

2006 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

Day 2, Panel 2: Trends in Online News: Audiences and Content

Moderator: Mark Tremayne, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism, UT Austin

Panelists:

Donica Mensing, University of Nevada-Reno

Tania Cantrell, UT Austin

Major Highfield & Justin Sablich, Syracuse University

Cindy Royal, Virginia Commonwealth University

Sue Robinson, Temple University

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: We are about to start. I want to someone was Hello? Hello? Someone was complaining that I was not making a reference to the millions and millions of people who are watching us in this Saturday evening in, ah morning in Asia no, evening in Asia, or whatever, all over the world. So, my good morning, world.

And I want to introduce you Mark Tremayne, who is the chair of the Research Component of the, of this conference, and an esteemed colleague here at the University of Texas at Austin.

MARK TREMAYNE: My interests lie in New Media, but before that I worked in broadcasting, and I'd like to talk just briefly about something which combines those things. And then I'll introduce the panelists, who are going to talk about trends in online news, a number of different topics.

I wondered if you had if anyone was familiar with this site, YouTube.com. It's I sort of see it as where blogging was five years ago, six years ago. We now have people doing their own version their own videos. And this is a site where people can upload their videos for free, and share them with whoever wants to see them. Which is a substantial thing, considering the bandwidth that's required to do something like this. So, those of you who haven't seen this site, it's like the blogosphere, it sort of runs the gamut from the very, very poorly done, amateurish type of thing, to very high-quality, very interesting content.

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But if you can think about how this might affect online news, perhaps this is something that online news sites could get in front of a little bit, and perhaps do something at the local level with content and with citizens going out and covering things with cameras. Some of this stuff shot on cell phones, like this little clip, [clip plays]. That was a guy that just happened upon an armed robbery at a drugstore, when he went in the middle of the night to get some Tums. So he shot it on his cell phone, and narrated a little bit.

This is, I think, [clip plays; cheering] some type of local swim team that has won something. And so they decided to put the, to put a video of it up on the web. [clip continues; cheering] OK. So you can imagine, at a local level, you could not afford to cover every swim meet. But, if your audience will go out and shoot some video of various things, and you put that on your site, you see its free content, and some people will watch it and be interested in it, and a lot of people won't. But. Anyway.

I see it as a sort of coming video, as you know it, if you spend any time on national news websites, is sort of becoming the thing; all the sites are pushing video these days. And this is a way to sort of generate video without necessarily a lot of cost. Alright. We can talk about that later, if you'd like.

I want to introduce our panelists today, and we'll take these in the order that they're in the program. And so we'll begin with Donica Mensing, who's at the University of Nevada, Reno, and her paper "Click Here to Learn More: A Comparison of Online Newspaper, Online Broadcast, and Online-Only News Sites."

DONICA MENSING: Good morning, and I'm happy to be here. A couple of notes about the research, before I present it: one, this is an exploratory study, so the results really are preliminary; I wouldn't say that they're conclusive in any way, so I appreciate any feedback anyone has about ways to improve it, or what you see in it. Second thing, the program has an abstract that I wrote before I finished analyzing all the data. And I actually changed the conclusion, so Ignore the abstract in the program, because there's a little different take on the end of it that I've been thinking about. I have really enjoyed all the presentations so far, and they've had an exciting look at the future. Mine is looking at the past, so a little perspective on where we've come from. But, ah, it's just a warning that the data is not as current as what we've been looking at.

I had two purposes in doing this research. The first is to begin looking at differences between types of online news. I really think that the whole idea of an online newspaper is going to seem very anachronistic in the future; online broadcasts that we will just have online-only news. But for the moment, the fact that online news is coming from these different types of news organizations means that they are producing different types of sites, different types of news, and so we can learn by comparing across types of online news.

My second purpose is looking at, how can we improve what people learn from our stories about politics? I think it really matters. And the surveys of American citizens

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shows, one, the level of political knowledge is very low, and the level of political engagement is relatively low. As we've seen the last few years, politics really matters. And I think being able to look at the way we cover political news stories in journalism and perhaps changing some of our patterns and traditions is something that we can do, particularly, online.

So that's the background for the study. What I did was look at political news stories from six different news organizations. Two are online newspapers, New York Times and USA Today. Two are online broadcast sites, ABC and CNN. And two are online-only news sites, Salon and Slate. And I looked at them in the year 2000 and in the year 2004, during the presidential primary. And the reason I chose that topic is because the primary is a season when people turn to the media even more for information, because they can't use cues from their political parties. They have to choose candidates from within their own party, and so they look to the media even more for information and direction.

So, I downloaded data from the six sites during, every night during the primary, then I chose, just randomly, ten days weekdays during that period to code stories. I looked at 289 stories in 2000 combined, between 2000 and 2004. And I looked at them on seven different characteristics that, from the literature, relate to political learning. And, again, this is a hypothesis, and feedback I would appreciate, but there's seven different things that I looked at. So, what I'll do for the next few minutes, is look at the results for each of the seven characteristics, and then accumulative examination.

So, the first characteristic that I looked at was: How was the story framed? And obviously, this is a content question, that relates to all different types of online news. But I looked at each story if it had a very personal frame, where it was just about the candidates, with not much background as you can see in this example on the left, it's just about Dean and Kerry fighting each other [laughs]. Do you guys remember Howard Dean, and what that was like back in the 2004 primary? Research shows that this kind of story, for people that aren't closely following the election, is very difficult to get into, to understand. That it can be off-putting, it looks like politics is a fight between these two guys that they don't know well, it's a spectator sport. So people don't learn as much from that approach, for the most part. The example on the right, from the New York Times, has a frame from the point of view of the voter. It provides a little more context and explanation.

So I looked at every single story, and categorized it, either as a personal frame or an institutional frame. And here are the results, by type of online news site. The online-only news, Salon and Slate, which is the bar on the far right, orange is 2004, blue is 2000. So you can see a comparison. The online-only news sites has a much bigger variety of types of stories: background, context, history and perspective than we saw in the other types. Online broadcasts didn't have a single story in 2004 that wasn't just about what the candidates had said that day. So, very little larger view in the broadcast sites. Online newspapers were in between: a little bit, ah, a few more institutional-type, process, historical stories in 2004.

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The second characteristic I looked at is, did they, ah, was there any information in the story that a voter could tell what the candidate thought about a particular policy issue? And I was very generous at how I interpreted policy information. But there were a lot of stories where there was just no policy information at all. It was all horse race, or about the campaign strategy. So, the picture there on the left, with John Edwards, totally about the first six people that voted in New Hampshire. Nothing about issues. The example on the right, at least it's some about Kerry's view about anti-terrorism. So again, categorized every story as either having some issue information, or no issue information.

And you need first to look at the scale if every story had issue information, the scale would go up to one, because all the stories would be coded as a one. But less than thirty percent of the stories in any medium had issue information. I mean, seventy percent of the stories had no policy information at all. It was all strategy and polling about the horse race. Online broadcast in 2000 had the most issue-oriented stories. It declined in 2004. You can see the online-only news sites, as much perspective and background as they had, it was much more about the process than about the policy. And they had the least number of stories that had policy information. In 2004, looking at the orange bars, online newspapers had the most issue information of the three types of sites.

