younger readers,” while greed comes from the realization that being able to count hits to a Web site could potentially open the door to advertising dollars (Brill, 1999, 161).

What Brill overlooks is that increasingly newspapers are beginning to update content during the day. News online is no longer a one-time-of-day deal. *The National Post*, for example, states at the top of its Web site that news is updated daily at 4 o'clock, while the CBC Web site updates information as it happens. This, in turn, will make advertising on the Web that much more appealing because the likelihood exists that people will visit the site, and therefore see the ads, more than once a day.

Also, according to Seymour Diener, new media manager for the *Ottawa Citizen*, print-based advertising can serve a useful purpose on the Internet. In actuality, he says, it is an exceptional extension to the print product. He says:

We're taking a lot of things we're doing with classifieds, which is a fundamental piece that we do in print, and we're doing business online in many of those areas. Hot classified areas ... we have Carclick for automotive, we have Careerclick for the employment category and these are really extensions of what we do in print but their products are totally designed for online (Diener, interview 2000).

The bottom line, however, one that Brill does not overlook, is that advertising on the Web is expensive and that advertisers are willing to pay.

According to Forrester Research, print newspapers charge \$60.31 per thousand people projected to a full-page ad in a midsize daily. Online news sources charge \$75 per thousand consumers. Jupiter Communications estimates that the amount of money spent on online advertising in 1995 was \$55 million and could reach \$5 billion by the year 2000 (Brill, 1999, 170).

Furthermore, while U.S. advertisers were projected to spend \$25 per person online, Forrester Research expects that to increase to \$104 per person by 2003 (Joseph, 1998, 1). According to Diener, this is good news because, "It's a numbers game. Produce eyeballs -- and they're good eyeballs -- and you'll get advertisers" (Diener, interview 2000).

If online news sources intend to stand alone as a viable business entity, then there is an urgent need to increase advertising dollars. In that sense, they need to follow the lead of their newspaper counterparts and use advertising dollars to make a profit. The money is out there; online news sources need to go after it aggressively.

But there are a number of problems faced by online advertising which must be addressed if online news sources are to make use of it. These problems, as well as potential solutions, will be addressed in the following sections.

Problems of Online Advertising

Several problems affect online advertising both from the advertiser and consumer perspective. For advertisers, issues of income and recognition are at the forefront of their Web concerns. However, they also share a number of anxieties that also affect consumers. For one, both advertisers and consumers are often left wondering if demand will sustain product, i.e., will the merchandise be there when it's needed and how fast will it arrive? Another problem, constantly debated, is the issue of the advertiser's ability to draw up customer profiles versus the customer's desire for privacy.

The main problem troubling online advertisers stems from the fact that they traditionally pay for ads based on the projected number of times a person will look at them, very much like newspaper circulation. However, this method does not yield an accurate account of how many people click on an ad. Advertisers now want to pay only if someone clicks the ad, thereby making it the "equivalent of paying only if a print reader were to read the whole advertisement" (Anderson, 1999, 1).

Sexsmith adds, "Lots of advertisers have proposed to us that they want to pay based on a click-through of their ads. But of course you can't operate like that because then we'd be at the mercy of how good or how creative their ad is" (Sexsmith, interview, 2000).

In effect, advertisers want to see more bang for their buck. There is a compelling motive for advertisers to take this attitude. Compared to newspaper, television or radio ads, advertisers can estimate with a higher degree of accuracy the number of people who see their advertisement by physically counting the number of online clicks. Of course, knowing how many clicks happen on a page does not itself translate into clear knowledge of how many people, having clicked on the add, will actually shop on the advertiser's site or later seek out the product or service. This is why the issue of recognition plays an important role in online advertising.

Nancy DeHart, executive producer for *National Post Online* believes, "The great thing is, the *Post* is an amazing brand and the *Financial Post* within it is an amazing brand. So, big advertisers want to play with us both in print and online" (DeHart, interview 2000).

Anthony Noto, an analyst for Goldman Sachs, says that brand recognition is what ultimately drives traffic and therefore sales: "The thing that separates the winners from losers is the ability to convert traffic into sales" (Dalton, 1999, 2). Unfortunately, in order to do this, retailers find themselves spending large amounts of money to advertise offline in the hope of increasing their online visibility (Dalton, 1999, 2). So again, online and conventional advertising appear to be linked. This may change in the future once consumers become more accustomed to online transactions, but until then it is difficult for advertisers to make a name for themselves based solely

on an online presence. Exceptions apply, as in the case of Amazon.com, but they are rare.

Another aspect to this is that although a brand name may be recognizable and marketing for the online site successful, the Web site still has to be easy for consumers to use. This involves a fair amount of money to create a site that not only has a large selection but also provides fast delivery as well as easy and trustworthy payment options. Not surprisingly, issues of trust play an important role in this formula as will be discussed later. At this time there are still a few more advertiser-related problems that require attention.

While online shopping seems to be paying off, as BizRate.com figures showed in relation to the American Thanksgiving Day weekend, it still remains to be seen if this will continue past the holiday season. Typically, the Christmas season is a tremendous shopping season, as any retailer knows. Also, as any offline consumer knows, it is also the most chaotic. A friend recently told me the story of her 80-year-old grandmother who, in her first experience with the Internet, completed all her Christmas shopping online in order to avoid the retail headache. Whether she, or most consumers for that matter, will continue to do so remains to be seen. In some ways, this depends on the issues that affect both advertisers and consumers -- demand and delivery.

Journalist Gregory Dalton has conducted a brief survey of four online, name-brand toy stores: Amazon.com, ToysRus, Etoys and Kbkids.com. Of the four popular toys he looked for -- Millennium Barbie, Barbie Deluxe Dream House, Pokémon Trading Card Game, and Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets -- Barbie Deluxe and Harry Potter were only available from Etoys and Pokémon was available only on Kbkids.com (Dalton, 1999, 5). Everything else was either out of stock or not listed.

So much for ease of availability and hard-to-come-by items being available online. Although the Web is sometimes perceived as the place to get these items, that is not always the case. Besides, if consumers have the good fortune to find what they're looking for online, advertisers are faced with the dilemma of getting it to them on time. Chapters.ca is a good example of a company that got it right; books normally ship within 24 hours and arrive at the door 24 hours after that. Still, books are a small item. How about large items such as bicycles, fragile items such as vases and glasses, or even clothing that comes from the US? This is where the trouble may lie but its consequences may not be felt until after the holiday rush. One thing is for sure -- grandma wouldn't be too happy if her granddaughter didn't receive her gift in time for Christmas.

Aside from all the seemingly minor problems with online buying, a greater problem, which no amount may cure, comes to the forefront. Do people trust the Internet enough to shop online in terms of giving out

personal information on a computer screen? Privacy is by far the greatest impairment for online advertisers and involves two main issues: trademark infringement and profiling capabilities.

