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Standards of Online Journalism:
If and how publications use
transparency, interactivity and multimediality

A Thesis Presented to the
Honors Tutorial College, Ohio University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation
from the Honors Tutorial College
with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Journalism

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

It seems easy to access the news these days – through the television, radio, paper, and especially through the World Wide Web. Whether it's an aggregator on an iGoogle homepage, a link on Facebook, or just the old-fashioned browsing of a publication's site, finding news information is not difficult for someone remotely web literate (Flavián & Gurrea 2006).

Because online news has become such an important part of American culture, it is just as important to study it. Other news media have had decades, if not centuries, to become popular and establish publishing traditions. Internet news has been around since 1980, when *The Columbus Dispatch* appeared on CompuServe, and Web-based journalism since 1994, when *Palo Alto Weekly* launched the first-ever browser-based news service (Poynter Institute 2009).

Even since the turn of the century, online news sites and practices have evolved rapidly, both because of technological advancements and because of increased comfort with the medium (Mackay & Lowrey 2007). In some cases, publications have almost entirely abandoned print for online, as is the case with the *Christian Science Monitor*. Other publications have followed in the footsteps of *Salon* and *Slate*, existing entirely online, while others still use their online versions as a place for increased coverage and functionality.

Even though determining how to make online published media viable seems to be at the forefront of discussion in the field of journalism, relatively little has been done to actually identify and analyze existing problems and successes. But by identifying these problems, like how to identify authors and how much multimedia to

use, publications can change or maintain their editorial and design practices in order to improve service and economic viability. Well-established media like newspaper and television have well-established publishing standards, honed over the years. But despite its young age, there must be existing standards of online journalism, if only due to individual publications' trial-and-error.

The question is, then, what these standards are, what might be a standard for one publication but not another, and what perhaps should be standard across all publications and currently is not. Ideally, a comparison of publications will reveal the answer to these issues. In this study, six publications are compared qualitatively in order to give a more in-depth, value-added analysis of practices that will reveal existing standards and provide guidelines for ideal practices.

This study examines transparency, interactivity, and multimedia in online media, using six publications as case studies, as, through observation and research, these seem to be the most important aspects of online journalism.

Transparency, in this study, is considered to be the visibility of process, making it obvious to the reader how an article was crafted and letting readers come to their own conclusion on to whether the article and publication are credible. Considering the smoke-and-mirrors nature of the Web, some researchers have shown transparency to be the most important aspect of ethics online (Friend & Singer 2007). Two obvious signs of transparency, used in this study, are the display of author credentials and the credentials of the article's sources. The relevant questions for this section are: Do publications display these? Is the author just a name, or is it possible to determine author's affiliations and get in touch with him/her? Are sources' names included, as well as their position and a way to find out more about them?

Interactivity, on the other hand, has been a buzzword of the electronic journalism since it began. The interaction of users with content and other users distinguishes the Web as a platform, because traditional mediums do not use the technology necessary to have an interactive interface – that is, unless newspapers abandon newsprint for e-readers and -paper in the future. Interactivity lets users be selective about their news consumption, heightening competition for readership (Dimmick et al 2004). Enabled commenting, social sharing options and links to related stories, not only draw in readers, they keep them at the site and make them invested in it, and bring their friends there too – but only if those options are built-in to the article layout. The relevant questions for this section are: Do publications provide these? How extensive are sharing options? Is it complicated to post a comment? How many types of related stories are included?

Multimedia, considered by some researchers as a subset of interactivity, in this study, is being defined in the most obvious sense – the use of media beyond simple text to tell a story. Images are the most popular example of this, but now dynamic multimedia, which changes based on human input, is becoming more popular. As the technology to make and publish dynamic multimedia improves, publications are capable of incorporating multimedia more easily, and are pushed to do so to increase readership (Deuze 2004). The research questions for this section are: Are publications incorporating multimedia? Do they only use images, or are they using dynamic content like slideshows, infographics and video? Does the multimedia aid the story-telling of the article's text?

The answers to these questions will help to determine what are and should be standards of online journalism. While the Web is, by nature, transitory, standards

developed during the medium's formative years will still be helpful to online media

developers in the short term and indicative of patterns in Web development and usage

in the long term.

STUDY DESIGN

Publication Choice

Though original versions of this study looked at two different types of media – those that evolved online and those that moved online from traditional media – in different genres, the final study compares six general interest magazines and newspapers against each other, without distinguishing between their origins or formats. It is difficult to compare newspapers and magazines within the print medium, but the fast-paced platform that is the Web makes the differences less noticeable, at least to the layman's eye. Initial observation also proved the differences between those that evolved online and those that moved online to not be as different in practice as originally supposed, making the cross-publication comparison stronger than one amongst matched pairs. Some have more of a blog focus and some are owned by large media corporations, but all have been evaluated to be viable news sources.

The publications being studied are: *Atlantic*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *New York Times*, *Time*, *Salon* and *Slate*.

Atlantic Online <www.theatlantic.com> is the online presence of The Atlantic, though the online presence has only been around since 1995 and its print counterpart has been in existence since 1857. Their online content, like their print content, tends to be feature and commentary style, and is frequently republished from the print edition. *Atlantic Online* and *The Atlantic* are owned by the Atlantic Media Company.

Christian Science Monitor <www.csmonitor.com> was founded in 1908, and in 2009 it decided to release its daily print edition online, while still releasing a printed weekly edition. They also have an e-mail edition that summarizes top news stories. In

STANDARDS OF ONLINE JOURNALISM

addition to quick-hit news, CS Monitor's website includes blogs, columns, and how-tos. Despite its name, Christian Science Monitor is an independent publication with only one article a day being published about its namesake.

New York Times <www.nytimes.com> started publishing in 1851. In 1994, the *Times* started releasing online content using America Online, launching an actual website in 1996. Most news stories average one (web) page long, though features tend to require a couple click-throughs. It is owned by The New York Times Company, which also publishes About.com, *The Boston Globe*, and other regional media.

Time <www.time.com> was started in 1923 as a print magazine, and now has a print and online edition. Though their print edition is weekly, their online edition is updated frequently with breaking news, as well as photo essays and podcasts. Time Inc., its parent company, publishes 22 U.S. magazines and a larger number of websites.

Salon <www.salon.com> was founded in 1995 online as a source for news and entertainment, and has won many awards since its inception. In addition to its more traditional content, it also hosts the online communities Table Talk and The WELL. It is owned by the Salon Media Group, Inc.

Slate <www.slate.com> was founded as an online daily magazine in 1996. Many articles include multimedia like videos, pictures and cartoons, and they have a plenitude of bloggers and columnists. "The Fray," their reader discussion forum, lets readers discuss top stories in an area removed from the story in question. Slate was purchased by The Washington Post Company in 2004.

Article Choice

Because the six publications being studied publish too much content for one person to study all of it within a given amount of time, the articles studied were limited. While limiting data points, this allowed for closer reading. In the end, three articles from each publication were selected for final review, gathered over a period of about four weeks.

In each case, the home page of the publication was used as a jumping off point. Since traditionally the front page in a publication is the most important page, the media samples' front pages were the beginning points to look at in this study. Every article selected to read was linked to on the home page on the day that it was collected and stored for use in the study, both by saving a permanent url, frequently called a "permalink," as well as by saving a screenshot of the entire page using a Firefox add-

on called Screengrab.

In all cases, the articles selected were considered "typical" for that publication, as determined both through the samples gathered as well as pre-testing. Basic checks met when selecting a story were as follows:

opinion or editorial
more reliant on text than multimedia
longer than a news update or brief
not from the wire
not obviously republished from a print edition
very visible from the front page

The articles used in this study also had to be given some amount of visual prominence on that front page, whether they would be considered features or not. Prominence is evaluated as being: an article in the center column (or main content column, if it is not a three-column layout), typically with an accompanying image, that has a teaser image and is above the fold (that is, one doesn't need to scroll down to see it). Every single publication in this study had, at the time of data gathering, this sort of front page formula.

In the era of frequently updated news, stories that are promoted and those that are features in the traditional sense – long, delving deeply into issues – are not always the same thing. In these publications, even ones with a print parent publication like Time, it seemed that those given prominence were simply recent story, and changed daily if not more frequently depending upon what news was most current.