The next characteristic I looked at again, research shows that visual information is very, very important to people, and it communicates quickly a lot of information that it's more difficult to get in text. So I wanted to see how these different sites are using photographs. So if the photo had ah, if the story had no photo, it was a zero; if it had a photo, it was a one. And this was the most dramatic difference, was between 2000 and 2004, a huge increase in the amount of photographs that accompanied political news stories. In the online broadcasts, nearly every single story had a photo in 2004. And that was not the case, obviously, in 2000. So, a very dramatic increase, statistically significant, for all three types of news, in their visual presentation of the stories.

I also looked at the use of multimedia how much are they adding. Again, there's a lot of good research that shows multimedia can portray and teach people about politics in ways that text is not as effective. Doris Graber's done a lot of work in this area. I don't know if you can see, but right here there's a little link to an audio file. And I've found that, on the front pages and in the stories, a much bigger use of multimedia in 2004. The interesting thing here is that online newspapers increased their use of multimedia dramatically. Now remember, I'm only looking at two, the two big nationals, but they had a huge increase in how much multimedia they're presenting with their political stories in 2004. So, of all of them, online newspapers are using it the most. Online-only, Salon and Slate, are using almost no multimedia. The only multimedia was on Slate, with some NPR stories that their columnists are doing.

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I looked at how they were using links from the story if there were five or fewer I just want to show you, I think there's, like I can't remember 48 or 62 links on this page to presidential information. So, if you look on the left and the right columns, these are all links to more information. On the left-hand side, we have it organized by issues; you can look at the candidate's positions on issues, polls, tallies, multimedia, video and audio, political calendars I mean, there's a tremendous amount of information linked off these stories, the templates that they were using. The question of whether and how consumers are using that much information clearly, if you're driving down the interstate, and someone puts up 64 signs of different places to go, you're going to get very confused.

This is a different situation, but I still think there's a lot we can learn about how stories are organized and how these links are organized, and there's some very interesting research done about people that ah, that Maxwell McCombs talked about, that looked at how information is structured by readers who only look at online news. And some evidence that they don't recall the facts as well, but that they way they understand the information, the structure of it is different than those who read only the print edition. So, the use of links and sidebars increased for online newspapers in 2004, but decreased in the other two types of online news. So, broadcast significantly decreased the links they were providing in the sidebar, and online-only news sites was a slight ah decrease.

I also looked at the action items. Research shows that a lot of people, when they finish reading a political story, want to know: What do I do next? How can I follow up on it? What are things that I can do? Online news has a lot more variety of things that they can send people, and suggest that people do, than some of the other mediums. And looking at again, in this case, it's just an organization of links. But CNN did a nice job of organizing things that you could do: watch video; look at related information; information about upcoming primaries, what's the schedule; they had a special report that they linked to I found in 2000, that most of these sites had very elaborate special sections for politics, but they frequently did not link to them from the story. That it would be on the front page as a graphic, but if you went and read a story, you'd have no idea they had all this information. They seemed to really address that problem in 2004. So, this was an example of a nice job of organizing links so that readers could go on and do additional research or interest So, in looking at the action steps, online newspapers significantly increased how they organized their links for 2004. Online broadcasts decreased, and online-only news sites were relatively the same.

The last of the seven characteristics that I looked at was providing feedback. Again, the research shows that readers or viewers, users that are able to engage in the material of somebody else, learn more. It extends what they get from the experience of reading the story. So, the top example's from Slate; the left is from the New York Times; the right is from Salon. And they each provide a way for users to follow-up on the story and talk about it, either with the reporter or with other readers. And, looking at feedback, here's a place where the online-only news sites have much more opportunity for feedback than in the other types of online sites. So, here's

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where they're taking advantage of the web to a great deal. Online-only or online newspapers, slightly less. Online broadcast, for the two sites that I looked at, did not have a single opportunity for feedback in 2004. 2000, they were fine. They took all that off in 2004. I thought that was very interesting.

So, I then took these seven characteristics, and because of the way they were coded, I could just add them up, and create an index, so that if you accept the assumption that these characteristics relate to political learning, and that these are advantages that we were gonna have, added them up to see which of these types of news sites were most conducive to political learning, and going in the right direction for what we need people to be able to understand the politics that we're covering.

And interesting results, here online newspapers appear to be really getting it. The kinds of things and the changes that they made in 2004 were all in what appear to be the right direction, in terms of helping readers and users understand their news. So, significant increase in online newspapers, and a significant difference between newspapers and the other types of sites. So, for those of you who are working in online newspapers, this is a good model. I mean, this is the right direction to be going in. Online broadcast sites seem to be, at least for these two, looking for a sense of direction. And I don't know if it's a resource issue, or what the challenges are, but in terms of looking at these characteristics, they had a significant decline in 2004. Online-only news sites stayed about the same, but I think it's even interesting ah, this is the last slide, now, I'll show you, with bar graphs that, if you look at the different news organizations, starting from the left, New York Times and USA Today, both very high on the learning index, compared to everybody else. They had a lot of the features that I examined. ABC is the broadcast site that cut back on its coverage the most. There was a dramatic difference between looking at political stories in 2000 and in 2004 on ABC. CNN did not change much, but because of the differences in ABC, that's why you can see the change in online broadcast sites. Between Salon and Slate, I think there's a testament to what happens when your resources are cut. And those of you who follow Salon know they were really struggling economically in 2004. And it showed in their coverage, I mean, it was very clear. A lot more wire stories that had no links at all, they were just were automated. Whereas Slate continued to grow and expand from what they had offered in 2000. So, a big difference in what I could see, at least on the seven variables that I looked at, between Salon and Slate.

So, I think that there are things that we can learn from each type of online news, and this is some data for you to think about, and if you have any feedback or questions, I'll answer them. So, thanks.

[applause.]

MARK TREMAYNE: Thank you, Donica. And we're gonna make a slight change in the program, and go to Major Highfield and Justin Sablich, from Syracuse, and their paper, "A Periodical Phenomena: A Look at Podcasting's Effect on Newspaper Audience, Advertising, and Atmosphere."

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MAJOR HIGHFIELD: As Professor Rosental says, let's rock and roll. [they play a short video introducing the presentation, modeled on an iPod advertisement.] OK, well, I am Major Highfield, and this is Justin Sablich, and first of all, I'd like to thank my co-author, Justin. We actually couldn't find an original copy of that commercial online, so he had to go back and dance everything back out in front of the green screen. [laughter]

JUSTIN SABLICH: I'm still very sore from that.

MAJOR HIGHFIELD: But our study was on podcasting's effect on newspapers who are actually doing podcasts. It was a qualitative study, and it was conducted during the fall of 2005. So if any of this information doesn't hold up to what the newspaper sites are currently doing, that's why. Because we found that technology's growing so fast, that there's a very good chance that a lot of these newspaper websites have updated since then.

I'm not going to go a lot in-depth about what podcasting is, because most of you are familiar with it. It basically began in 2004. It was created by former MTV VJ Adam Curry; back in 2001, he went to a blogging conference called BloggerCon, and he walked away from the conference with the idea that the future of portable audio was going to be some kind of combination between a laptop and being able to download the Internet into a portable audio device, like a Walkman. So he worked on that concept, and in 2004, he released the software called iPodder, and it let people download MP3 files, and actually ah, let people download MP3 files anytime that they wanted to, using a syndication technology called RSS.