Trademark infringement refers to ads that pop up when a Web site is called. Unlike placing certain ads with specific editorial content, this tends to happen when a keyword or phrase is requested. At that time, a banner ad will appear based on the key word that was bought from the Web site.

NameStake offers a service in which you can test this happening. If, for example, you enter the keyword “Versace”, the following ads may appear:

Neither of these banner ads belongs to the Versace brand and neither carries information about Versace on its Web site. But both have bought the name Versace so that whenever it is entered into a search engine, the banner pops up.

According to the Canadian Intellectual Property Office, a trademark allows for the “exclusive rights to words, symbols and designs, or combinations of these, that distinguish your wares or services from those of

someone else" (par. 1). Applied to online advertising, what this means is that no other company can use someone else's trademark to sell its product.

Neil Shapiro, a First Amendment and intellectual-property lawyer in San Francisco adds to this by saying, "There are a lot of court opinions saying that the ultimate purpose is the protection of the consumer, so the consumer is not misled into purchasing an inferior product believing it to be the higher-quality product" (Frauenfelder, 1999, 2).

Issues of trust affect the advertiser who would buy the keyword, the online source that would sell a keyword search option, and the reader who doesn't know whom to trust. To succeed in a court case, advertisers would have to prove that consumers were misled into believing the bogus Web site was related to the authentic trademark (Frauenfelder, 1999, 2). In an online world, this is not an easy feat to accomplish.

A further issue of trust lies in the advertiser's profiling capabilities. Some advertising companies contend that without customer profiling, there is no viable way to meet customer needs. Privacy advocates say "online profiling is like inviting people into a store with a list of all prior stores visited stamped on their foreheads, while salesmen follow them and take copious notes as they shop" (Perine, 1999, 1).

But information gathered online is valuable to advertisers who want to know the faceless person at the other end of the computer screen. To them,

understanding customer needs will ultimately earn more money. Stuart adds:

What's incredible about this medium compared to others is the ability to measure results. It's just phenomenal. I see this as the most parallel to direct marketing because not only are you sending things out, you can capture anything you've ever wanted to know about your users (Stuart, interview 2000).

On October 14, 1999, the Fashion Institute of Technology sponsored a media panel entitled, "And That's The Way It Will Be: How The Internet Is Changing The Way We Get Our News & The Business Of News". During the discussion, David Talbot, chairman and editor in chief of Salon.com, said that his Web site asks for registration information when people log on. This is not only for their own in-house use but is also sold to advertisers who are willing to pay a premium price for that information (Media Panel, New York, Oct. 99).

To some, this is a slap in the face of privacy control. According to Rohan Samarajiva, information is private as far as an individual can control the release of information and its uses. In cases where information is being unwillingly extracted by (in this case the advertiser) the customer has no control. He explains:

knowing is asymmetrical in two ways. First, the firm knows about the customers, but the customer does not have equivalent information about the firm. Second, the firm in most cases extracts [information] from the customer more-or-less involuntarily, while the customer has, for the most part, to rely on advertising and other persuasive information disseminated by the firm (Samarajiva, 1997, 430).

How then can trust be established if personal information is dealt with at the advertiser's whim?

Stuart added that for a Web survey conducted on the *National Post Online*, their third-party technology experts were able to discern information such as a user's screen resolution, complete package of software on the user's computer, and even the type of computer being used. All this, she says, was in addition to the standard questions asked in the survey; the users would be providing results like these without having been asked (Stuart, interview 2000).

In Henrikas Yushkiavitshus' 1998 opening address at the UNESCO Second International Congress on Ethical, Legal and Societal Challenges of Cyberspace, he affirms that what is at stake is both moral and legal. According to him, "The rhetoric of the 'information society' and 'globalization' will have no meaning if we do not concentrate our attention on the basic ethical and societal issues in the global expansion of technologies and economies" (Yushkiavitshus, 1999, 1). Yushkiavitshus contends that information and knowledge should respect the individual and the right of individuals to exercise their own responsibility:

privacy and the right to privacy are slippery concepts. The approach to privacy issues from a human rights perspective is different from that of the market-based, economic approach. The first one will serve the moral, humanitarian aspects; the second will put business profits forward and not necessarily serve the moral rights of individuals but rather the 'common good' of a community. In commercial electronic transactions the second often overrides the first (Yushkiavitshus, 1999, 1).

In an attempt to balance 'moral and intellectual virtues' of the individual, Yushkiavitshus offers a number of solutions that should be considered. These solutions will be discussed in the following section. For now, there is one more aspect of privacy to consider which is whether privacy is really an issue for the individual or if it is just a source of pride.

Solveig Singleton, director of information studies at the Cato Institute, in Washington, considers the entire issue of consumer privacy protection to be larger than it should be. He points to the fact that, "Businesses that collect data on customer profiles usually do so because they are trying to sell something. As human motives go, this is not an especially sinister one" (Brin, 1998, 57). The point is that consumers have always known that information was accumulated about them. That is what leads to buying statistics that leads to buying trends, which leads to buying preferences and ultimately ends with trying to fulfil the wishes of the consumer. So what if we have to give up some personal information to get what we want?

Stuart agrees:

If you're someone who is a "newbie", just starting to get on the Web, you may be more cautious and you may not know what a cookie is and you don't want to give your credit card number because it's going into a black hole... Then there's the people who are more educated, who have been online for a few years. They know what cookies are (Stuart, interview 2000).

Steven Miller, author of *Civilizing Cyberspace: Policy, Power and the Information Superhighway*, aptly points out in his book that consumers have often traded their personal information -- and sometimes the personal

information of friends and family -- for convenience's sake or to receive savings because it is ultimately a benefit to them (in Brin, 1998, 153).

The bottom line, according to Brin, is that while people are overwhelmed by privacy concerns, they are also willing to reveal the most intimate information. According to Brin, the real problem is not that personal information is being accumulated but that people are left powerless in their decision to reveal that information and "Humans certainly do get depressed in situations where they lack feelings of involvement and control" (Brin, 1998, 157).

Stuart also points to the fact that, even for those who are aware of cookies, they become monotonous to track. Eventually, people who are familiar with the workings of the Web will just not care. Stuart maintains, "If you become more savvy you realize it. If you put your cookie detector on, you realize you can't spend two minutes out there without having a million cookies" (Stuart, interview 2000).

So then, what may need to change is not necessarily the means by which information is tracked but the relationship people have to the understanding that their information is being tracked.

Solutions for Online Advertising

Paul Saffo, a director at the Institute for the Future in Menlo Park, California, has developed what he calls the '30-year rule'. It suggests that it takes about three decades for a new technology to be socially accepted. The

stages, as described by Saffo, are as follows: "First decade: lots of excitement, lots of puzzlement, not a lot of penetration. Second decade: lots of flux, penetration into society is beginning. Third decade: 'Oh, so what?' Just a standard technology and everybody has it" (Fidler, 1997, 9).