The type of article – e.g. editorial or commentary – was not distinguished between, largely because some publications, particularly *Atlantic Online*, seemed to give commentary pieces the same amount of front page real estate as other, editorial articles. Articles that were not articles so much as pages containing video or slideshows were disregarded, as those pages tended to have only as much text as

required to serve as a caption for the multimedia involved, and thus not a good sample

for the study, as well as being out of the norm for the publications involved.

Most articles were only one "page," though of course the idea of a page as

a measurement of length is relatively superfluous on the Internet. *Salon* and *The*

Atlantic utilized an article trimming mechanism similar to blogs, in that clicking

on the article takes the reader to a "topic" page similar to a blog layout, with newest

stories at the top, and in order to continue reading that particular story, a "view more"

option must be clicked.

a neighbor, a grandfather. His campaign signs included hand-painted placards with phrases like "Vote for my grandpa," and he was introduced by Mitt Romney as a "man of faith and family."

▶ **Continue reading**

💬 11 COMMENTS | PRINT | PERMALINK |

SHARE: ✉ EMAIL t TWITTER f FACEBOOK in LINKED IN
       DIGG REDDIT STUMBLEUPON SHARETHIS

SATURDAY, MAY 8, 2010 18:06 ET

Utah GOP boots Sen. Robert
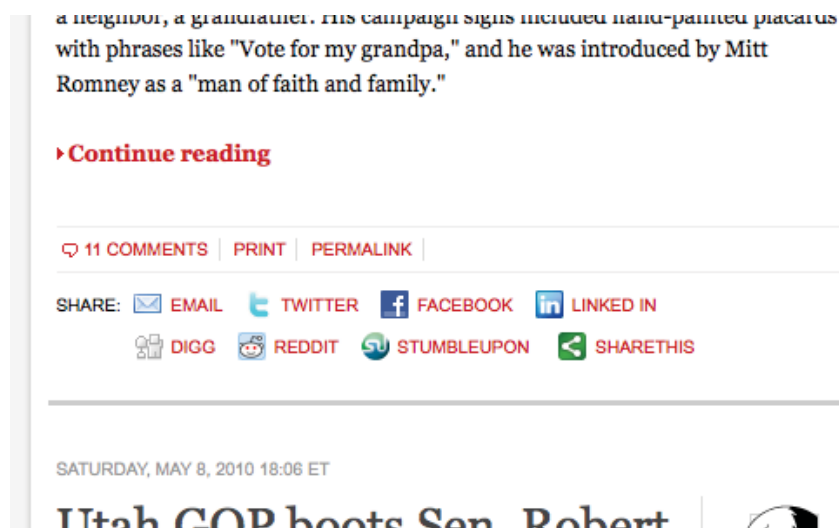
Other publications, when a story was too long for just one page, would either

have an option to view as a single page or, if the article was particularly long, would let

the reader click through the multiple pages.

1 | 2   **NEXT PAGE »**

TRANSPARENCY

Theoretical Framework

Journalism ethics, some researchers have determined, might be even more critical on the online platform than in traditional ones. In a medium where anyone can be a publisher, producer, writer, etc., a strict adherence to ethical codes and indulging in the key tenets of journalists' ideology – public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics -- could be key for preserving journalism in this relatively new format (Deuze 2005).

Transparency is been considered to be a main component of ethics for online journalism, and one new to the field of journalism ethics (Friend & Singer 2007). Transparency is the visibility of the journalism process, and a major indicator of credibility. For example, a journalist that is up front with readers not only about his/her background but also how sources were contacted and interviewed would be considered to be transparent. Because of the fluid nature of the Internet, where not everything is always as it appears, visibility of process (transparency) through things like authenticity, accountability and autonomy are necessary to be considered credible (Hayes et. al. 2007). The trust brought on by this is integral to user satisfaction (Flavián et. al. 2005). The awareness that sources are not transparent and thus not credible can have disastrous consequences – take, for example, the Wal-Mart blog fiasco, which diminished the following of the blog, as well as casting the firms involved in a bad light (Pauly 2007). Because transparency is an indicator of credibility, the actual end result is typically what is studied.

Credibility is frequently broken into two types – medium and source. Medium

credibility is the credibility of a particular communication channel, e.g. newspaper,

television, whereas source credibility is the credibility of a particular publication,

e.g. CS Monitor or Slate (Kiousis 2001). Studies on users' perception of medium

credibility differ – some show that there's no major difference between newspapers,

online and television, whereas others show that the newspaper reigns supreme

(Flanagin and Metzger 2000; Kiousis 2001). Other studies have looked at what might

be considered medium credibility within the World Wide Web – comparing blogs and

media publications – and determined reliance on blogs to be the main determinant

in considering them credible (Johnson & Kaye 2004; Mackay & Lowrey 2007),

something that echoed earlier studies that showed online reliance to be key in its

measure of credibility. Source is typically meant to be individual publications – that

is, the source of the news. Research has shown that news from well known, well

established and well thought of news sources tends to be considered more credible

(Chaigouris et al 2008).

However, as the publications in this sample essentially already fit those criteria,

it is not necessary to study medium and the traditional source transparency. Instead,

indicators of transparency within publications, as determined by the use of author

and source (within articles) credentials, were examined. These are two ways for the

layman to get a sense of a publication's practices, establishing them as – potentially – a

transparent publication, thus making them more credible.

Idling et al (2009) showed that understanding author motivations and seeing

extensive research increased confidence in material. Authors with a commercial

background were trusted less, as they might have a vested interest in the topic. The

visibility of extensive research, on the other hand, makes it look like the author

considered all facts in order to come to a (un-biased) conclusion. This finding of author credibility is supported by another study, which compared opinions of newspaper articles and press releases, and found that newspaper articles were considered more trustworthy (Jo 2005).

Though a variety of studies (Chiagouris et al 2008, Idling et al 2009, Wathen & Burkell 2002) hold that site design is the main indicator of credibility, as the Web continues and decent design becomes more prevalent, this benchmark may become moot. As such, transparency indicators like author and article-source credentials may be the new credibility measurement. Assessing the use of author and source credentials might give clues as to how these six credible publications maintain that status, and give other publications a baseline to compare their practices against in order to join the ranks of credible publications.

Author									
Identified			Position					Contact Info	
yes - 5	no - 0								
in text - 0	in byline - 0	in bio - 1	official - 0	spokesperson - 0	expert - 1		journalist - 1	yes - 2	no
					professional	academic		ease of finding	
								on page - 1	other page

Notes: 10 points possible (technically 11, but it's impossible for the author to be both an expert and a journalist)
five points for identifying the author, an extra one if the writer has a bio
one points for a journalist, one for experts, none for others -- so publication isn't seen as vehicle for business/gov't propaganda
two points for providing a way to contact the writer, and an extra one if that's available on the page

Source					
Source ID:					
Type		Position		how to access	
how accessed - 1	not how accessed - 0	stated - 2	not stated - 0	y - 2	n - 0

Notes: 5 points possible per source -- averaged over all sources

Transparency Analyzer

The coding for the transparency section revolves around visibility of process, as this has been shown to be a major part of developing credibility in the online medium (Friend & Singer 2007). This section of the study used a two-part approach of analyzing author and article-source attributions.

Simply identifying the author yielded five points, as it puts a body behind the story. A further point was given if a biography was available, as that provides context and reveals, to some extent, why the story was written – was it just another assignment, was it the writer's area of expertise, etc. Available through the bio or, alternately, through a staff directory, is some indication of the author's credentials, stating whether he/she is a journalist, expert, spokesperson, or official. If the writer was an expert or journalist, two points were awarded on the basis that these credentials were more apt to be considered unbiased (Idling et al 2009). Finally, three possible points were available through the inclusion of the writer's contact info – two if it was there, another one if it was on the same page as the article, and thus did not require much effort to access. Research shows that the more effort a user has to put into this sort of interaction, the less apt to happen it is (Mackay & Lowrey 2007).