JUSTIN SABLICH: Just a quick look at some of the previous research that was out there on podcasting obviously, this is such a new technology, that there wasn't there haven't been many studies done, really, on podcasting. That's one of the main reasons why we chose this topic, so we can find out more. Basically, they all say the same thing: that podcasting's starting to get big now, but it's really projected to take off within the next five years or so.

MAJOR HIGHFIELD: So you may be asking, why did we want to do this study. First of all, we're new media nerds, and we're interested in digital storytelling online. But second, we had a few questions that we had about podcasting. First, are podcasts actually increasing a newspaper's audience? Are they drawing traffic to the site, or to the newspaper? How is podcasting effecting a newsroom itself? Do reporters enjoy doing a podcast, are they just, kind of, being forced into doing it? Are the podcasts at newspapers actually being promoted on the website or in the newspaper? Are newspapers actually selling ads within the podcast? Are they making money off of podcasts? And also because, as Justin said, there really hasn't been that much research done on podcasting, particularly with newspapers.

So we wanted to try to find out what works and what doesn't, and if newspapers know anything about their podcasting audience. Are just young people listening to

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them? Are all ages listening to them? These are things that we were asking editors of newspapers.

JUSTIN SABLICH: These were three official research questions: what is podcasting's effect on newspaper's audience; basically, are they liking it, are they understanding what it is? Number two, what is podcasting's effect on newspaper's atmosphere? We took a look at the newsroom, kind of looking at how traditional print journalists are reacting to this new technology. And lastly, what is podcasting's effect on newspaper's advertising? This proved to be the toughest of the three questions to get the answers to.

MAJOR HIGHFIELD: Podcasting is a new phenomenon; that's the reason this was a phenomenological study. We conducted ten in-depth interviews with newspaper website editors, using a purposive sampling method. We actually had to go out and find people who were familiar with podcasting. Actually, back during the fall, there really weren't a ton of newspapers doing podcasts. That number has increased now, but we ran into some problems, actually, finding ten newspapers.

And, one thing about the subjects who we interviewed, they had to be familiar with podcasting. They either had to host a podcast, they had to edit the podcast, or they had to oversee the podcast. They had to have some kind of hands-on experience. And the people came from medium-to-large newspapers, because those were the newspapers that were currently doing podcasts. And we did the interviews over the phone, because they took place throughout the country, and each one lasted about 45 minutes.

JUSTIN SABLICH: And these are some of the people we talked to. We were given permission to them all to reveal their identities. You may recognize some of these names, or know these people personally. They came from the San Diego Union-Tribune, the Bakersfield Californian, the Greensboro News and Record, San Francisco Chronicle, the Lawrence Journal World, LA Times, Philadelphia Daily News, Roanoke Times, the Denver Post, and the Naples Daily News.

MAJOR HIGHFIELD: We'll go ahead and start talking about our results. The effects on the audience the dominant theme was that newspapers really didn't know that much about their audience. The primary reason for this was because most did not have the ability to track downloads. They didn't ah, they hadn't received very much statistical data, or even anecdotal data, about their audience.

Only five newspapers the San Francisco Chronicle, the Philadelphia Daily News, Lawrence Journal World, Roanoke Times, and Denver Post had the ability to technologically track the number of people who downloaded a podcast. And three newspapers had received anecdotal feedback, through word-of-mouth and through email messages. And, fortunately for them, the feedback was positive, they said. People had positively commented that they were happy that they were doing podcasts, and actually embracing some new kind of technology.

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Another effect that we found was that newspapers felt that podcasts do not increase audience size at least, right now, they're not. Eight of the ten felt like they hadn't had any growth. Only two newspapers, the Roanoke Times and Denver Post, felt that their site's traffic had, indeed, increased because of podcasts. And that was primarily because they're located on iTunes, or they had been found through Internet searches. More audience effects the majority of the newspapers who podcast did not target specific audiences. They actually tried to produce a wide array of podcasts; most newspapers, in general, do a news headline podcast, where they talk about the news of the day. They do a behind-the-scenes style podcast, where you have an editor, maybe, interviewing a reporter about a story he or she has recently done. They do a sports podcast. And then they do some kind of entertainment-style podcast that resembles a radio morning show, you could say.

But one interesting note on that: some of the newspapers did feel that, because podcasting is a new technology, they did target younger readers. And the Bakersfield Californian, in particular, Jennifer Baldwin, said that she felt, because the staff was made up of younger people, they inadvertently targeted young people through their podcast.

And newspapers also feel that the audience doesn't understand podcasting. If you go to most of their sections on podcasting, you'll see some kind of info bar telling what podcasting is, how to download the MP3 file, how to subscribe to the RSS feed, what an RSS feed is, and the newspapers felt this because, they said that they they felt that most people believe that you had to have an iPod to actually listen to a podcast, or they just didn't understand the terminology. They didn't know what an RSS feed was.

We'll move on, now, to atmosphere effects. By atmosphere, like Justin said earlier, we kind of mean: what changes have taken place on the newspaper's website, in the newsroom, or in the print product itself? We found that the majority of papers were actually promoting the podcast in one way or the other. Seven were actually using cross-promotion between the website and that print product; they would run house ads in the newspaper to promote the podcast on the website. Nine of the newspapers promoted podcasts on the website's homepage, so that people would in fact see something talking about the podcast as soon as they visited the site. And five included a link to the podcast section on the navigation bar. However, all the newspapers interviewed basically said that they still even though they were doing this, they still felt that the podcasts were too hard to find on their site.

One of the most positive reactions from this study that we found was the newsroom reaction to podcasts. Nine newspapers, with the exception of the Lawrence Journal World, felt that their employees, that their reporters, were pumped-up and excited about doing podcasts. Now, you know, you can go back and ask them a year from now, they may be burnt out on it, I don't know. But right now, they're excited. The Lawrence Journal World said that they felt that their reporters just didn't have enough time, and were too busy to actually enjoy doing podcasts. Also, they felt that even though reporters do face a learning curve when doing podcasts, because they

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have to think like a broadcaster, and actually work on their voice, and make themselves sound more like radio-style news reports, it was a much easier technology to actually embrace than other forms of media, such as video and video editing.

OK, we'll move on to advertising effects. And yes, this was the most difficult question to get a good answer from. One, the dominant theme in this was that most newspapers want to implement advertising, and make some money from podcasts, but they don't really know how. One reason is because podcasting is new. Back in the fall of 2005, podcasting had really just been around a year. And, during that time, newspapers had really just focused on creating podcasts, creating good podcasts, and actually coming out with some worthwhile content to actually attract listeners and audience members.

Another reason that they didn't know that much was because, as most of you know, there's an invisible wall that separates the editorial side of a newspaper from the advertising side. And all of our interviewees came from the editorial side. So, they weren't necessarily as familiar with the advertising questions as somebody from the advertising department may have been.