Saffo contends that slowness of change is the rule rather than exception and that technologies are accelerating more quickly today than in the past. What he believes to be the bottleneck is what he calls 'cross-impacts', which make new media difficult to forecast. Saffo deems that "more technologies are coming up at the same time. It is the unexpected cross-impact of maturing technologies that creates this powerful acceleration that we all feel" (Fidler, 1997, 8).

In terms of applying Saffo's rule to the Internet, it appears that stage three has been reached; most people are familiar with the Internet and have used or seen it. Also, the Internet is quickly becoming a fixture in North American schools, which will undoubtedly add to its familiarity. But the Web sites just beginning to develop are quite probably only in stage two because, in the many ways discussed, no one is quite sure what the end-user wants. This is doubly true for online advertising in news sources because both news and advertising are just starting to emerge. Online shopping, as mentioned earlier, has only just begun to enter the comprehension and comfort level of most users, thereby also putting it into stage two.

This does not surprise Stuart who says, "Really, when you think about it, people have only started advertising in '96/'97. It's just really preliminary and it's really only burgeoned in the last few years" (Stuart, interview 2000).

Before stage three can be reached, there are a number of changes that need to be made for online news source advertising to attract the reader's attention and money, in order to create a stand-alone industry.

First, the way banners are presented to the potential consumer needs to undergo significant alteration. Instead of selling key-words to advertisers who have nothing to do with the particular product, key-words should be sold based on product relevance. This will not only ensure that consumers are presented with appropriate information but will also increase consumer trust.

Furthermore, the banners themselves need to change. Eric Savitz reports:

Web surfers no longer see anything all that special about banners, which is still the most prevalent form of advertising on the Net. The rate at which people click on banners continues to shrink. Those skinny rectangular boxes just aren't an especially engaging way to hock your wares (Savitz, 1999, 2).

Banner advertising needs to become more dynamic and engaging. There is absolutely no reason for people to click on an ad if they are not curious about what's behind it. Indeed, there is no reason to click if they don't even notice the ad.

Mark Gimein calls this "The Great-Click-Through Drop-off". This, says Gimein, is in keeping with Nielsen's prediction that as more experienced Web

surfers become less impressed by the banner ads and the ability to click on them, click-through rates will plummet (Gimein, 1999, 2).

As Savitz points out, "People can remember the jingles from decades-old TV ads. But can you recall even one banner?" (Savitz, 1999, 2). While targeting tools are improving, as a popular dancing monkey banner has demonstrated, the amount of 'flat' banners still outweighs the dazzling ones. Advertising agencies now need to turn their attention to the Web with as much flair as if they were designing an ad campaign for television or radio.

Another element to this is the placement of the ad on the page. While the data analysis in section two showed that bottom-page ads were generally overlooked, this may be one of the most critical areas in terms of add click-through success. As DeHart says:

I think a lot of people, if they're going to click on an ad, they'd rather read what they're trying to cover on that page first. I don't think there's much of a chance of someone -- unless they really find the ad compelling or it's targeted to them -- to click on an ad when it's going to take them away from the article they've come there to read (DeHart, interview 2000).

Sexsmith agrees and adds: "I'd like to see it [advertising] spread out [and] even more put at the bottom of the page. But it's hard to convince an advertiser that they get value from being at the bottom of the page. They all want to be at the top of the page" (Sexsmith, interview, 2000).

Java banners, which are interactive and can create simple animation, may be the key to measuring the rate at which consumers click-through to an

advertiser's Web site. Gimein had deduced that, "High interaction rates don't prove ads are useful. Nor, for that matter, do low click-through rates prove that plain, old animated banners are useless. But interaction rates at least provide some basis by which the relative effectiveness of ads can be compared across campaigns" (Gimein, 1999, 3). This may be precisely the change needed to increase that effectiveness.

This, once again, reintroduces the displacement theory. The difference here, however, is that the new may very well replace the old.

Gimein thinks the future of Web advertising is bright and remarks:

Fortunately for both advertisers and audiences, this is one area in which the Web has a distinct advantage over the old-media world of television and magazines: Thanks to the marvels of Web tracking, advertisers really will have a decent chance of knowing which half of their ads work and which half don't (Gimein, 1999, 5).

Dynamic banners would add fire where only a spark remains. Just as other forms of advertising have evolved, so too will online advertising.

While Stuart agrees that "The better the resources on the creative end, the better your product is going to be," she also affirms that, "The money being spent online will grow but not on the traditional ads. I think banners have capped-out on what they can do." (Stuart, interview 2000).

While banners, tiles and buttons may be the types of ads most users are familiar with, says Stuart, other ways for online news sources to make money are through sponsorship of particular articles, events on the Web site

and affiliate marketing, which is essentially a way of obtaining revenue for each revenue dollar you send them through your site (Stuart, interview 2000).

Also, adds Sexsmith, it is important to engage a reader in the ad with words like "Win", "Contest" or "Free":

Contests generally do well on the Net. For whatever reason, people like to participate; they're interactive, easy to enter and they've done well. So, some of our most successful advertising campaigns with some of our clients have involved contests (Stuart, interview 2000).

Although it is not immediately apparent, Forbes' Journalist Penelope Patsuris recognizes that effective advertising can resolve some privacy issues in terms of divulging personal information. She concludes that advertising information on the Web has to become more relevant to the needs of consumers and that advertisers need to think in terms of consumer needs so that they might stop bombarding them with useless information (Patsuris, 1998, 1-2).

In her article, "Where do we go from here?", Patsuris quotes Joseph McCambley, president of Thunderhouse, as saying, "On the Internet the consumers will ask for information or services that are best for them and block the ones that aren't, forcing advertisers to make their message more relevant. I'm only going to allow someone to have information about me if it makes my life better" (in Patsuris, 1998, 2).

This corresponds with Brin's view that people will give out personal information if it benefits them. Privacy becomes secondary to issues

concerning relevance of information, benefit to the individual and convenience.

Consequently, the discussion of solutions has come full-circle and led back, once again, to the issue of privacy. This time looking at ways, other than what was just discussed, for possible solutions to allay people's fears about the online disclosure of personal information.

Yushikiavitshus first points to regulation as a means of decreasing "organized hackers that steal personal data and transmit it to others as a source of revenues" (Yushikiavitshus, 1999, 2). This also includes designing principles to be employed in the creation of software packages that track when personal information is given out on the Web (Yushikiavitshus, 1999, 2).

Another interesting suggestion by Yushikiavitshus is to follow a code of ethics as well as "set up behavioural and civic standards for the users of the new information and communication technologies" (Yushikiavitshus, 1999, 2). Ultimately, this would require a review of educational policies and that all learners be trained not only in the new technology but also in recognizing its impact on society and individuals (Yushikiavitshus, 1999, 2). His solutions may seem utopian in that they present an ideal situation for consideration. However, he's not alone in his vision.