For source attribution, the number of sources was not weighted. Instead, the first three sources were evaluated and their scores averaged together, avoiding any potential score inflation through habitual use of minor sources. One point was available through stating how the information was gathered, whether through an interview, document, etc. Another two were given for identifying the source's credentials, but no points were given based on type of credential to avoid creating a hierarchy of source value. Finally, two points were awarded if some way to access

that source was given, whether contact info, a link, or a thorough citation. Blogs in particular make a point of backtracking through articles, and making source access easier makes it obvious that the publication is not attempting to hide information.

Publication Results

Score Card

Publication	Author Credentials	Source Credentials	Overall
Atlantic Online	7	2 2/3	9 2/3
CS Monitor	8	3	11
NY Times	6	4 1/3	10 1/3
Salon	9	3	12
Slate	7	4 1/2	11 1/2
Time	9	2 2/3	11 2/3

Transparency at *Atlantic Online*

Author Credential Score: 5 + 1 + 1 = 7

Source Credential Score: 1/3 + 2 + 1/3 = 2 2/3

Overall score: 7 + 2 2/3 = 9 2/3

Atlantic Online identifies all of its writers with a byline, and, if they are an editor or correspondent, a bio. Names also link to an author page that repeats this bio and includes an aggregation of clips. There was no visible way to get the writers' contact information, though extensive click-throughs on the correspondent article did eventually lead to the correspondent's blog.

Sources are all referenced in a relatively off-hand manner – no direct quotes,

Chris Good - Chris Good is a staff editor at TheAtlantic.com, where he writes for the magazine's Politics Channel. He has previously reported and blogged for The Hill newspaper.
ALL POSTS

SHARE   « *Previous Politics* | *Next Politics* »   EMAIL PRINT

Jobs! Nevermind The 30,000 Lost--

no links, and largely no reference to how the information was learned or how it can be accessed again. However, they do include the position and name of their sources. Judging by sources – experts and other journalists – it might be assumed that their online content is largely commentary in nature, with relatively no breaking news content, but rather analysis of pre-existing news.

Transparency at CS Monitor

Author Credential Score: $5 + 0 + 1 + 2 + 0 = 8$

Source Credential Score: $.5 + 2 + .5 = 3$

Overall Score: $8 + 3 = 11$

CS *Monitor* identifies all writers at the beginning of the story, but it also includes their correspondent status, if they are one. Clicking on these names takes one to a staff directory, and scrolling down, hopefully, takes one to their name and a contact form link – but one is out of luck if it's a correspondent.

By XIYUN YANG and MICHAEL WINES
Published: January 25, 2010

About half of the source citations included how the information was accessed and how it can be accessed, and all included information on the position of the informant. Sources were quoted directly, and most of the sources were experts, though information from documents was also used.

Transparency at *NY Times*

Author Credential Score: $5 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 0 = 6$

Source Credential Score: $1 + 2 + 1\ 1/3 = 4\ 1/3$

Overall score: $6 + 4\ 1/3 = 10\ 1/3$

Like the other publications in the sample, *New York Times* listed all writers in bylines. Only some of the writers have a hyperlink to a site that aggregates all of their articles – it is unclear if this is due to a staff/non-staff issue or not.

Stories tend to rely on one major source – typically the actual topic of the story – and then use other periphery sources to flesh out the story, adding contextual and factual information that wasn't garnered from the main source. One article, however ("A Look at America's New Hope: The Afghan Tribes"), seemed to have no obvious sourcing.

Transparency at *Salon*

Author Credential Score: $5 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 0 = 9$

Source Credential Score: $2/3 + 1\ 1/3 + 1 = 3$

Overall score: $9 + 3 = 12$

Salon identifies all of its writers through bylines. For staff writers, that name is hyperlinked, leading to a page with a short biography, the writer's e-mail address and an aggregation of their clips. This does not exist, however, for correspondents – there is no obvious way to get in contact with them.

There were two camps of source usage in the three articles sampled. In the case of "Sundance, Girl power, circa 1975," most of the information was presumably from the journalist's own observations. The other two stories, however, used quotes in

a traditional, newspaper sense, citing figures in direct contact with the subject.

Andrew O'Hehir

Andrew O'Hehir has written about movies, books and culture for Salon since 1996 and has covered the independent film world in Salon's Beyond the Multiplex column since 2003. He has written for many national and international publications, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, US Weekly, the Times of London, Sight and Sound and others. He was editor-in-chief of San Francisco's SF Weekly in the mid-'90s and later a senior editor at SPIN magazine. He is the author of two produced plays and (like so many other journalists) an almost-completed novel. He lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., with his wife, Leslie Kauffman, and their two children.

Contact Andrew

You can reach Andrew by e-mail at aoh (at) salon (dot) com.

Most Popular

MOST READ | ACTIVE LETTERS

1. **Why I hate Mother's Day**
   ANNE LAMOTT
2. **Who leads the Democrats if they lose the House?**
   MIKE MADDEN
3. **For Tea Party, a slogan that would make Don Draper proud**
   DAVID SIROTA
4. **The latest on Elena Kagan**
   GLENN GREENWALD
5. **Come on, let Bristol Palin have some fun**
   AMY BENFER

Andrew O'Hehir's Salon stories

FRIDAY, MAY 7, 2010 07:10 ET
"Iron Man 2": Parody or party?

Transparency at *Slate*

Author Credential Score: 5 + 1 + 1 + 0 + 0 = 7

Source Credential Score: 1 + 2 + 1 1/2 = 4 1/2

Overall score: 7 + 4 1/2 = 11 1/2

While *Slate* does use a byline at the top of the page and a well-hidden biography at the bottom (so well hidden that it was not noticed until later perusals), there is no obvious way to get in touch with the writers.

Tom Shone is a former critic for the (London) Sunday Times. He is author of Blockbuster: How Hollywood Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Summer.

Each article sampled used citing pretty differently. One is an opinion piece and uses sources to set the scene ("James Cameron Hates America"). The story on gay marriage did not seem to have any interviews – it was all Supreme Court cases and

snippets from trials. "The Vancouver Experiment" pretty much relied on one source, with a couple other quotes to add depth.
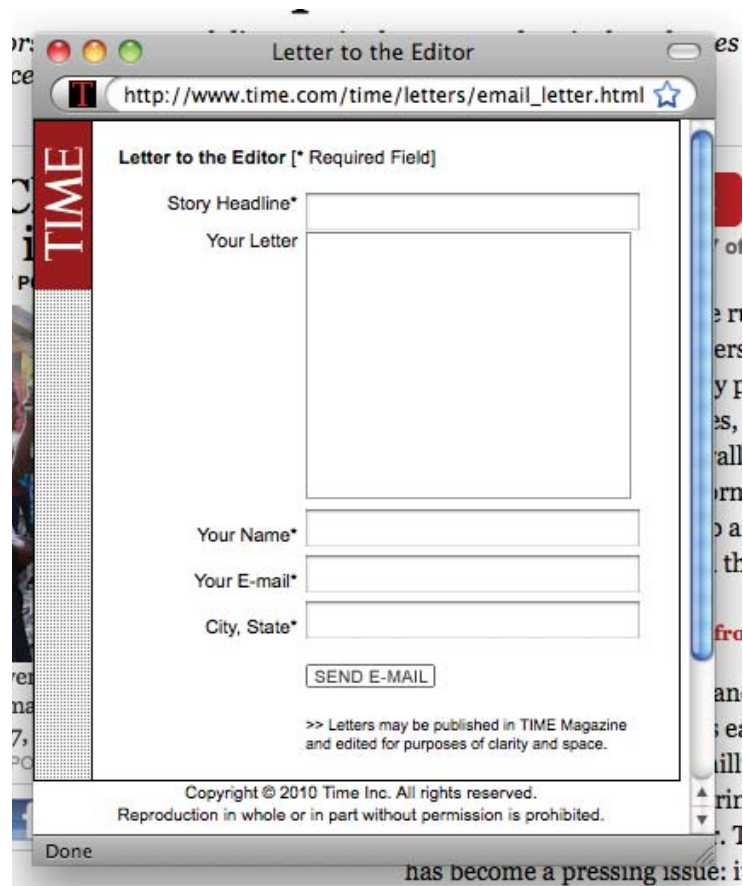
Transparency at *Time*

Author Credential Score: $5 + 0 + 1 + 2 + 1 = 9$

Source Credential Score: $2/3 + 2 + 0 = 2\ 2/3$

Overall score: $9 + 2\ 2/3 = 11\ 2/3$

     Time identified writers in a byline and used this as a direct way to get in touch with – well, someone. Clicking on names opens a pop-up "Letter to the Editor" form, but it is unclear whether this goes to the writer, an editor, or a digital mailroom.