But, nonetheless, five newspapers were actually incorporating ads into their podcasts, and four were working to integrate ads in the future. So the majority, like I said, do definitely want to have some kind of revenue from podcasts. Right now, they have the same fear about advertisers that they do with their audience members. They're scared that advertisers don't know what podcasting is, so if they try to approach them and convince them to buy an ad, they're going to get kicked out. For that reason, the newspapers who are selling ads are targeting local advertisers. One, the Naples Daily News, for example, is getting a local bank, Partner's Bank, to advertise with it. They're targeting niche ads; the, I believe it's the Greensboro paper, is actually advertising with ah, is actually having a local record store buy advertising during its podcast, and they're going with the angle of, if you're interested in doing podcasting yourself, you can go and buy podcasting equipment at this store. And they're also targeting tech advertisers; for example, the Denver Post made national headlines last year because they actually came up with an advertising deal with Best Buy.

Another issue affecting advertising is the type of ad to include within your podcast. This was really evenly divided. Three newspapers were actually doing spot ads, which are pre-recorded ads, similar to what you would find on the radio, and two were doing spoken-word ads, where the host of the podcast would just say, "This podcast is sponsored by so-and-so."

JUSTIN SABLICH: Like Major just said, the main weakness one of the main weaknesses in our study was because of the premature nature of podcasting. The people we talked to back in the fall, they were kind of too busy trying to make a quality product to actually think about how it was affecting the atmosphere in the newsroom, and the advertising side of things. A lot of times, when we asked them

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about advertising audience, they responded with, "That's a good question. Let me think about it." So that showed us that they haven't really taken the time themselves to really put much thought into some of the issues that are emerging.

MAJOR HIGHFIELD: Another weakness in the study, like we said before: participants were just not very good at advertising question. However, we did feel that we had to ask these participants advertising questions, and they were still the best to answer the wide array of questions we had for this study. If we had solely relied on advertising people, they would not have been able to answer the questions about audience or the atmosphere of the newsroom.

Future research that could be done you could do an identical study today and get new information, just because technology is changing so fast, and newspapers are upgrading and adding new features and new podcasts. And, also, we feel like the data we collected could easily be transported into a quantitative study, to have some basis to go off of.

The conclusion that we came up with we definitely felt that we got some of the answers we were asking, through this study. We found out that, when it comes to audience, newspapers really don't have a good idea about their audiences, primarily because they don't have the ability to track who is downloading the shows. But they are getting some feedback, and that should improve in the future. Audience the audience really isn't increasing because of podcasts. Also, they're not targeting specific audience members, although they may inadvertently be targeting younger audiences, because of the technology itself. And they also feel that the audience just doesn't understand yet what podcasting really is. When it comes to atmosphere, all newspapers are pretty much promoting their podcasting one way or the other. But they do feel like they could do better. And the newsrooms are excited about podcasting; the reporters are pumped-up, they enjoy doing podcasts. And when it comes to advertising, again, they don't know that much about advertising, but they know they want to make some money off podcasting, and they're trying their best to do so and half were, and half weren't, but the half that was not, they have plans to do it in the future and in all honestly, I feel like they're probably doing it right now.

So, some of the data was premature at the moment, but we did get answers. The important factor that we felt was that podcasting is a new storytelling technology, and it's being adopted and explored by newspapers to benefit the audience. That's the best news that we can come up with. And future technological improvements, and better data, will actually help future researchers, as well as web producers, learn more about their audience and how to sell ads, and how to help out their staffs and their reporters. So, that's all we have. Thank you for your time.

[applause]

MARK TREMAYNE: Our next paper, from Cindy Royal, now at Virginia Commonwealth, soon to be returning to the great state of Texas. Her paper, "Visualizing Technology: Images in Google and Yahoo News Aggregators." And for

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the remaining presenters, anything you can do to keep things timely and efficient we'll be grateful.

CINDY ROYAL: No problem. Thank you, Mark. I appreciate the introduction, and for those of you who don't know, just less than a year ago, I was actually roaming the hallways of this building as a graduate student. So it's been nice to see familiar, friendly faces, and I feel very at home here. So I really appreciate being part of this. I miss you, too. [laughter] And I appreciate what you've done, every year, to make this really a worthwhile event. So I'm really happy to be a part (inaudible), so thank you very, very much.

I'm at Virginia Commonwealth University now, and the research that I've done as a graduate student and currently has focused on the gender implications of technology, particularly as it relates to Internet usage. So, the idea that I got for this particular project is I've been wanting to look at how images of technology are used and represented, and the gender effects of that. I went to the Association of Internet Researchers Conference in Chicago last fall, and another person did a paper her name is Inna Kouper, from Indiana she did a paper where she looked at two news aggregators, she looked at Google News and she looked at Yandex, which is a Russian search engine, and just looked at images in those general categories of news on both of those sites, and looked at how gender was represented on those.

So I started thinking, well, it would be really a good way to using these news aggregators, like Google News and Yahoo News, that also have categories specifically for technology, or science and technology, and they're increasingly using images with each story, so I wanted to see, what are the images that they use to represent technology across the board?

These aggregators I'm sure that many of you have been to either Google News or Yahoo News they aggregate news stories from a variety of different sources. In most cases, they don't have writers writing their stories. In some cases, Yahoo has some people. But in most cases, it's stories from say AP or Reuters, or other sources. Sometimes they even have blogging coverage that shows up on these pages. So, just as an abstract, the Pew Internet and American Life Project does a lot of demographic studies.

So I took information from two different studies, one that had to do with Internet news users, and the other that came out last fall, regarding gender and Internet use. So, 24% of Internet users have searched the Internet for news, photographs, or video that other media outlets have decided not to publish or broadcast. So it's becoming a very important way we and, as we have seen here for the last two days that people are gaining information about the world. Another study showed that 67% of the adult American population now goes online; 66% of men, and 66% of women. But women slightly outnumber men in the population, so the numbers are actually very, very similar. So women are really catching up with men, in terms of their Internet usage. It had been really a different story just, say, five years ago.

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But the study also pointed out that several differences exist in the quality of one's usage, based on gender. So the digital divide is not resolved just by the pure fact that the numbers are getting to be equal. There are different ways that men and women are using Internet technology. Some of the things that that study found were that men were more intense in their usage, and go online in greater numbers than women, for a vast but scattered array of activities. Women seem to focus on certain areas, like health, medicine, and religion, for the topics that they're searching for online.

And what I consider to be an alarming trend, the study also found that men were more interested in technology than women; they were more tech-savvy and comfortable with their usage of computers; they value the Internet more for the breadth of the experience that it offers, whereas women value it for enriching personal relationships. They're also women are more concerned with the risks of the Internet. Compared with women, men are more interested in the world of technology, and how gadgets and systems work. And men are more likely to try new things, in regard to both hardware and software. Men are more likely to know the latest terms around technology. And more men than women maintain and fix their own computers.

So there is still a digital divide out there, in terms of the ways that the genders are engaging with different types of technology. So, with such significant differences in the quality of one's usage of technology being determined by gender, it's important to understand the cultural and social reasons for such diverse patterns. This is, sort of, one way to take a look at that. There are, obviously, roots of technology that have caused these gender differences. And now, I wanted to look at the way images in online media are influencing how we imagine our roles in society, particularly with technology.