Similarly, Herbert Burkert, in his essay "Privacy-Enhancing Technologies" [PET], discusses the implications of using trust as a foundation to privacy-enhancing technologies. The aim of trust would be to encourage

individuals to consider interacting more often in uncertain environments (Burkert, 1998, 138-140). This “involves a conscious decision to interact *although* there is risk” (Burkert, 1998, 139) because when risk is eliminated, there is no opportunity to trust or be trusted. Burkert suggests that the need for trust should be designed into PETs. It is the individual, as Yushman suggested as well, who should change his attitude towards displays of trust.

Conclusion

Steven Brill, editor in chief for *Brill's Content*, explained that:

The real threat of the new media is directly aimed at daily newspapers because classified advertising is the key. Classified advertising is the perfect thing to be on the web. You don't browse classified ads unless you know you need it. You want to find what you want to find. If you're looking for a job you don't want to go through the car ads you want to go to jobs you want to search. It's the easiest thing, you shouldn't have to get that section of the paper unless you want it. It was made for the Internet. The problem newspapers have is that they should have been there first. They should have owned that franchise. They should have owned it from the beginning. They should have cannibalized it from the beginning (New York, Oct. 99).

Steven Brill's commentary pushes the notion that some advertising is best suited to the Internet. However, his eagerness seems to suggest that online advertising should replace conventional advertising. What he doesn't recognize is the continuing need for what already exists. Although it may appear beneficial to have a new medium replace an old one, it discounts the importance of the original medium.

In Levinson's book, this displacement theory is argued at some length. True, once a new medium is introduced, the old seems archaic in its inability to encapsulate the advantages of the new. Yet, "a media inadequacy is neither replaced entirely by a new medium nor obliged by media competition to rely upon its inadvertent advantage for human communication; it is rather not replaced, or shifted in its use, at all" (Levinson, 1998, 102). A new medium is employed only in so far as it is used. Although classified advertising may be "perfect" for the Web, it still requires its newspaper counterpart in order to be useful to everyone in society.

For instance, "A popular ad-world cliché is that Web advertising is now at the same point TV advertising was in its infancy. In those days, an actor would sometimes carry a big sign with the advertiser's logo across the screen. Typical Web banners are just barely removed from those days" (Gimein, 1999, 4). Although television advertising is not the same, it still exists. Also, it exists in conjunction with radio advertising, newspaper advertising, billboard advertising, etc. Each time a new medium was introduced, and thus a new form of advertising, it simply added to the old and provided another avenue for advertising. The same is true with online advertising; it will never replace conventional newspaper advertising but only provide another means to disseminate information.

Because online news sources are a relatively new phenomenon, there is much hype about their potential. This hype is not entirely unfounded.

Online news sources have opened new doors to the way news is distributed and assimilated by users. In turn, this has led to a lot of speculation about online advertising and its role in online news.

While some people do complain about the presence of advertisements on news sites, according to Sexsmith, others understand its necessity. She remarks:

We still get complaints about our ads too. Some people would prefer to not see them at all but most are actually quite intelligent about it because obviously they know they're getting a service for free and the price is worth the advertising. So most of them are really quite tolerant and in fact, many of them have written us saying the sites we offer are so wonderful and so valuable to them they try to support the advertisers because they appreciate the service (Sexsmith, interview, 2000).

As it stands today, online advertising has yet to find the same fierce hold on electronic news sources as conventional advertising has found on print sources. This is not surprising, considering it has just begun to command recognition.

However, the potential is there and what that potential can create is another form of medium -- the online news source -- that will have the capability to stand alone as a viable news entity. Online news sources are following the same path as the newspaper.

Once online news sources turn online advertising into a steady, sustainable income, the dependence on their newspaper counterpart is sure to end.

The Future of Online News

Introduction

The final chapter attempts to provide some indication as to where Internet news source might find its niche. In the previous chapters, we examined issues relating to trust, usability, and reliability from the perspectives of the news industry, the journalist and the individual user. Also, we examined the topic of advertising and how it has been -- and will continue to be -- a major crux within the news industry, both online and off.

It has been argued that online news sources are currently in a state of flux because they have been unable to weigh the above issues and successfully reach an audience that wants more from the Internet. Indeed, an audience that wants more because it know it can get more. Overall, online news sources have not been able to mesh what is best about conventional media with what is best about the Internet. Hence, this "imbalance" creates fluctuating patterns of news consumption and distribution on the Internet.

But I believe specific issues will emerge from the flux and come to the forefront of online media. These include issues relating to the personalization of news on the Web, the emergence of online classifieds, and the cataloguing of user profiles. This chapter ends with a brief overview of my preferred online news site and why I think it is successful in relation to the Canadian Web sites studied in chapter two.

Personalization

Personalization refers to the ability to organize news on an individual basis. This is one of the strengths of the Internet yet it is also one of the major problems for online media today. Paradoxically, many online news sources try to control what the reader gets to see rather than letting the reader choose and determine the nature of the news experience. Within a newsroom, editors and producers decide the order in which news will be presented to consumers. Online, however, this is not feasible because users have already become accustomed to "surfing" the Web at their convenience and discretion.

In some ways, the lack of user freedom that exists on news sites comes from the fact that the industry shovels its product online without much adaptation. Another reason, according to author Joseph Lasica, is that conventional media editors and producers are afraid of turning over power to the user. He writes:

No trend threatens the guardians of old media more than personalization. The very notion challenges the philosophical underpinnings of traditional media: We, the gatekeepers, gather the news and tell you what's important. Under this arrangement, editors sort through and rank the news, controlling everything from the assignment of stories to their tone, slant and prominence on the page (Lasica, 2000, 1).

As a result, news online is presented to the reader as it would appear in conventional media; top stories on top, followed by other sections, as laid out by the editor or producer.

This kind of news control will find it difficult to continue online because, unlike conventional media, users have more freedom to pick and chose what they want to link to first; unlike the layout of a newspaper, the online user doesn't even have to look at the top story if he doesn't want to see it and he certainly doesn't have to sit through a whole broadcast to get the weather or sports news.

Lasica believes this will eventually eliminate the role of editor altogether from online media:

Personalized news eliminates or greatly reduces the role of the editor in the news equation. The reporter writes the story, the copy editor (if there is one) edits it, another person indexes it for easy retrieval, and the user decides what's important ... Users can be reached simultaneously with one-of-a-kind messages. The old formula of editors and news directors having the lone say in determining what's important has become an anachronism in cyberspace. The user, after all, is in the best position to know what he or she finds most interesting, valuable or useful (2000, 1)

This is not to say, however, that the role of editor will be eliminated from all media. That would be impossible because conventional media rely on editors and producers to control the flow and layout of news. Indeed, even many online users may prefer to have their news experience arranged by news professionals rather than taking on the role of gate-keeper themselves.