Quotes are largely used to establish context, not always being used factually, but in some cases they're used more traditionally. It is always clear who the source is, but not always how that information was accessed, and how readers might verify this information, or learn more from or about particular sources.

Transparency Analysis

Author Credentials

The only thing these publications seemed to have in common, across the line, was the consistent use of bylines. Regardless of other name treatment, every publication included at least one name at the top of each story. Perhaps also in common was the fact that, for the most part, no publication simply left it at that. Publications like *Atlantic Online*, *Salon* and *New York Times* used links that lead to an aggregation of writers' stories. *Salon*, *Time* and *CS Monitor* used links to make it possible to contact someone at the publication with relative ease. And *Salon*, *Slate* and *Atlantic* all included biographies. From this, it is clear that *Salon* is the "winner," per se, of the author credential score contest – *Salon* makes it very clear who the writer is, what they have done with the publication, and how to get in contact with them.

Source Credentials

Different publications used sources different ways. Some articles, largely those in *CS Monitor* and *NY Times*, used sources extensively in a traditional newspaper fashion, to add facts and context. Others did not use any sources, or used them in an off-hand manner to set the scene, like most of those in *Atlantic Online* and *Salon*.

In many cases, a publication would have articles treated in both fashions. The real distinguishing factor in the sharing of source credentials seemed to be whether it was a news story or commentary, though even then there were some obviously well-researched commentary stories, and some news stories for which the journalist just magically seemed to know the necessary information. *Atlantic Online* and, to a certain extent, *Salon*, focus more on commentary, and thus are not as stringent in their sourcing, whereas the print newspaper-based *CS Monitor* and *NY Times* cited well enough to make news-writing professors proud. All of the publications, however, were lacking in the area of sharing how to access the information – the only cases in which this was available were when a link could be stuck in unobtrusively.

Conclusion

This section of the study examined the credentials of articles' authors and sources. The treatment of these in individual articles was used to create a holistic view of a publication's transparency. The comparison of publication's transparency was then used to get an impression of transparency practices across the medium.

> Do publications display author & source credentials?
> Is the author just a name, or is it possible to determine the author's affiliations and get in touch with him/her?
> Are sources' names included, as well as their positions an ways to find out more about them?

It is safe to say that, at least for these publications, bylines and stories by staff members here become standard. Biographies and contact links are extra functionalities only utilized by half the sample. Treatment of author credentials did not have any bearing on treatment of source credentials, however. Use of sourcing varied between publications as well as within publications. When traditional news-

style sourcing was used, however, it always included the source's position, though rarely a way to find out more about the source. While there is definitely a standard for author credentials, there are no across-the-board standards for source credentials.

INTERACTIVITY

Theoretical Framework

Critics and academics have heralded website interactivity as the most vital aspect of the Internet and even more so of the so-called "Web 2.0" that developed around the turn of the 21st century. Previously, mass media had been largely top-down, with the audience being passive receivers and the media being the holders of all power, choosing what the stories are and how the audience will receive them (van Djick 2009; Chung 2008). Interactivity, however, can make those passive receivers into active ones, changing how media is used:

> The use of interactive features on the internet has the potential to trigger a paradigm shift in mass media by challenging the traditional unidirectional flow of messages through features that provide bi-directional or even multi-directional communication. (Chung 2007: 1)

Though all agree on its importance, definitions of the phenomenon vary. Deuze broke it into three categories – navigational, moving through the site; functional, interpersonal communication; and adaptive, the potential for customization of a page (2003: 12). Navigational interactivity might not even be considered interactivity for more web-savvy users, as it is simply using the links within the page layout to maneuver a site. Functional is the aspect most studied within this study, as interaction with content and other people is the focus of most current interactivity research. It can include sharing thoughts with others, as through comments, but also sharing articles with others through different sharing options. Adaptive interactivity seems to be the least common type of interactivity, though some have called for an increase in it due to its desirability (Forbes & Rothschild 2000; Granatstein 2006), though it can be can be found in customizable home pages like iGoogle, and the

uptick in uses of Really Simple Syndication, or RSS, feeds.

More common both in usage and academic discussion, however, is interactivity

defined by the actors in it – user-to-user and user-to-content interactivity, approximate

to Deuze's functional and navigational interactivities, respectively (Chung 2007; Shao

2008). Shao defined these comprehensively and coherently as such:

> User-to-content interaction occurs when people rate the content, save to their favorites, share with others, post comments, etc. User-to-user interaction occurs when people interact with each other through e-mail, instant message, chat room, message boards, and other Internet venues. (2008)

Options for interaction, particularly within the user-to-content modality of

interactivity, seem ubiquitous. While the majority of media users will not even engage

in these interactions, or will at least not choose to engage in the most effortful of

them, they were found to have a positive effect on user satisfaction and perceptions of

credibility (Chung 2008; Chung and Nah 2009; van Dijck 2009).

Despite the push for interactivity, researchers have shown that practitioners

are not embracing interactivity as much as they could be. In a study of online news

producers, Chung found a resistance towards implementing user-to-user interactivity

beyond posting comments, likely because of the effort involved in maintaining such

features:

> Instead of focusing on the internet's unique ability to exchange information back and forth with the user that challenges the one-way model of traditional media, many site producers stuck primarily to a discussion about incorporating medium interactive features. (2007: 50)

At least from a site producer standpoint, interactivity is good but harder to

achieve, particularly on a journalist-to-reader level, and it is this human-to-human

level that seems to be the most valued all around (Chung & Nah 2009: 866-867).

However, beyond work done in the 1990s, which seems pretty archaic in terms

of the Internet's evolution, there has been relatively little work done on evaluating what the interactivity options are that are currently provided by the mass media. The most relevant is a study similar to this one that compared mass media in Europe and the United States, which found that the levels of interactivity both between readers and between readers and journalists varied by site, with some promoting user-driven forums, and others not even providing a way to contact the journalist (Quandt 2008).

The hitch is that users can only indulge in interactivity insofar as they are allowed and capable, making it necessary to evaluate "the substantial role a site's interface plays in manoeuvring [sic] individual users and communities" (van Dijck 2009: 45). Commenting is a relatively common topic of study and social media seems to constantly be expanding, and thus the availability and use of both merits studying to see if publications make these user-to-user and user-to-content interactions available. Another area of user-to-content interaction that is not typically mentioned or study is that of related and recommended stories. Reading these are the least typically interactive of the three interactivity categories, but still require reader initiative.

Given that the United States was the birthplace of the Internet and therefore, logically, the most advanced in terms of Internet feature adoption, it is necessary to take a closer look at main sources of news in the country, and what options they provide Americans for engagement, and determine if online interactivity is really the mechanism for a more involved republic.

Interactivity Analyzer

Given research and original observation, the aspects of interactivity considered

worth studying are sharing options, related/recommended stories and commenting.