So, I studied two popular news aggregators, Google and Yahoo News. And, just a quick literature review I won't spend much time on here but I wanted to look at framing, particularly as it relates to images. A lot of time, framing studies have to do with textual content, but I wanted to apply it to images, and there was a study done by Phillip Bell, on content analysis of visual images, that I borrowed a lot of the ideas for this research from. But also, Reese says that frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the world that's Dr. Steve Reese, who's on the faculty here at U.T.

I also looked at feminist media studies, including the work of Gay Tuchman and Elizabeth Van Zoonen; the representations of women in media; women's magazines; women's uses of other types of technology, to ground this. And then, discourses of the private sphere as well.

And then, finally, the area of cyber-feminism, has to do with the intersection of technology and gender, and looking at the ways in which a feminist approach would explain these gender-based differences. The researchers in that area include Dale

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Spender and Sadie Plant, but Melanie Stuart Millar defines cyber-feminism as a "woman-centered perspective that advocates women's use of new information and communications technology for empowerment." The, ah, extent to which they do that.

So, the method that I use is a fairly simple one. What I wanted to do was to visit the Yahoo and Google News sites every day for fifteen consecutive days, so I did that at the beginning of the year, January 18th through February 1st, 2006. I collected a total of 513 images; 273 were from Google, and 240 were from Yahoo, so roughly the same amount of images. There were a few more in Google. Yahoo is increasingly beginning to put images with its news stories. I visited the sites at 8am each morning, to try to simulate the viewing habits of a user surfing for news early in the day. Different day parts could be analyzed, but I think similar trends would occur, because of the number of days that I actually engaged with the stories. Often, stories develop throughout the day, and in some cases they change throughout the day. On the Google site, they have a science and technology category; on the Yahoo site, they have a technology category. So, some of the differences between the sites may be able to be explained by the fact that science is part of the news category, and certain topics go along with pure science that might be different than something that's purely dedicated to technology.

So I saved each of the pages the introductory pages that have and I'll show you a couple of samples of the pages that have the teasers for the story and a small thumbnail image. I saved each of those as a PDF every day, and I printed them out to perform the analysis. For each day, I coded the site. I coded the main character of the image, and wanted to determine: was the main character human, animal, was it a corporate logo, or was it some other type of an object? Then, if it was human, I wanted to code the number of people, the gender of the people in the picture, and how they were using it, basically and this is really more of the role of the person. Was it a tech executive? Were they engaging in using the technology? Or were they was it just a random person, not using the technology, but being used to represent the story in some manner? I used a second coder on a sample, 20% of the articles I studied, and I got 90% agreement or better on each variable.

It was surprisingly difficult, at times, to determine the gender of certain people and to do some of this coding. So it's not as easy as it sounded, particularly if there were parts of people's faces, or were being shot from behind. So, in some cases, the gender was undetermined. And then I imported the data to SBSS for my analysis.

So, here's the Google News science and technology category, and this is just one screen shot; each one had about twenty stories per day, as you look at and actually, twenty stories per page, as you look at it. So, throughout the day, they would be changing. So, you can see, very clearly, here's a picture of Steve Jobs at the top, a tech executive, and used to represent a story about Apple. MacWorld was going on at that time. Then you can see a couple of other, just, sort of corporate logos being represented: a Windows logo, and an HD DVD. In some cases, the photos themselves come from the stories, the source of the stories. In other cases, it

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appears that the aggregators are just "popping in" some stock art that they have to help have an image to go along with the story, with each one.

And here's the Yahoo News technology section. This is fairly standard for what you would see at the top of the technology page: usually, one large photo, and then some of the other stories, as you would go further down, might have smaller thumbnails. Very typical to see a picture of a male engaging with technology on this particular site.

So, the things that I tested: images of inanimate objects are typically used more frequently than humans, that was the hypothesis that I stated and I wanted to test. Of the inanimate objects, corporate logos would be a significant percentage. Images of individuals would be used more frequently than groups. Quite often, that's the best way to capture an image for a story, to have a real focal point. But, in this case, we often think of technology as something that somebody does by themselves, or the lone inventor or programmer. Images of men are going to be more predominant in representing technology, and while individuals are more likely to be used to depict technology, men will be more likely to be shown as individuals than women. Women would probably be shown in groups. Men are more likely to be depicted as technology executives, or using technology; women, more likely to be seen as objects non-engaging with technology. So these are the things that I wanted to test.

So here's the first chart, that looks at the main character of the image: whether it's a human, animal, logo, or other. Google's on the left; Yahoo's on the right looking at the slide. And you can see that there is a difference between the two sites. Yahoo is much more likely to use images of humans, whereas Google because of that, sort of, science in their category is more likely to use either corporate logos or objects. Not very often are animals used, although a few more in Google than Yahoo. In terms of the number of people in the image, very obviously, much more single, one-person, in the image as the main character of the image, as a percent of images of humans. By and large, on both sites. So there was not that much difference between the Google News site or the Yahoo News site, in regard to the number of people in the image.

Now, the main question that I was looking at was in regard to gender. I looked at whether it was male, female, mixed, or undetermined if it was a group of people that were both male and female. And it's clear, here, that you can see that, significantly, men were represented on these pages, in the images, more than women in most cases much significantly more so in Yahoo, and it's much more important there, because it has more images ah, of humans. So that percentage makes a bigger impact because of that. The gender of individuals also is, very frequently, male. You can see similar trends going on with, just, regular gender of individuals on the pages, because most of these images were of individuals. And then, if you look at the usage by gender, the roles that are being played on these sites, between Google and Yahoo, obviously, a large percentage of the tech executives were male. The exception to that was often Meg Whitman of eBay, the

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CEO of EBay. She was photographed a few times. So, I don't think that's any big surprise to anyone.

In terms of the user, one aberration occurred with Google, where it actually had more women than men being shown as users, but it was a small number of experiences in that area, in that coding there was only seven out eleven total images of users for Google, they didn't have that many people actually engaging in using technology. So they ended up having women engaging with the technology more frequently than men. But across the other categories, with Yahoo there were definitely more men shown as users than women, and even more men shown as non-users of the technology. So, really, across the board men are depicted much more frequently with the technology, when you look across the board at these pages, when you glimpse, first thing in the morning, to get your technology news, you're seeing pictures of men engaging with technology or you're seeing corporate logos or objects.

So, to keep things short, in conclusion, symbolic annihilation which is a theory stated by Gay Tuchman has to do with the silencing of women's voices and the lack of representation of women in areas where they should be represented, in regard to media. It's still relevant in media images, and particularly so in regard to technology coverage. Women are portrayed less often, and with different usage patterns than men in images depicting technology, and quite often inanimate objects and corporate logos are used to represent technology, even as the Internet becomes more of a communications medium as we were talking about, with blogging and social networking. It's still being portrayed as something that's disembodied, quite often.