User control only really exists online and the news industry is beginning to realize how that is true. Many Internet news sites now offer customized email delivery to readers who want it. This allows users to choose the news sections that they are most interested in, i.e., sports, or

business, and have those stories emailed to them. In all likelihood, it will not be long before Internet news sources offer users the ability to customize their Web browser so that only the sections they are interested in will appear on their news Web site every time they log-on.

Online Classifieds

In a report written for the European Journalism Centre that includes a section regarding the future of classifieds in the online news industry, co-authors Jan Bierhoff, Minique van Dusseldorp, and Róisín Scullion conclude:

the fact that up to now newspapers were the main medium to channel this information does not mean this will also be the case on the Internet. Services that migrate to the Web do not necessarily seek out newspaper sites to reach their audience. Advertisements move to those sites that are most frequently visited; be they search engines, free e-mail services, or sites of television stations. Even personal ads and classifieds grouped together turn out to be an interesting service in themselves. For the printed newspaper there is therefore a risk of losing revenues in this field, especially when it comes to specialised job markets (1999, 22).

In essence, if online news sources don't find a way to transition their conventional classifieds into online classifieds, a huge portion of their revenue could disappear.

In the past, conventional media and classifieds were a perfect fit because it was the most effective way to link buyers and sellers (Schaeffer, 1999, 1). Today, however, online classifieds are doing the same and users

are foregoing their loyalty to the sources they trust and turning to those that can provide them with the information they need in the easiest, fastest and cheapest way. Journalist Barry Schaeffer reports:

of all that newspapers do, classified advertising is among the least protected by brand loyalty. Advertisers care only about reaching buyers, and readers care only about finding what they want quickly and easily. If either find it outside the traditional newspaper-based print model, they'll go there in a heartbeat. Anyone doubting that fact need only remember the rise of the free "pennysaver" publications that debuted widely in Southern California in the early sixties and spread rapidly across the nation (Schaeffer, 1999, 1).

That said, it becomes prudent for online media sources that rely heavily on their classifieds in conventional media to start looking for ways to bring the two together effectively.

The fact that classifieds are exploding on the Internet should come as no surprise. According to *Computer Economics*, 10,000 resumes were posted online in 1995. This jumped to 2.5 million in 1998 and is expected to reach 16 million by 2002 (Chaisson, 2000, 1). This is a strong indication that online classifieds have the potential to draw in huge numbers. Ultimately, it will translate into more eyes for advertisers who are linked to the classifieds sites because "they generate up to 40 percent of the total page views on the site. That opens up excellent possibilities for banner ad sales tie-ins to the searchable databases, and additional related content, including transactional services" (Zollman, 1998, 4).

Thus, the most rewarding element to come out of classified advertising is the ability to bring in other sources of advertising. As Peter Zollman writes:

Newspapers can be cautious or aggressive; they can outsource or do it themselves; they can buy or license technology; they can charge for online ads or offer them as another service to readers and advertisers. The most important decision, however, is the first one: To put the ads online. Newspapers that decide not to place classifieds online may find in a few years that they no longer run many classifieds in print - and that 30 percent or 40 percent of their revenue has disappeared with their classified advertising section (1998, 4-5).

On that note, the most successful example of an online classified Web site, with the largest draw to date, is workopolis.com. Since its launch on January 26, 2000, it has become the largest Canadian job site and contains all the jobs and careers listed in *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, and *The Hamilton Spectator* (Chaisson, 2000, 1). Most important, however, is that workopolis.com is proving to be effective. Journalist Gail Chaisson reports:

According to a globecareers.com survey and traffic data, 69% of users have applied to a job seen on the site and 40% of those have been contacted for an interview. Users tend to be in the higher demographic sectors, with 80% having college and/or university degrees (compared to 25% of the general Canadian population) and 37% have personal incomes of \$50,000 (compared to 14% of Canadians) (2000, 2).

Keeping the rapid growth of classifieds in mind, it is likely that more online news sources will try to benefit from it for three main reasons. One, the Internet is an arena in which employers/employees and buyers/sellers can exchange information and do business much quicker than reading the entire classified section in a newspaper because search engines allow users to

specify the information they want to see. Two, the Internet is the first medium in which employers have the opportunity to reach out to interesting candidates without having to wait for resumés since they are already available online. Third, potential employees can store their information online without having to re-send or re-enter it each time a potential job is posted.

Consequently, it is likely that we will see more services currently in conventional media migrate to the Web because it is a medium in which supply and demand come together.

Cataloguing User Profiles

As we have already discussed, the profiling of Internet information is a common practice. Each time we log on to a Web site, the possibility exists that information about us is being captured, stored, and variously assembled. The US FTC (Federal Trade Commission) chairman Robert Pitofsky describes this practice as follows:

The use of conventional demographic information by advertisers to target consumers most likely to be interested in their products and services is a staple of the advertising industry, and does not raise any eyebrows. Online profiling, however, looks like it may be a very different beast. When I see, read, or hear an ad in the offline market place, "it" takes away no information from me. But, the online entity placing the ad may have the ability to watch me as I surf across various web sites, record what ads I already have seen, make sure I do not see them again, and show me ads it presumes will be of interest to me based upon the sites I have visited and whether I have clicked on other ads I have seen. And, all of this can take place without my knowledge, let alone consent. On a personal level, I find this more than a bit disturbing (in *CardTrack*, 1999, 1).

Pitosfsky brings up two points that require consideration; one is that the collection of demographic information is accepted in conventional advertising and two is that he is disturbed by the same type of data-collection when it pertains to the Web.

Of these considerations, I see two possible resolutions.

First, at some point in the future, online news sources will begin collecting information about users, which they will in turn sell to advertisers. At that time, online news sources will begin seeing revenue based on the information they can supply to advertisers, just as magazines, newspapers, radio, and television can sell advertising based on demographics captured about their audiences.

Second, once people have accepted the idea that data collection on the Internet is no different than data collection that occurs when we buy groceries, buy magazines, watch television, etc., the "red flag" will lower. Eventually, people won't care if their information is being captured if it brings benefit to them. We already see this happening in instances where people provide personal information about themselves in order to get free access to a particular Web site or have a product shipped to them directly.

Salon.com

In chapter two, I examined four Canadian Web sites to determine what online news sources were doing in terms of links, word count, graphics, refresh, advertising, etc. What I found was that each had an element that was

better than the others: *The National Post* provided links to additional references on its homepage; *The Globe and Mail* utilized the most advertising; *CBC News Online* continually updated the Web site as news became available and; *GlobalTV* had a homepage that provided a variety of different internal links.

But there is one online news source that I feel combines many of the good attributes found in those mentioned above. That Web site is salon.com.

This Web site is a good example of what I hope to see more of in the future. It combines elements of good writing with quick turnout, varied word count, simple organization, and topics that are not found anywhere else. What makes salon.com different from conventional media -- and most of the online news sources that exist today -- is that it provides users with items of news they *can't* get anywhere else. Also, they *have* been able to take what's best of the Web and merge that into what's best about conventional media.