The first feature measured in the interactivity section is the provision of sharing capabilities – the inclusion of methods to share an article with other people, whether through the World Wide Web, Internet, cellular telephones, or in person. Sharing stories is one of the most low effort forms of interactivity, while still involving some form of person-to-person communication (Chung 2008).
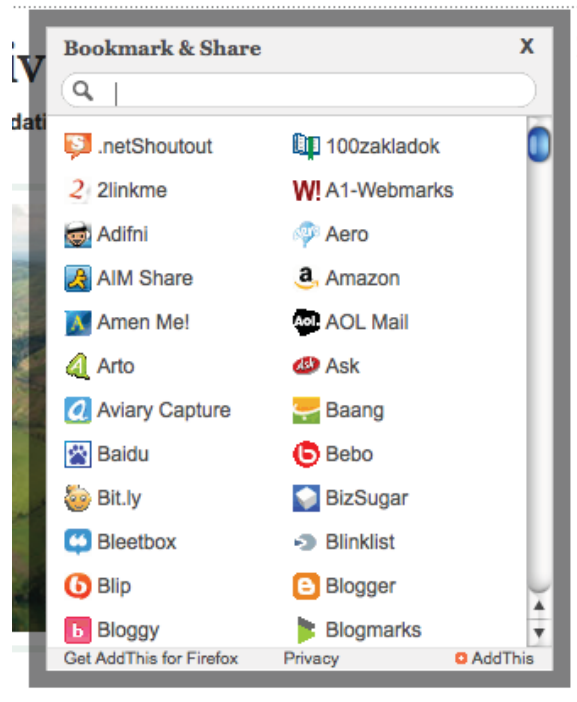
Observation revealed five types of sharing mechanisms – sharing through data-sharing, through social networking, through social bookmarking, through RSS, and through blogging. Data-sharing includes printing, e-mailing, and sending through cellular telephones. Social networking includes sharing through social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace. Social bookmarking includes sharing through sites like Digg and StumbleUpon that exist purely for that purpose. Sharing through blogging is giving readers the opportunity to share the article on their blog.

Sharing capabilities are weighted the most heavily of all the interactivity sections. Simply including these capabilities is worth two points, while one point is awarded for including each of the types. No differentiation is made between if they are spotlighted or included in a catch-all social media tab.

Many publications include links to related or recommended stories in their article layouts. These links can exist in text, in a tag cloud, or in a link list. If links are in text, they may actually be hyperlinked words within the article, or links at the end of paragraphs (as in *Time*).

Links in a tag cloud are given hierarchy by their size, as more popular ones are portrayed in a larger font size. Links in a link list are typically in a table in a column, not necessarily listed in a particular order. These stories can be organized by theme, popularity, or similar readers. Related stories by theme are on the same topic, though potentially separated by time, geography, or other factors. Related stories by popularity are those stories that have gotten the highest number of hits within a given period – some publications differentiate by day, others by week, etc. Related stories by similar readers are aggregated from what readers who read that article also read.

The inclusion of related or recommended stories is worth the fewest points, largely due to it being the least interactive of the other three sections of interactivity. The inclusion of these stories resulted in two points, and if they were included due to their theme, another point was given. Inclusion by theme was valued more than popularity or similar readership due to its status as "continued reading." That is, it

could be assumed that an interested reader would be more apt to click on thematically related links than other stories, assuming headlines equally provocative (MacGregor 2003). The layout and navigation of these stories was not considered in the weighting of the section, as there is little research done as to how effective the three prospective layouts are in prompting readers to click.

Sharing Capabilities Provided						
Included		Type				
yes - 2	no - 0	data-sharing - 1	social networking - 1	social bookmarking - 1	rss - 1	blog - 1
Notes: 7 points possible two points for including sharing options one point for each sharing option						

Related/Recommended Stories						
Included		Navigation			How Picked	
yes - 2	no - 0	in text - 0	tag cloud - 0	link list - 0	theme - 1	popularity	similar readers
Notes: 3 points possible two points for including related/recommended stories one point for stories that would be like "continued reading"						

User Input/Commenting							
Included		Visible		Requires Registration		Directs Elsewhere	
yes - 3	no - 0	yes - 1	no - 0	yes - 0	no - 1	yes - 0	no - 0
Notes: 5 points possible three points for having commenting enabled one points for having visible comments one points for not requiring registration							

The final part of the interactivity section is the opportunity for user input and commenting. While commenting is often pointed to as a necessary part of interactivity, research has shown that commenting, for whatever reason, is not as used as it could be (Chung 2008). Comments, if enabled, can either be visible or hidden, and even if they are "visible" to the public, reading the comments may direct one to a different page. While registration with the publication's site is not necessarily needed

to read the comments, it may be required in order to post a comment.

Commenting is worth the second most points of the interactivity section. While including commenting is considered valuable and therefore weighted at three points, only two other parts of commenting were given points. One of these was visibility of submitted comments – that is, do they disappear into the black hole of the publication' domain, or are they published for others to see and respond to. The other is whether registration is required to comment. Personal experience led to the speculation that requiring some sort of commitment to the site in order to participate in simple ways is a turn off to users, and thus not requiring registration was valued.

Publication Results

Score Card

Publication	Sharing	Stories	Commenting	Overall
Atlantic	5	3	2 1/2	10 1/2
CS Monitor	7	3	0	10
NY Times	5	3	0	8
Salon	7	3	4	14
Slate	6	3	4	13
Time	6	3	2 1/2	11 1/2

Interactivity at *Atlantic Online*

Sharing Capabilities Score: 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 5

Related/Recommended Stories Score: 2+1 = 3

Commenting Score: 1 1/2 + 1 + 0 + 0 = 2 1/2

Overall score: 10 1/2

       Some of the content on *Atlantic Online* is "shovelware," or stories repurposed from the print edition, and the interactivity treatment between these pieces and pieces produced for the web vary. Namely, stories republished from the magazine do not have commenting enabled. On stories where commenting is enabled, it does not seem to be relatively popular or used.

Add New Comment

Required: Please login below to comment.

D DISQUS   t Twitter

Type your comment here.

Name   Website (optional)

Email   ☐ Subscribe to all comments by email

Login and Post

       Interesting, however, is the fact that site registration is not technically necessary to comment – users can use an alternate login through a Disqus or Twitter account and comment that way.

       While discussion might not be a focus of the site, giving readers access to

related stories seems to be. Some stories have links to blogs that reference it. A link list to the right also shows recent stories in the same section and by the same author.

The publication does offer different ways to share articles – through data-sharing (e-mailing), social bookmarking and social networking – by clicking on a button that opens a small window to see the different options. This button is always at the bottom of the article. However, sometimes more "traditional" sharing methods, essentially e-mailing and printing, are available towards the top of the article in addition.

Interactivity at *CS Monitor*

Sharing Capabilities Score: 2 + 5 = 7

Related/Recommended Stories Score: 2 + 1 = 3

Commenting Score: 0

Overall score: 10

The *Christian Science Monitor* does not enable commenting on its stories, but it does promote the sharing of stories through the "Add This" widget. This widget – really a button with a pop-up window – seems to be relatively popular among news sites, perhaps because it is a low-effort way of offering many sharing methods. Through it, one can share articles through pretty much any social bookmarking, social networking, or blogging interface one can think of. Interestingly, Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo! Buzz and Digg are all linked to externally, as well. There is also an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) option, as well as printing and e-mailing. This list of sharing methods is available at both the top and bottom of the article. Stories also include a link to *CS Monitor*'s Twitter account.

Follow us on Twitter.

Readers can get to other stories through two methods. A link list in the text shows stories that are related by theme. A link list to the right, amongst ads and other peripheral content, shows popular stories, as determined by number of page views.

Interactivity at *NY Times*

Sharing Capabilities Score: 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 5

Related/Recommended Stories Score: 2 + 1 = 3

Commenting Score: 0

Overall score: 8

Interactivity

The *New York Times*'s level of interactivity is similar to that of the *Christian Science Monitor.* Commenting is not enabled in either. Related and recommended stories are available through the same layout – that is, a table embedded in the text shows stories related by theme, whereas a table in a column to the right shows recommended stories by popularity (most hits).

However, *New York Times*'s story sharing options are significantly pared down compared to the *Christian Science Monitor.* While there is a pop-up with different sharing methods – LinkedIn, Mixx, Digg, Myspace, Facebook and Yahoo! Buzz are included in it, while a link to Twitter is further up on the page. There are no options for RSS or blog sharing.

Interactivity at *Salon*

Sharing Capabilities Score: 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 7

Related/Recommended Stories Score: 2 + 1 = 3

Commenting Score: 3 + 1 = 4

Overall score: 14

Salon uses the popular "Share This" tab, a green button that pops up showing more than 60 different sharing methods, including rarer types like blogging and syndication. In addition, Twitter, Facebook and Digg are spotlighted outside of the tab.

Typically, the article was at the top of a page that included all stories in that topic. As such, scrolling down takes one to related stories by theme. However, there are also links to the right for the most recent stories from Salon.