Further analysis should include continuing research on the ways that images of technology are used to affect the idea of who uses it and how it is used and engaged. Race, ethnicity and age it's difficult to code race in these small images, but I think there's probably a way to look at visual representation in that regard. And then also, experimentation will be necessary to determine how users will engage with these images. And Dr. McCombs talked about agenda-setting effects, and how difficult they were in an Internet environment. I think these news aggregators provide an interesting opportunity to see how people are making sense of the diverse sources that are online, but still kind of see what the agenda is across these sources, and it corresponds with what he was talking about, in terms of even though there are a variety of sources, the agenda is still being consistently set; there's still quite a bit of consensus on how we feel about certain things in our society. So, that's all that I have. Thank you very much for your time.

[applause.]

MARK TREMAYNE: Thank you. Next, let's hear from Sue Robinson, Temple University. Her paper one of our top papers "Gateway or Gatekeeper: The Institutionalization of Online News in Creating an Altered Technological Authority."

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SUE ROBINSON: OK, I'm Sue Robinson; I'm a PhD student at Temple, soon to be at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. I just got hired there. And I'm gonna try to keep this short; I've cut out all my lit review, and everything, for you guys. But, basically, I wanted to look at what was going on with the institution of news, and I had these three research questions this is basically a pilot study in order for me to get started on my dissertation, which I'll be doing this summer.

But the overarching question was: is the Internet technology undermining journalistic institutional authority? And I separated that, basically, down into missions, routines and procedures, and what roles sources and audiences were playing. And, briefly, the guiding definition of whether news was a political institution, I used Tim Cook's understanding of it, and he says "characteristics of an institution include taken-for-granted social patterns of behavior, valued in and of themselves, as procedures, routines, and assumptions, which then extend over space and endure over time, in order to preside over a societal sector."

And so what I ended up doing was, I talked to about fourteen different editors of online newspapers, and I chose newspapers in particular because it's a very traditional print medium that still uses a linear communication model, of we have the sources, or the reporters, and then we have the receivers. Even though we could talk about Schramm's feedback loops and everything else, generally speaking it's still a hierarchical structure. I was a reporter for twelve years, and I just left the newsroom, and it was still very much like that.

So I wanted to look at how newspapers in particular were moving online, because I thought that would give me the best understanding of how news traditionally is moving, conceptually, onto the web. So I did in-depth interviews. A bunch of them I did last year at this very conference. I also used what these online editors said at the conferences that I've been to, as well as what they've said on the website, and also in Q & A's in CyberJournalist.net. It wasn't a rigorous sample, and so I'm just using this as an exploratory study, once again, in order to jump off into my dissertation.

But I formed all my questions around Cook's definition of what is an institution, looking at ok, what are their assumptions of what they're supposed to be doing? And I formed that as, ok, what is your mission? And then, what are your procedures and routines? And I'm looking at professional norms and routines that a lot of literature has already been done on, in terms of and I think, actually, this morning we were talking about how what reporters do and how they gather the news matters for what our knowledge is. And then, finally, what are the relationships between journalists with their sources as well as their audience members? So, that's how I structured the whole study, and I'll go right into my findings.

Basically, when I first started talking to these guys, it's all traditional vocabulary. And partly that's because most of these people, men and women who are doing online news, come from the print world of journalism. They talk about "gatekeeping," they talk about "sourcing," they talk about wanting to give readers an "authoritative

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read." All of these terminology we've been hearing for the last half-century, when we talk about newspapers.

But when you start getting into what it is they're actually doing and what they want to do online, there's a whole other lexicon that comes up. And you hear words like "experience" we want the audience to experience, we want a sense of "the journey," we want our readers to have a sense of "the journey." They use words like "play." They use words like "interact;" they use words like "platform." They talk about "community-building," as opposed to "community knowledge" and "informing the public." So, it really indicates that there's a schizophrenic identity complex that's going on. Do we want to produce a product, or are we giving are we transitioning into more of a service?

And I should mention, actually, I did some multimedia training at USA Today. I used to work for Gannett. Last summer I was there, and that mission this idea that what it is that we were doing played out in everything that we did, from all of our meetings to what it is that everything was about the technology it gets, and how we could bring the reader along with us.

And so, it was a very different thing from what I had learned as an undergrad, in journalism. This is from Tom Kennedy; he's Managing Editor of the WashingtonPost.com, and he says "Our mission is to produce content that meshes with stories being received from the Washington Post newspaper." And always, this is the initial thing what is your mission? this is what they said, "We are to supplement the traditional newspaper." But then they always have a caveat, and this is where Tom comes in: "I don't want to be bound by those structures. For most print products, there's such a force of institutional history that it's very difficult to allow for new possibilities. At WashingtonPost.com, virtually everything is new and fresh. So there's more of an aha! moment when you start to see good stuff." So, right away, you can start seeing that there's a whole transition in thinking, in terms of what is our institutional responsibility here.

Secondly, I looked at the process, and how it is that they've got this mission from the concept stage onto the web stage. And everything is about the technology. When I was talking to the USA Today guys, and they're mostly guys, in the graphics department, they complained that they're no longer journalists, that they're coders. Especially with Flash, and all the other things that they have to use, it's all about understanding computer programming language. As in the storytelling aspects it's there, but it's, right now and maybe this is just a diffusion of innovation thing that needs to happen right now, it's about, how can we do this digitally?

And another thing was, when I was in the newsroom, all of our reviews starting being attached to how well we were using multimedia. And so we had all these new digital recorders and video cameras, and they were so excited that we had them, they just gave them to us. And, you know, "Go get something!" even though we really didn't think too much conceptually about what it is we're doing, and whether it made sense to auto-record that four-hour meeting that we were going to.

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The other thing that I kept hearing about were "nodes of thinking." Reporters need to talk about different levels of storytelling, and enter the virtual realm of what it is that we can provide for readers. And last year, the interactive graphics editor from El Mundo talked about how different details are having to be enhanced because of the technology. And he used the example of the March 11th Madrid bombings, and how in a newspaper story we could just talk about the bag that was brought by the vehicle and left outside of the train, whereas for him, in order for him to do that story digitally, he had to know: is that a backpack? is that a satchel? is that a briefcase? In order for him to digitally depict it and then also, what kind of vehicle was it? Was it a truck? Was it a compact car? And so, details are starting to come out are not necessarily from a narrative sense, but from a technological sense.

And then, everybody was always taught that we're changing the trajectory of news production. And when I say "everybody," I'm talking about the people that I interviewed for this, by the way. Len Apcar, who just had to leave he said this a few years ago, when they were talking about "Times on the Trail" Blog, that they did during the 2004 election. And I thought this was really striking. So he says, "We knew from the beginning that was required for this kind of page." He's talking about off-site linking to other blogs, which they did along the you probably all saw it on the right-hand side, they had a long, long list of all different campaign sites, even most of their competitors, all different kinds of blogs. And he says, "We knew that there was plenty of other very good reporting out there, and we knew that to have credibility with the reader, we couldn't just say, "Well, here's what the Times are reporting. Ignore everybody else." I thought this was really striking, because here we're talking about the New York Times, and he said, "A scoop is a scoop is a scoop." But since when did they care what everybody else is doing, and want to highlight what everybody else is doing? So, right away, we're seeing a sort of door opening to that institutional castle. And then, finally, relationships, and how an institution is presiding over those sorts of those societal sectors. And these are just a list of some of the quotes that I took from my interviews. "Journalism is now a dialogue, rather than a monologue." "The audience is becoming a part of the presentation." This came from Ben Arnold, from the Christian Science Monitor, and he was embedded in with the troops in Iraq. And he talked a lot about how his mission was to bring the readers along the journey with him. He talked a lot about how we wanted to use first-person in order to make them feel as if they're right there beside him. They talk a lot about "a place for people to explore their personal spaces." So there's a sort of whole weird therapeutic theme going on in a lot of these interviews. "We're a partner with the public now." "We're a switch connecting sources with readers." And this last one got me to thinking a lot about different kinds of models, and when we talk about the idea of what gatekeeping is, and that very linear communication model that I talked about at the beginning: sender, message, and receiver. And so ah OK.