First, and similar to the four Canadian Web sites, salon.com employs reputable journalists. Editor David Talbot believes in using journalists who are familiar with the daily workings of a newsroom and know how to write effectively (Lassica, 1998, 2). As a result, readers have a certain degree of trust in the group of professionals who are producing the news at salon.com.

Second, because salon.com is made up of journalists, they have experience with breaking stories and getting to the heart of the matter quickly

and competently. In relation to the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, Andrew Ross, managing editor of Salon said:

The speed of our response had a great deal to do with our coming from a daily newspaper background. This was what you did — jump all over a story, especially coming from an afternoon paper on the West Coast with three to four editions a day, where you remake the paper all throughout the day. To some extent, this is second nature (in Lasica, 1998, 2).

Here then we have an excellent example of combining the best of conventional media and online media.

Third, and still building on the notion of combining the best of both media, is the fact that salon.com uses very little sound and video. Instead, the Web site is "stylish and understated, with sleek, modern typefaces, legible body text, fast-loading graphics and none of the multimedia bells and whistles that play havoc with slower modems" (Lasica, 1998, 3). This Web site successfully considers the user in its design and observes elements that pertain directly to readers; for instance, what would be most comfortable for them to read, how long are they willing to wait for downloads, how fast is the average user's computer, etc.

Fourth, salon.com rationalizes its story lengths depending on what can be found in conventional media and what can not. Stories and columns run shorter than in print while interviews and in-depth articles can be extremely long (Lasica, 1998, 3). This is an appropriate use of space on the Web because people are more likely to want to read longer pieces online if it is something they can't find anywhere else.

Finally, what sets salon.com aside from most other Web sites is that it doesn't shy away from what conventional media won't cover. Some say that this makes Salon a tabloid because it covers sensationalistic stories more than hard news. But Talbot maintains:

I'd describe Salon as a smart tabloid. Tabloid in the sense that we want a popular readership, we want to engage and entertain and provoke them. We're not just an advertising vehicle. We're something that is meant to be read and argued with. And so Salon often tries to use all those visceral kind of ways that tabloids connect with people. Our cover lines try to be sexy and we tend to run a lot of stories about sex and crime and scandal, all the things that are the meat and potatoes of the tabloid press. And I see nothing wrong with that. They're subjects that people want to talk about to help them figure out their own lives. And those stories can be approached in an intelligent fashion, without pandering (in Lasica, 1998, 5).

Again, salon.com shows itself to be an example of how to combine the best of all media. It writes stories intellectually and with the attributes of good journalism, such as clear writing and attribution, together with the risky, almost flirtatious elements of the Internet. Salon is willing to take the risks the Internet offers without jeopardizing its reputable nature.

Of course, Salon is not without its flaws and the argument has been made that it puts too much information on its homepage, making it look cluttered and scrolling on too long.

The point is, however, that salon.com is an excellent example of what most online news sources should strive for. Once that point is reached, they can attempt to go further. For now, it must be enough to know that the

potential exists to merge the best of conventional media with online media and wait for the day the two will come together.

Conclusion

Finally, in this conclusion, it is necessary to remind you, the reader, that what you have read is a collection of my thoughts and ideas, which combined give my interpretation of the Internet news medium. I have not attempted to ascribe anything within these pages as the final word on the subject. That would be impossible.

Recalling again my interview with Ed Greenspon, he described my thesis as being a moving target. How true this is. By the time you have read this work, it is quite possible that it will be outdated or some new technology would have been invented that has totally changed the face of the Internet as we know it.

With that said, it would be useful to revisit the situation of online news in ten years to see how, or even if any changes have been made. Perhaps the news industry will have found its niche in cyberspace and the Internet as a source of news will have flourished. Or, it's also possible that everyone will have dropped out of the online news game entirely.

But for now, here is what I have to say...

I think the Internet as a news source is being given too much credit, or rather, it has been taken for granted the amount of work that still needs to be accomplished. There is no doubt in my mind that the Internet is quickly emerging as the new media and will ultimately come to be considered just

that. Sooner or later, "print, radio, television and Internet" will be the news media that consumers refer to.

Nevertheless, there is still much to be learned. If Internet news sites don't become standardized in terms of how they function, how they relate to their users, and how advertising is done, consumers will eventually tire of trying to constantly adapt. It has been proven time and time again that people are most comfortable with what they know. Currently, they cannot fathom what the Internet holds in its news future; they can't know because even the news makers don't know what the future may bring and how that will be transposed to the Internet. There is no uniformity.

The Internet provides the opportunity to deliver news when it happens and in the frame of text, audio or visual. This will be attractive to consumers who will eventually come to demand news as it happens rather than in retrospect and who want the news in whatever form suits them best. Still, I don't think any of the current media will die, they will only have to reinvent themselves in order to accentuate their benefits as either a print or broadcast medium.

All in all, this thesis has attempted to show that the current Internet news source is in a state of flux . Yet, when it comes down to the bottom line, that is only my opinion.

Here is what others had to say...

Edward Greenspon
Executive Editor, *Globe and Mail*

The Internet is a baby with some wonderful attributes, but the personality traits it will exhibit as it matures are impossible to assess. It certainly holds the potential to provide editors with a new medium of communications, one that can live comfortably in the worlds of print and broadcast as well as in a world of its own. It allows us to blend the speed of newsradio with the depth of the library. It frees users to manipulate data beyond the capacity of traditional media. The Internet also allows us to go beyond journalist-mediated news and include instantaneous user-to-producer information and user-to-user information.

The web no doubt will suffer a rough adolescence, one that will shake our faith in it. But it has a future of unparalleled promise

Paul Benedetti
Executive Producer C-Health, *Canoe.ca*

The Internet is destined to become the most powerful and pervasive source of news in the world. The reasons are transparent - reach, accessibility, and immediacy. The Internet allows the immediacy of radio, the visual power of television, the text richness and depth of newspapers, and an archival capacity that exceeds libraries. Already, the best Internet news sites are challenging traditional media in speed and scope of coverage. Soon, as electronic newsrooms grow, the capacity of the Internet to deliver context - in

the form of backgrounders, editorials and investigative pieces, will move beyond that of traditional media.

In North America and Europe, the number of people with access to the Internet grows exponentially. In politically repressed nations or those with limited economies, the growth may be slower, but the impact for freedom of information will be even greater.

Ken Wolff
Executive Producer, *CBC News Online*

In the future people will even be more demanding about wanting news when they want it, not when programmers make it available. They will also want their news in the form they like best. Some will opt for audio, some video, some text and some with all three combined. Those who want it combined may see it on a computer screen or on a television, but the quality of delivery and images will certainly be more advanced than what we have now.