Commenting is enabled. Referred to as "Letters to the Editor," registration with Salon is required, though it stresses that the account needed to submit these

letters is free. The Letters open up on a separate page, instead of below the story.

Interactivity at *Slate*

Sharing Capabilities Score: $2 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 6$

Related/Recommended Stories Score: $2 + 1 = 3$

Commenting Score: $3 + 1 + 0 + 0 = 4$

Overall score: 13

The only links *Slate* provides for article sharing are Digg, Buzz up, Twitter and Facebook, along with the standbys of print and e-mail. It also includes an easy way to "like" the article on Facebook, as well as the number of times the article has been "Dugg" or "Buzzed up".

Links throughout the story lead to off-site articles with more content. Popular stories are listed to the right, and stories with the same topic are at the bottom of the story. There are also links to related, off-site stories at the bottom of the page as part of an advertisement block.

Slate has enabled commenting on stories. The comment form is underneath the article, but registration is required in order to leave one.

Interactivity at *Time*

Sharing Capabilities Score: 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 6

Related/Recommended Stories Score: 2 + 1 = 3

Commenting Score: 1.5 + 1 = 2.5

Overall score: 11.5

     Time offers a number of ways to share articles, including blogging, and most of which are available through the "Add This" tab. Outside of that tab, however, Facebook, Twitter, Buzz up and Digg are highlighted. In addition, the number of times the story has been shared on Twitter, Facebook or Digg is shown.
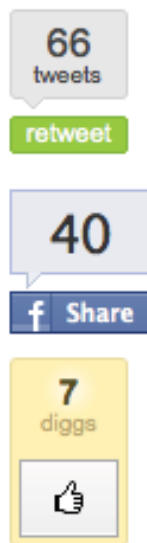
     Commenting is not enabled on all stories, and on stories where it is enabled, it is deactivated after a certain period. On stories where it is enabled, a link at the top of the story says "Submit a Comment," and a sentence at the bottom tells readers that they must be logged in to comment. Through this perusal, there does not seem to be a pattern as to which stories have commenting enabled and which do not.

     Related stories by theme are in a column to the left. They also occasionally

appear within the text as bold red links at the end of the paragraphs – in some cases these are only tangentially related to the article, and presumably listed due to containing a keyword present in the paragraph. Most popular Time stories by hits and e-mails are in the column to the right.

Interactivity Analysis

Sharing Capabilities

All publications included some level of sharing capabilities. *Christian Science Monitor* and *Salon* included all possible sharing options, which is interesting given their stark difference in the commenting category. In order to provide these, they both used social media widgets that include almost any sharing method one can think of. Both of them also highlighted Facebook, Twitter and Digg externally, as well as traditional e-mail and print data-sharing options.

All publications included these traditional data-sharing options. They all also included social networking and social bookmarking sharing options. In these cases, clicking that one wants to share through a particular social media typically formats the post for the reader – for example, when tweeting an article, the tweet automatically includes the headline and short url, all the user has to do is click "tweet." Blogging and RSSing, however, might imply more involvement with the material, and that could be the reason they are less commonly included. After all, while one could, feasibly, simple have a blog post with the necessary information to link to the story, it would be in the nature of blogging for the blogger to spend the time to comment on it.

Related/Recommended Stories

When it came to related/recommended stories, all publications tied in their scoring – that is, all of them had related/recommended stories, and all of them included, at the very least, related stories by theme. In some cases, this was access to other stories within the department, whether immediately related or not, whereas in others, these were stories with similar keywords or providing background to the story. Popular stories were the next most common to include, and were typically in a column to the right, part of the template of the webpage. No publications seemed to include stories by similar readers.

Related stories by theme could be considered the most helpful of related/ recommended story types, as they can be construed as recommended or extended reading about the topic at hand, such that readers interested in the current story are apt to read those as well. In this case, they might be more useful than stories by similar readers, as similar readers might be apt to, say, click on the top "popular" story next instead of one on a similar topic, and that popular story might not be of interest to the current reader.

User Input/Commenting

There was a significant disparity in commenting scores – some publications, such as *Salon* and *Slate*, received nearly full scores, whereas *NY Times* and *CS Monitor* received zero points. One thing was the same across all publications, however: registration, while free, was required in order to give input. This makes a certain amount of sense, as it cuts down on spam and makes readers accountable for their comments. However, it might also be a turn off to some readers, as it requires

more effort and yet another registration for yet another site that they might never use again.

While *Slate* and *Salon* allowed commenting on all their stories, and *NY Times* and *CS Monitor* on none, *Time* and *Atlantic Online* allowed commenting on some of their stories. Worth noting in this is that both *New York Times* and *CS Monitor* were originally print newspapers, both *Time* and *Atlantic* were originally print magazines, and both *Slate* and *Salon* have always been online. It is probably more than coincidental that the different mediums have equivalent commenting policies. *Slate* and *Salon* are firm in the online tradition of allowing user input, but the other four publications have a strong print tradition, in which commenting on articles is not so easy. In the case of the print-to-online magazines, it may be the case that commenting is enabled on site-only content and not shovelware. As for the newspapers, it is unclear why they would not allow commenting. After all, print newspapers make a point of having a letters section. It may be the case that these newspapers view their sites more as another method of getting out content, rather than its own medium.

Conclusion

This section of the study examined the potentials for interactivity within article's layouts, particularly the presence of sharing capabilities, related stories, and enabled commenting. The inclusion of these was used as indicators of a publication's potential for interactivity.

> Do publications provide interactivity options?
> How extensive are sharing options?
> Is it complicated to post a comment?
> How many types of related stories are included?

Overall, there was not a huge disparity of scores between different publications

– all publications got at least half the points available for this section. At least token sharing options were included, and catch-all ways to include social media, like Add This and Share This, were popular. If commenting was enabled, some sort of registration was required. All publications included recommended and related stories.

Publications seem to favor interactivity that does not require that much work on their part. Using a third-party sharing service eliminates the need to aggregate social media to link. Requiring registered commenting reduces the need for spam filters and comment moderators. Stories by theme and number of hits simply require a php script running to fill populate that section. Whether this low-publication-effort interactivity is enough is another thing.

MULTIMEDIALITY

Theoretical Framework

In the 1980s and 1990s, it was speculated that potential for multimedia, along with interactivity, would make the Internet and the Web change the way people experienced the news. Academics thought that multimedia would elevate storytelling to a whole new level, causing articles to have "a linear heart, with options to deepen and widen it in unprecedented ways" (MacGregor 2003:8). It is perhaps undeniable that the Internet and the Web have changed the news experience, but whether multimedia was the unique aspect that changed everything is up for debate. Whether a piece is a complete, immersive multimedia package, or an article with a few bells and whistles, at the end the goal of multimedia is to do what all news aims to do – tell a story – and ideally, this extra depth of content serves to engage users, as well as living up to the capabilities of the web (Sundar 2000).

Definitions of what, exactly, multimedia is vary between defining it as multi-format storytelling and multi-platform storytelling. The first is of multimedia as:

> the presentation of a news story package on a website using two or more media formats, such as (but not limited to) spoken and written word, music, moving and still images, graphic animations, including interactive and hypertext elements. (Deuze 2004: 140)

This seems to be the most obvious – the combination of different elements to form a whole, like so many offbeat art projects in grade school. It is also the most readily apparent to an outsider, which is why the second definition, though its validity is recognized, is not being used:

> [Multimedia] as the integrated (although not necessarily simultaneous) presentation of a news story package through different media, such as (but not limited to) a website, a Usenet newsgroup, e-mail, SMS, MMS, radio,

television, teletext, print newspapers and magazines ... (140)

Studies on convergence have already been done, and require research into the actual production methods of a publication as opposed to looking at a publication's website through the eyes of a consumer. And while issues of convergence sometimes come into play when studying multimedia, it is perhaps not an issue editorial and web staffs have control over, and thus not viable to study through this research.

A recent study by Quandt found that 3/10 of his sample publications – all popular in their home countries – enhanced more than 20% of their content with multimedia, but the other seven enhanced less than that, and in the case of times-online.co.uk and lenta.ru, no multimedia was used at all, and of the multimedia that was used, it was almost always a slideshow. The publication that utilized the most multimedia, the BBC, had a strong television/radio background and thus was already accustomed to creating this type of content (2008: 727) – a case in which convergence does play into multimedia implementation.