First I wanted to talk about, underlying all of this was this idea of time and space changes. Because a sociologist back in the 70's, Giddings, talked about how in institutions, power will weigh in its ability to form everybody's time and space parameters. It tells us where we're supposed to be, when we're supposed to be

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there; we're supposed to go to school, and we're supposed to go to the actual school building, and be there at a certain time. We're supposed to go to church, we're supposed to be at the family dinners, so institutional sort of structure where we're supposed to be, when we're supposed to be there.

And the Internet changes all that. It manipulates our idea of what time is and what place is, both on a physical level, because we're in a virtual space now, there's no tangible newspaper that we're reading at our kitchen table, but we actually go to a virtual realm where we can engage with the reporters and the sources and other audience members, but also on a very conceptual level, in terms of the "back" button, where we can go back to reading 19 ah 2002 blog entries, which is written in the present tense, as if we're there in 2002. We can go "forward" from a link, that brings us into the present day, and then we can go back again, back to the past, which is actually the present.

So this really plays with our notions of what time and space are, and I'm not really sure what that means yet for for what this means for an institution. But certainly, a platform for journalism is existing in a different kind of space and a different kind of time.

So, these next two slides are in-progress slides, and they're drafts. So I'm taking any kind of feedback you could have. But I'm looking at how that linear model is morphing. And so, on the right here, we have our little schoolhouse; this is our institution. And on the left, we're talking at looking how, instead of being an institution, it's really more of a support beam. And we're looking at the idea that there's a platform, and that news is serving as a switch to connect readers and journalism sources. And that means that authority has to be shared now. Because it's no longer hierarchical, it's no longer coming from the top down. If you incorporate all of what these people are saying, you're bringing the readers into experience, then you're allowing them to share authority into what that experience is going to be.

The next slide is a little bit more overwhelming, and it's something that I continue to work on; I've already tried to make it less ah a little bit more simple. But I basically took that linear model and made it circular. And I took their tripartite entities the media, the sources, and the readers and I messed them all up. Because, to me, this seems to be what's happening online, to a point. Obviously, I'm not saying that there's no more institution online, or no more authority, or no more gatekeeping. But there is, definitely, a platform happening a platform effect. And so, on the right here, we have that we still have encoding and decoding going on, and there's still a product that's meant to inform the masses. But on the left-hand side, look at this in terms of a continuum, I guess, we have this service idea, in that we want people to experience the news, we want to be able to have them interact with it. And we want them to have it be a personal thing for them.

And so this is something I'm still working on, but I think you get the idea. I originally termed this "Gatekeeper to Gateway," and then Axel Burns just published his book

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called Gatewatching, and I feel like there's too many gates going on, so I'm going to have to change that. [laughter]

And that's the end. Basically, the institution is still facilitating the information, but knowledge is becoming less dictated.

[applause]

MARK TREMAYNE: Thank you. I know everybody's getting hungry. We have one presentation left, though, before lunch: Tania Cantrell. And her paper she's one of our students here at U.T. Austin and her paper is "Looking at Local Dailies' Election 2004 Online News Coverage."

TANIA CANTRELL: Thank you so much. I'm going to try to make this quick, to everybody's benefit including my own. [laughs]

[while Tania works to start her presentation, Mark Tremayne solicits a question from the audience.]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is for ah you two guys, on podcasting. So, I'm curious to know, just from what I've seen of podcasts, from what my company does A lot of the traffic is not coming from iPods, or at least through subscriptions. We don't even though in iTunes and everything, and it looks like the vast majority of usage is coming from people who just go to the website and click the "play" button, or download the MP3. So I'm curious to know if you saw that across the board.

MAJOR HIGHFIELD: That was one of the things that I guess falls under the whole technological barrier. We actually asked that that was one of our questions that we asked, we wanted to know, "Well, are more people downloading the podcast through an MP3 file or are they actually subscribing to the podcast or an RSS feed? And most newspapers, they didn't know. The ones who could track the downloads, that was just the number of downloads of the MP3 file, so they didn't really know if the people were downloading straight from the website, or if that file was being downloaded through some kind of third-party software, like iTunes or iPodder or something like that. So they don't know yet how people are actually listening. I tend to agree with you; I think most are probably just going to the website, and actually listening to it through that.

MARK TREMAYNE: OK. Tania's presentation is now ready, so, if you have questions, please come back at 3 o'clock and we'll take them then. Tania?

TANIA CANTRELL: Thank you very much, Mark. I'm going to do my best to keep this as short as possible. I had it designed for ten minutes; we'll see if I can speak clearly and coherently in less time than that.

The title of my paper is "Looking at Local Dailies' Election 2004 Online News Coverage." And I really want to give special thanks to Dr. Maxwell McCombs, and to

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the 2004 Fall graduate class in content analysis. As a group, we worked on collecting this data, and then I was able to take the data and give it further analysis.

A quick overview I'm going to go through, just the separate parts, very quickly. For example, the introduction: the main question guiding the study was, "How often do online local newspapers upload new political information on their site? And what kind of information do they upload?" So this is taking up to this point in the presentation, we've done a lot of looking at technological innovation, and how that affects storytelling. This takes more of a content approach to finding out: Well, what kind of storytelling is going on?

There are two important points, of why this is a significant study. Number one is, next to voting, media are the primary channel by which people actively participate in their own governance, and through which government and other political actors communicate with the public. Secondly, local news media are commercial enterprises that must make a profit in order to survive. And, in an effort to peg down plain readers, newspapers are molding a new niche: politics on the Internet.

Very, very quickly, theoretically, inter-media agenda-setting is the theoretical framework which is proposed by Dr. Maxwell McCombs, and that occurs when various media interact with and influence one another. The other theoretical concepts tie into the research questions and the hypotheses which are the basis of this study. For example, media interdependency is more prevalent as media rely on and compete and with each other to get information to their public. By election 2000, about twice as many leading newspapers offered separate online election sections than in 1996. Again, this is the trajectory of the technological development, and we've seen a little bit of that in today's presentations from the 2000 to the 2004 time period. Local news has been criticized for focusing less on issues and positions and more on quote-unquote "quirky, amusing stories," where each candidate stands in the horse race particularly. The online news trend has been to offer more local news on the web, and some public policy analysts believe that the impact of the media and newspaper candidate endorsements can be decisive. We'll come back to each of these points.