People will want simplified text versions of stories available in electronic form. Text stories are not dead, in fact we may be entering a renaissance of the printed word. The electronic distribution of news and information will continue in ways we have only begun to consider. You will soon see news on Palm Pilots, cellular phones, on refrigerator doors and in automobiles. People will want information when they want it, delivered in ways that are convenient to them.

Lisa Stuart
Director of Sales and Marketing, *National Post Online*

The future of the Internet as a news source is strong, yet will continually be re-defined. The Internet will act as a conduit and allow "new sources" such as ourselves to act as "infomediaries" pushing the news via a number of channels to consumers. Internet technology will allow us to view our news wherever and however we want. Already cell phone networks such as AvantGo allow you to subscribe to news channels on your cell phone. Palm Tops are also included in the currently available list. Next we will be able to receive the news in a highly customized fashion in our homes. Scan the headlines on your fridge or coffee maker for example. Bill Gates has currently resigned from his full time job at Microsoft to get back into product development. Wiring the home is his current focus. Customization will become stronger and stronger as we are able to request what news we want and in what priority. The current boom in permission based email marketing is the beginning of this trend.

Convergence of technologies is leveling the playing field already. TV, Internet, Cable, Newspaper, Radio, Magazines - are all viewed as "content" to be pushed via the best technology to the consumers in a highly customized fashion. We will be faced with a few "mega" information corporations. The key players are currently merging and buying each other out creating this new competitive arena (e.g.. AOL/Time/Warner & BCE/Sympatico/Alta Vista).

Strategic Partnerships have never been more important and traditional competitors are finding themselves "in bed together" in this Online scramble for dollars and leadership. The Internet will never be an exclusive news source - print will not die. Each medium will be forced to maximize its delivery mechanism and target its users more carefully. A Millennium Survey conducted by Deloitte & Touche claims "electronic delivery will be the key source of business news for most executives in 2005. Specifically, 91% will turn to Internet informational services." The winners in the fluid Online news game will be those who can use this new medium as a platform for learning and implement the knowledge obtained to effect real change in their Online offerings. We can rely on the old adage; "nothing will be more constant than change".

Wendy Sexsmith
Chief Web Producer, Globe Information Services

The Internet will be the primary source of news for the generation of young people graduating from educational institutions today. It is already a major news source for people using the Internet on a daily basis. The Internet has the ability to deliver news to people when they want it, how they want it, and where they want it. It also provides consumers with the ability to define very specific filters so they only see the news that matters to them. This interactivity is what defines the medium and what makes it a preferred source of news particularly where people are time-constrained.

Blair Shewchuk
One of the Senior Writers, *CBC News Online*

Predictions are very unreliable, someone once quipped, especially about the future.

However, I think we can get a glimpse of journalism's evolution on the Web over the next few years from some recent headlines: "America Online to buy Time-Warner for \$160 billion," and "BCE offers \$2.3 billion for CTV." It doesn't matter how fancy our technology gets, with faster delivery of fatter computer files, the key will remain content -- i.e., supplying people with news, weather, sports, entertainment, and so forth. Every print organization, from the National Post to the National Enquirer, will expand online, and more broadcasters will become electronic "publishers" (offering text with their audio and video reports).

In this age of information overload, journalism as a profession with thrive because there will be an increased demand to make sense of the world, sorting out the nonsense from the necessary, and putting stories into context in an unprecedented way (including links to previous coverage as well as relevant external Web sites).

But will there be giant mergers between newspapers and broadcasters in the long term? Will ink-stained, home-delivered papers that are "updated" only once a day even survive the next century? Will the writing get worse or better? Will governments step in to try to regulate the Internet the way it did with radio and television? No one knows, of course. And before one even

attempts to guess that far down the road, it's humbling to remember an observation by the English writer Norman Macrae: "An extrapolation of the trends of the 1880s would show today's cities buried under horse manure."

Martin O'Malley
Writer, *CBC Online News*

Online Journalism, or the Internet as a news source, is a can't-miss prediction. It has to supercede what I call "deadtree journalism" over the years, and probably quite quickly. At lunch the other day I encountered, once again, an older person (over 40), who told me she prefers reading newspapers for her news, and she made motions as if she were grasping the edges of a newspaper page. I told her, there's something romantic and wonderful and nostalgic about horse and buggies, too -- but they were replaced by newer technology because they could not not be. There are people, I'm sure, who would prefer to put a stack of 33 1/3 long playing records on a turntable and softly put the diamond-tipped needle on the right track. Sorry, CDs came along and that's the end of that.

Online journalism is just too fast, and too portable, not to have a huge impact on journalism. I like to call Online Journalism "print radio," as it has the immediacy and ambience of radio, but definitely is a print medium. Two years down the road, a reporter could cover the war in Kosovo with a Palm Pilot, a tape recorder and a digital camera -- to use for both stills and video. Online Journalism will democratize journalism, taking it out from the monopoly of

official journalism. In fact, it will be more like when I started in journalism, when a typical newsroom would be occupied by bright Grade-10 dropouts and PhDs, sitting side by side. I predict it will spell the end for journalism schools. We encourage so-called "ordinary people" to submit articles, diaries to us. Check our diaries from Jocelyn Hainsworth, a farmer from Redvers, Saskatchewan. She has never been past high school, never been to journalism school, never worked for newspapers, radio or television, but she is proving to be a first-rate "reporter," or, more accurately, "feature writer."

It relates to a long held belief that journalism got off on a wild wrong footing by thinking of itself as a monopoly, when it has always been a "craft." A monopoly implies exclusion, and as far as jobs are concerned, this means work like being a doctor, lawyer or architect. You need a license to practice. God help us if only graduate "journalists" are allowed to be journalists. Online Journalism will bring journalism back to the people. It will demystify journalism, and that's a good thing. It will also erode the celebrity nature of journalism. ("Celebrity corrupts," as I said in my book More Than Meets the Eye: Watching Television Watching Us, "and absolute celebrity corrupts absolutely.") Journalists should *never* be celebrities, just honest, accurate searchers of truth. Imagine a situation where you could not be a novelist unless you graduated from "novelists school." Eeeeeee!

Wayne MacPhail
Freelance e-Journalist

Many newspapers, in Canada and the U.S. will find that they've waited too long to understand and experiment with the Internet and will, at best, continue to create brochureware from their newspaper content. Other newspapers will suffer from completely new companies offering local news via the Internet in innovative ways.

I also think there's a chance that news on the Internet will be more tied to advertising than is print. It could, in some cases, be the worst of happy talk TV news blended with the worse of community boosterism. I hope it doesn't evolve that way, but it is entirely possible.

The fact that newspapers have allowed ebay, bid.com and monster board to even come into existence suggests that in the future the newspapers will continue to fumble the Internet ball in other lucrative areas.

Finally, I think we'll see the Internet via cellphones become a popular source of headline news or headlines linked to audio reports (much like radio) via cellphone. Wireless news will shortly be an extremely important information source.