MacGregor (2003) determined that this slow adoption is likely due, among other things, to a lack of desire to give up journalistic conventions, a lack of technology needed to prepare a multimedia package, and a lack of theory on how to put together such a piece. These problems may be alleviated in cases of "converged" news sources. After all, the BBC already had the staff on hand with the knowledge and resources needed to produce multimedia presentations. The average publication, however, does not necessarily have this sort of infrastructure. Those with a background in written journalism could be wary of changing fields, and may not know best practices, nor will their workplace necessarily have the technology used to create excellent material.

MacGregor also questioned whether multimedia was even the best way to tell

stories, due to the "sensory gap" – the breaks in reader absorption with content – that comes about through offering a self-determining, non-linear method of news perusal.

Other scholars have also identified problems with multimedia storytelling. An eyetrack study found that factual recall is better in media set-ups just using text, though unfamiliar processes are better understood with multimedia, and overall recollection of news was better when consumed through text (Poynter Institute et. al. 2004). Yet how to make the use of multimedia clear and comprehensible? Yaros suggests using continuity and coherency in page design and flow to direct the reader's eye, as stories with these characteristics have been shown to both be rated higher by users as well as aid user comprehension (2009). Eyetrack studies recommend providing entry points, drawing attention to special content, using infographics, and using object size to develop a hierarchy (Poynter Institute et. al. 2004). A study by Sundar (2000) found that while still graphics aided comprehension of accompanying text, audio-visual stimulation hindered comprehension, so though a small amount of multimedia might be valuable, a complete multimedia package as imagined by early academics might not be the most useful for news consumers.

Particular multimedia's utility is moot, however, without first determining if and how multimedia is currently being used by news publications. By studying the images, infographics, slideshows, video, and other types of multimedia that publications employ, future research can hone its focus to pertinent multimedia and the issues surrounding its usage. It can also set a new baseline for multimedia implementation towards which publications can work.

Multimedia Analyzer

The multimedia section of the study is divvied up into two parts – images and, essentially, everything else. Images, in this case, are still pictures, and can be photographs, illustrations, or photo illustrations. The "everything else" includes video, animation, and audio contents.

For the purposes of this study, photographs are relatively unaltered images taken with a camera (left), illustrations are drawings of any type (center), and photo illustrations meld the two in a way that it is visible to a nonprofessional's eyes that it is, in fact, a combination of the two (right).

Eleven points are possible for the inclusion of images. Merely including images gives two points – no distinction is made given the number included. The type of image is not weighted due to creating a hierarchy of image types seems unnecessary.

Four points are given for slideshows because, if a slideshow is necessary, it can be assumed that there is a decent quantity of pictures provided. Four points are also given for infographics, because they take into account the need for meaningful relations between text and other elements that Macgregor (2003) and Yaros (2009) established. If meaningful captions explaining the image(s) are included, another point is given.

Images								
Included	Type			Presentation			Caption	
yes - 2 | no - 0	photos	illustrations	photo illustrations	in layout - 0	slide show - 4	infographic - 4	yes - 1	no - 0

Notes: 11 points possible
two points for including a picture
zero points to avoid creating a hierarchy of type
four points for slideshows because that implies there was more than just the one requisite picture
four points for infographics -- can also get points for text content, if applicable
one for including a meaningful caption

Everything Else: Video/Animation/Audio								
Included	Type			Presentation		Content		
yes - 4 | no - 0	video	animation	audio	embedded	pop up	footage	text	images

Notes: four points possible
four points given for including any additional content
no other points given, as it's exceptional enough that this additional content exists

The "everything else" of multimedia includes free-standing video, animation, and audio content. Like images, they can be embedded within the layout or pop up in a new window. In the case of video and animation, they can include footage, text and images. The inclusion of these multimedia options is weighted the same as including a slideshow, since they result in a similar level of multimedia content. No other points are given, because it is exceptional when this content is included at all.

Publication Results

Score Card

Publications	Images	Everything Else	Overall
Atlantic Online	6	0	6
CS Monitor	7	0	7
NY Times	11	0	11
Salon	2 1/2	0	2 1/2
Slate	7	0	7
Time	7	4	11

Multimedia at *Atlantic Online*

Images Score: 2 + 4 = 6

Everything Else Score: 0

Overall Score: 6

Perhaps due to its print background, the multimedia options of *Atlantic Online* are slim to none. While articles typically have a large photograph at the top of the article, there is nothing interspersed through the article, and these images do not have captions. In later perusals of the site, even these images across the top of the page seem to have gotten sparser in their use – frequently there is an image accompanying the front page blurb, but actually going to the article, there are no pictures.
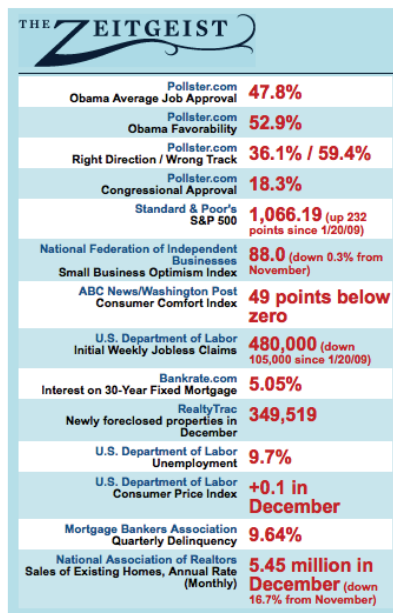
Only one other use of multimedia was found, and this was an infographic of sorts in the politics section that aggregated political info and was called "The Zeitgeist, which was a fancified table, but for the purposes of this study it is being considered an infographic.

Multimedia at *CS Monitor*

Images Score: 2 + 4 + 1 = 7

Everything Else Score: 0

Overall Score: 7

All of the stories studied incorporated at least some multimedia. In each case, a photograph spanned the top of the column the article was in, and was static across each page. Occasionally, a picture was also embedded within the layout of the story.

Two stories also included a link to a slideshow. In one case the slideshow seemed to be stock images only vaguely related to the article at hand. The other slideshow was not as obvious, and only noticed on a later perusal of the article – the slideshow caused the image at the top of the page to scroll, and navigating interface was relatively minimal.

Pastureland encroaches on farm plots in the North Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo where cattle herders have fought farmers in land disputes.

Julien Harneis

Enlarge   Photos (1 of 7)

Multimedia at *NY Times*

Images Score: 2 + 4 + 4 + 1 = 11

Everything Else Score: 0

Overall Score: 11

Each article has a large photograph across the top of the page, shown at full-size, with short captions. (Since gathering this data, *New York Times* has changed this layout to eliminate this header image and instead include it in the left column.) Some stories also have further multimedia options in the left column.

In one case, these were infographics that, on a click, blew up to full size. In "A Look at America's New Hope: The Afghan Tribes," two infographics describe the customs and hierarchy of Afghan tribes, using a combination of images and text to give the story context.

