



## Culture Clash: Journalism and the Communal Ethos of the Blogosphere

### Comments

Interesting.

Posted by: B-\$tring at July 8, 2004 12:20 PM

I'm not sure whether the distinction between "media" and "media formats" is a hair worth splitting. And I stumbled over "to their near vanishing point" because a vanishing point isn't near -- it's on the horizon, far away. Should that be "near-vanishing point"? Phrasing it as "nearly to their vanishing point" avoids both unnecessary complexity and pedantic hyphenation.

As for the mission of journalism ♦ journalism only has a mission of informing the electorate in societies where there are such things as electorates, and where freedom of the press is permitted. If you define journalism as only the kind of news reporting that takes place in a democracy that supports the freedom of speech, then you limit the kinds of social change that journalism (and/or blogging) can bring about. For much of its history, journalism has been published mostly in partisan papers that made their biases clear.

I'm not saying that objective reporting is not a good and noble goal, but it's also true that an important mission of a news reporting institution is making enough money to pay the bills (and then some, from whence comes the profit). In light of Carroll's statement of old media's economic traditions and policies, perhaps instead of a democracy metaphor, a revolutionary metaphor would be more appropriate.

Since I doubt that Hunt made special reference to blogs in 1996, I gather that Carroll is applying what Hunt wrote about other media to blogs. Thus, by extension, any medium would seem to convey the sorts of values held by the creators of the content. If that's so, then I'm not completely sure what is gained by applying that observation to blogs -- though to his credit Carroll seems to address that same question in his description of how Rogers and Malhotra expand on Hunt. Fair enough.

While professional journalists work as part of a vast hierarchical team, I'm not sure I would accept Carroll's characterization of the "lonely blogger, a single node in a vast heterarchy". By virtue of being a node, the blogger isn't really alone. Comments, cross-blog discussions, and e-mails from readers tend to reinforce bloggers. Those who aren't sufficiently motivated by the kinds of responses one gets from blogging tend to drop out of the blogosphere, meaning that a certain kind of person whose writing generates a certain kind of response tends to keep producing more of that kind of writing. A journalist isn't tied quite so closely to the love (or hate) that comes via reader feedback. At any rate, the image of being part of a network and being lonely work against each other, particularly a few paragraphs later when Carroll mentions "what Hunt called the communal ethos of websites".

To say that a newspaper staff "funnel[s] the information out from a center" once again causes me to stumble as I read. A funnel just doesn't work that way -- it uses gravity to push grains or

liquid down into the center. I think Reddy was right when he says that the conduit metaphor is so ingrained in the English language that we can hardly think of communication without it -- but if we want to use metaphors ("filter" and "network") it makes sense to avoid mixing them.

I'm not sure that one can easily say that blogs are heterarchical and be done with it to paraphrase George Orwell, some blogs are more heterarchical than others. The culture of the A-list bloggers, and what they deem blogworthy, does affect search engines to a degree disproportionate to their numbers.

I agree with this: "Blogging and journalism do not have to be dichotomous; the two divergent schemas for understanding ethos do not have to be mutually exclusive," but since the title of the article seems to presume a culture clash, I'm not entirely satisfied with this formulation.

I was very interested to read of Sipe's blogging of the John Allen Muhammad trial for the *Virginian-Pilot*, though I'm not sure it's clear that the blogging was the cause of the paper's boosted circulation during the trial -- the relationship may merely be associative (though Carroll seems to have done more work on that, so I'll give him the benefit of the doubt here.) But that brief discussion comes close to the end of the article.

I do like Carroll's closing observation, complicating Winer's bet with Nisenholtz (that by 2007, Google will rank blogs higher than the NY Times).

Posted by: Dennis G. Jerz at July 13, 2004 11:19 PM

Grunts -- Pictograms --- Words ---- Scibes ----- Gutenberg ----- Books ----- Computers -----  
E-Mail ----- Blogs!

Posted by: Richard A. Garn at October 1, 2004 04:02 PM

The bet with Winer is silly. He makes bets all the time. He owes me ten dollars after two bets at the Berkman conference where he denied that things were said on the previous day.

Google will highly rank pieces which are *normative* or *definitive*. Wiki may do well in this category. So does civwriting. Search for **political writers** on Google, and ranked 1-2 will be two of my pieces.

Posted by: Jon Garfunkel at February 15, 2005 08:25 AM

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