Endnotes

Chapter One

ⁱ On April 13, 2000 (after the bulk of this thesis was written), Edward Greenspon was appointed to spearhead the new "Globe Interactive", which will offer real-time, reporting on major business stories produced by the editorial staff of The Globe and Mail. While Greenspon's official title will remain executive editor, it has become his responsibility to lead the new initiative. In relation to the appointment and decision to offer original news coverage of breaking business stories, Greenspon said, "This important step will provide Canadians with Globe and Mail reporting, analysis, and insights throughout the day as stories break ... We have chosen to emphasize business coverage first because of its fast-paced, hourly developments and The Globe's national leadership in business reporting"

While the ramifications of this initiative have yet to be examined, it is another example of the constant flux within the online news industry as well as its constant growth and redevelopment.

ⁱⁱ Nancy DeHart worked solely with Thomas Bink, who was then the Web designer as is now our Art Director, until late December, 1999. A shift in corporate direction at the end of 1999 led to better resources for 2000 in order to build a larger team. At the time of this thesis, five additional people had been hired.

ⁱⁱⁱ On May 10, 1993, Paul Bernardo – who was then in police custody on rapid charges – was charged with the murders of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French. He was convicted for his crimes in 1995.

^{iv} Neal Parsons helped collect much of the banned court details relating to the Bernardo trial and posted those finding on the *Alt.fan.karla.homolka* newsgroup.

^v The view that time delays are important in the field of communication applies not only to the Internet as a whole but also to specific elements that deal with the Internet and online news sources. In particular, Roger Fidler, author of *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media* (1997) points to the theory of Paul Saffo and what he calls the '30 year rule'. This theory will not be overlooked as it plays a crucial role in the development of online advertising and will be further developed in later chapters. For now, it is important to keep in mind that change, even though we may want it quickly, often does not adhere to our desire to see a new technology implemented.

^{vi} Greenspon also reminds us that "when you went from radio to television many years ago, essentially what people did was put radio up on TV. Today, I think basically people are doing that. They're putting newspapers or broadcasts up on the Web." (Greenspon, interview, 2000).

Essentially, the news often imitates the old before it finds its own feet to stand on.

In terms of what we see on the Internet today, mainly from news sites that have a paper counterpart, Stephens' theory and Greenspon's remarks explain why newspapers are currently borrowing from their print versions and posting it directly online. This is not at all surprising considering that it makes sense for a newspaper to take a form of communication that works and try to mimic it in the new medium. What doesn't make sense, however, is to continue this practice once the new medium begins to distinguish itself as a separate entity.

^{vii} Evidence for this argument can be found in a consideration of television, which since its inception has been credited with everything from demoralizing children to dismantling the family unit to causing violent behaviour. The trend today seems to be towards the Internet and how it has negatively effected our society. Pornography on the Internet, spamming, and cyber-hackers are only a few of the negative hues that have been painted.

^{viii} The question that remains, however, is whether these fears are founded.

On October 31, 1996, *CNET* published an article entitled, "Four Horsemen of Net Apocalypse," which asserted that the Internet is in danger of falling prey to attacks represented by the four signs of the apocalypse. These disasters and what they represent include: "Pestilence (the millennium bug), War (cyber terrorism), Famine (Internet address limitations), and Death (traffic overload)" (*CNET*, 1996, 1).

In terms of pestilence, the article refers to the Y2K bug that was feared might cripple computer systems worldwide (*CNET*, 1996, 1). Now that the problem has passed – with far fewer problems than were anticipated – the threat seems to have been overwrought. In actuality, the fear of the unknown consequences far exceeded the actual scope of the problem.

For war, the article declares, "Net users must now worry about guarding against dangers from without and within...But now security experts and the government are worried about international crime rings and full-fledged terrorist organizations hiding out in cyberspace and using it as a launching pad for a whole new kind of crime" (*CNET*, 1996, 1). No doubt, cyber-crime is a real plight for authorities yet it is not as crippling as this statement foresaw. The February 2000 "attacks" on electronic commerce Web sites were quickly solved and those responsible quickly found out. There's no guaranteeing that situations similar to this will not recur or even become far worse, but there is a belief that authorities will advance at the same level in order to stop such crimes.

Famine, according to the *CNET* article, will occur because "the Internet is outstripping the number of available Net addresses" (2). Another indicator is that "the demand for top-level domains (ending in ".com" or ".net")

has already outgrown the supply, and many businesses worry that the best names are already gone. Like anywhere else, for businesses on the Web, it's location, location, location" (*CNET*, 1996, 2). Still, more than three years after the article was written, this threat has yet to make a dent in our cyber-situation. True, location is important, but it appears that people have discovered innovative solutions to creating domain names or buying the desired name from a current holder.

Finally, death will come because "The Internet may simply die of its own popularity. Cyberspace can grow without constraints and without limitation, but we can only get there by running over real wire in the real world paid for by real money" (*CNET*, 2).

^{ix} According to Galloway, individuals form patterns in their news consumption; some read the paper over breakfast, some listen to the radio in the car, others watch the news at 11pm religiously, and so on. Also, the news the consume depends on the ease of consumption, i.e., it's easier to listen to the radio in the car than read the paper.

^x Using a combination of fact and fiction, Matt Drudge produces an electronic magazine called the Drudge Report (www.drudgereport.com). He has been credited with braking stories conventional media wouldn't report, but in the same vain, he has been chastised for reporting false information with no reliable source attribution.

^{xi} Matt Drudge first reported the Clinton and Lewinsky affair in 1998. In this case, President Bill Clinton was accused of having an affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

^{xii} This is not meant to suggest that individuals take everything they hear or see from conventional media at face value. Rather, conventional media steers towards stories that are "safe" in terms of facts and attribution so that the guess work is taken away from the individual; they have been doing this for so long that some people automatically assume conventional media is accurate and truthful.

Chapter Two

^{xiii} Li's survey, which has been adjusted in this chapter, is based on an Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion (IMRD) format. The Introduction explains what this survey is about, Method describes the quantitative and qualitative measurements used plus the reasoning behind those, Results refers to the outcome of the survey and Discussion rationalizes those results.

This chapter will be revisited throughout the rest of this thesis to serve as a model of what current Canadian Internet news sources are doing today in regards to their Internet production.

^{xiv} This is often called "shovelware" and will be referred to again through this thesis.

^{xv} "Dig" or "Click-through" are terms meaning that the readers has to click more than one link in order to find the information they are looking for.

^{xvi} Eye-scrolling devices are visual aids that help the eye move down a page by giving them visual targets to follow.

Chapter Three

^{xvii} By this, Benedetti means that news in newspaper or in broadcast is usually ordered in the most important story - as decided by editors - is put first, followed by others in order of importance. This hierarchy, argues Benedetti, does not exist online because readers have the ability to choose for themselves which story they want to read first.

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