For example, the first research question: How often do online newspapers upload new political information on their election sites? And what kind of information do they upload? In other words, what percentage of the local 2004 election news articles change over time? This leads to a number of hypotheses, in addition or in the context of the theoretical approach. First, local online newspapers will rely more on national news coverage to supplement their online national election coverage. Secondly, the election 2004 local news coverage will focus on the horse race. Third, local papers will focus more on local elections than the national elections.

And then, the second research question is: Does an online paper candidate endorsement affect its coverage of presidential candidates? And as I said, the class was a content analysis class; we pulled 308 stories from a particular week in October, getting towards the October 25th through the 29th news period we

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anticipated would be a good time it was about a week out from the election. We in coming down to decide on the four online local newspapers that we were going to take a look at, we took a look at the 2004 State of the Media Report, and what media corporation had the highest traffic. We also took a look at the Columbia Journalism Review's website to see who owned what, and we decided to take a look in particular at two media corporations: Advance Publications and Gannett, and from each of those two, to pull two newspapers.

So we came up with four online newspapers: the Cleveland Plain Dealer in Ohio, the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, and the Syracuse Post Standard, both of those being from New York, and then the Lafayette Journal and Courier from Indiana. We used a software tool called Grab-a-Site, so that each day at three different times, 9am, 1pm, and 5pm, we could go to these websites and pull their homepages and see what each newspaper was projecting at that particular time. Our main units of analysis these are the umbrella terms, there were many other than this but we basically wanted to see the headlines and the stories, to get an idea of what they were changing, and then the content of each of those. SPSS was the statistical software package that we used to analyze the data, and because there were thirteen students working on this, we definitely had to do an intercode of reliability. In some instances it was 100%. That is key, because that 100% was in terms of our major analysis, the headline and the story, but then there are differentiating reliability levels, in regard to the other units of analysis that we took a look at.

That, of course, is part of the limitations. We had national we had US students in the class, but we also had some international students, where English is their second language, so trying to decide if the stories were positive or negative towards candidates, there may have been some language barriers that led to a decreased intercode of reliability. But in terms of our overall units of analysis, we were set to go.

Findings. First research question: How often do online newspapers upload the new political information, and what kind of information do they upload? We discovered that there was no relationship between the news sites and the time of the uploading, and for each of the news sites the majority occurred at about nine o'clock in the morning. We heard from Cindy Royal that she's sort of going online at eight o'clock in the morning, to see what people were tracking and so forth. But during the course, there were 77% of stories that changed.

Here's a quick chart to help us understand it a little bit better. The news site and the uploading time, you see at 9am, 1pm, and 5pm. Thirty-seven percent of the stories from the Plain Dealer, 38% there just isn't a lot of change that goes on from time of the day with the different stories. Again, that's one of the reasons why there was no statistical significance.

Taking a look at the hypotheses the first one, local online newspapers will rely more heavily on the national news sources to supplement their online national election coverage. This was supported. There was a significant relationship; our P-value was

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less than 0.01. But we also found that there was a little bit of a reverse in the relationship, and we're going to come back to that with another one of the hypotheses. They relied more on local news coverage than national, but the national news coverage, of course, was supplemented from national news sources. In the findings here is the chart, and I was a little technologically-challenged myself in trying to put these together, but this actual chart is supposed to go across the top. But you can see how the Plain Dealer, their local or regional coverage was 80%, their national was 16. Post Standard, 91 versus 9; Journal and Courier, 100 versus 0; the same thing for the Democrat and Chronicle. So, a nice relationship there; there's a significant difference in between the category.

Regarding our second hypothesis: election 2004 news coverage will focus on the horse race election aspects. We did not find that this was the case. For and we'll come back to that in the discussion, to find out why that is. One of the reasons could be how large the other aspects of the election categories came to be. You'll notice the Democrat and Chronicle, their horse race analysis is at 55%; Plain Dealer is only at 4%; Post Standard is at 43%. But the other aspects of the election and that, of course, is an umbrella term that incorporates many smaller categories that's the predominant categorization for these terms.

Third, local newspapers will focus more on local elections than the national election. That was, in fact, true. Ninety percent of the stories in the sample content analyzed is locally- or regionally-based, whereas only 9% were nationally-focused.

This second research question is very interesting: Does an online paper's candidate endorsement affect its coverage of a presidential candidate? I approached this research question from four different perspectives. One of them was, I decided to call the editorial desk of each of the newspapers and find out what their 2004 affiliation was, and what their 2000 was. Taking a look at each of the papers, you see that in all instances there was a change either from Bush to no endorsement, um it was the Rochester, the state is democratically-centered since they're the Democrat and Chronicle, that may have something to do with it. But the Lafayette Journal and Courier, they switched from a Republican endorsement to a Democrat, and then the Cleveland Plain Dealer went from a Republican endorsement to no endorsement at all.

Another way was to take a look at the relationship between the publication and the story initial presidential candidate tone variables whether the stories themselves were positive towards the candidates, or if they were negative. And it turns out that most of them were actually neutral, with one large exception: the Rochester Democrat ah, excuse me yes, the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, 86% of their stories were negative to both of the candidates.

And finally, and I deleted this chart when I took a look at the evaluation variable component that took a look at a lot of the different aspects of the stories. But 66% from the four online local newspapers were judged neutral. Only 22 of the 148 analyzed were considered negative to both presidential candidates.

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So, the discussion. The purpose of the paper's been to explore online political news coverage of the four local news sites during the election 2004 week, during one of the weeks. It's important because few studies of political online communication at the local level have been conducted, and to me it's interesting for at least the following four reasons.

Number one, in accordance with general intermedia agenda-setting theory, this study demonstrates an intermediate dependency occurs at the local level. The online news sites do supplement their election coverage with national stories, although the main focus, as far as the election goes, is on local election coverage. The relationship between partisanship and media bias raises old and perhaps tautological, but also new, concerns and trends.

In addition, the study hints at a series of additional inter-related questions that range from the role of polls in online local news coverage to how much local news site visitors learn about elections and politics. And then another question regards the use of technology in journalism. Some of the things to take a look at in the future, especially in regards to gender issues, race issues, ethnicity issues not only in the story creation, but also in the story reception. Taking a look at bylines, for example; reporter gender and ethnicity, even the datelines of the stories, those need to be considered. We didn't allow for that in this particular study. We need to pinpoint how and why political communication stories are moved. Where's their positioning during the times that they're changed during the day? Are they moved to a second page? Etc., etc.

The lack of the horse race predominant is that another indicator of a disconnect between media and audience? And why have two of the four news sites in the study decided not to endorse a presidential candidate? Is there a lack of opinion among local news sites? Is that a new trend? Was it just as per this particular election? What are some of the reasons that could possibly explain that? And in what direction is political news heading? Will it be more substantive? Or will sensationalism, which local news is criticized in doing, will that escalate? Will there come a time when the non-traditional press, including blogs, perhaps podcasts, and other forthcoming media technologies set the elite media agenda?

Online journalism is more seriously considered for its role it needs to be more seriously considered for its role in political discourse, principally in the dynamic democratic process, and local news sites' political news coverage deserves its opportunity in the political and in the media analysis spotlight. Thank you very much.

[applause.]

MARK TREMAYNE: I'd like to thank all the panelists. If you have questions, again, you came come at three o'clock, to our wrap-up session, where we'll answer your questions.