In "Haiti Hospital's Fight Against TB Falls to One Man," it was an interactive feature that gave 360 degree views of two rooms in the hospital to illustrate the

Panoramas: Tuberculosis Patients
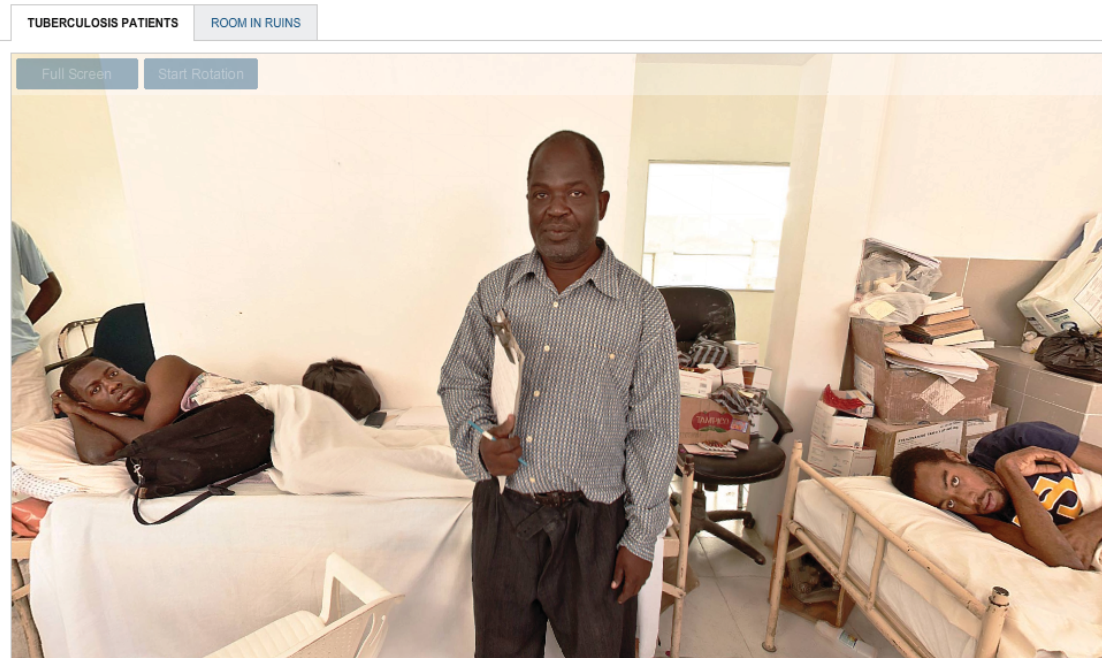
In a small clinic hastily erected alongside the rubble of the only tuberculosis sanatorium in Haiti, a lone nurse, Pierre-Louis Monfort, attends to some of the remaining patients. Most cannot walk. He also hands out medication during the day to outpatients. Most of the sanatorium's several hundred surviving patients fled after the earthquake.

condition of the building. Because of how panoramas are created, and its interactive nature, these pieces were considered slideshow equivalents.

Multimedia at *Salon*

Images Score: 2 + .5 = 2.5

Everything Else Score: 0

Overall Score: 2.5

Salon uses a photo or photo illustration at the top of each article, but seems to make only a token effort at captioning photos, and none at all on photo illustrations. Much like the other publications surveyed, none of the articles studied used any other multimedia content. This is particularly interesting that two of the articles sampled had the potential to include television and movie clips.

Multimedia at *Slate*

Images Score: 2 + 4 + 1 = 7

Everything Else Score: 0

Overall Score: 7

Slate uses the standard layout of having an image at the top of the article. In two of the stories surveyed, this was all that was used. In "The Vancouver Experiment," however, that image was a link to was a relatively low-tech but extensive slideshow. Including photographs of the facility being discussed, it added to the story not only through images but through detailed captions – including one which had a correction note in it -- which included information not present in the original article.
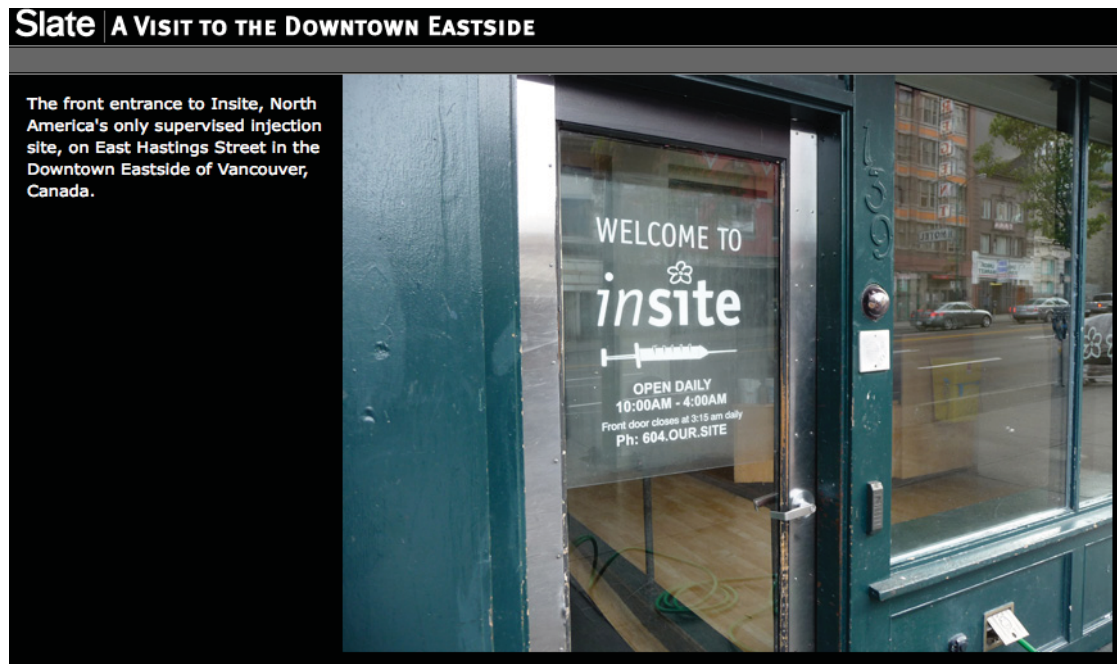
Multimedia at *Time*

Images Score: 2 + 4 + 1 = 7

Everything Else Score: 4

Overall Score: 11

Time has a photo at the top of the each story as its main use of multimedia, and includes a caption for it. However, some stories had additional multimedia options – though they were not always obvious and not always published immediately. In the case of "Iran's Opposition: Confrontation or Compromise," the related photos was an option within the column to the left, where related stories were shown.

> smashed-up storefront, and the pillaging
> of goods begins.
> **(See TIME's exclusive photos from Haiti.)**
>
> Such scenes of police shots and looting
> have played out daily in this earthquake-

In an article that became part of *Time*'s Haiti earthquake package, new content was added later – there is now a slideshow link visible underneath the first paragraph and a link to a video by the same name as the article underneath the second paragraph. This video made it the only publication and only article to score any points in the "everything else" category.

Multimedia Analysis

Images

Every single publication in this study scored at least four points in this section – that is, at the very least; they included some semblance of visual imagery with the

articles used as samples. For *Salon* and *Atlantic Online*, this was essentially all that they did.

Other publications rose above this, however, sometimes using exceptional

Who Will Win the Gay Marriage Trial?

A road map to the routes to victory for both sides.

By William N. Eskridge Jr. and Darren Spedale

Posted Friday, Jan. 29, 2010, at 10:45 AM ET

With the testimony in the Proposition 8 trial now closed, it's time to consider: Which side will win? Will Judge Vaughn Walker find that California's limitation of marriage to one man, one woman violates the U.S. Constitution? Legal doctrine affords both sides avenues for victory. It also generates landmines (arguments that could create controversy for Judge Walker) and lavender herrings (silly diversions that he would be wise to avoid).

Kristin Perry, left, and Sandra Stier are plaintiffs in the gay marriage case

If Judge Walker finds that

PRINT
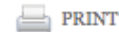
multimedia. *Time*, *Slate* and *CS Monitor* all used slideshows in addition to the cookie cutter image-at-the-top-of-the-page layout that every publication used. *Slate* and *Time*, in particular, made an excellent use of these slideshows, using them to add to the narrative thread of the story. The *New York Times* had a non-traditional slideshow, turning a myriad of pictures into a panorama. It was also the only publication to use infographics. This exceptional use of multimedia is intriguing considering its print background, though it is possible that print training made the infographics possible.

Everything Else

Only *Time* used anything beyond images. In this case, it was a video that was put up after the article was originally viewed, but essentially told the same story the article did, and the content was created by the writer.

Part of the reason that this had content and the other publications did not might be because this story was part of a pretty big one at the time – the earthquake in Haiti. As such, the story was part of what later turned into a special package about the event. Because of this featurette status, it may have merited special treatment.

Conclusion

This section of the study examined the use of multimedia in the articles studied. While imperfect, because not all articles in a publication necessarily exhibit

the same multimedia usage, this was mitigated somewhat by the random selection of stories. Research emphasis was given to value-added multimedia like infographics, slideshows and video.

> Are publications incorporating multimedia?
> Do they only use images, or are they using dynamic content?
> Does the multimedia aid the story-telling of the article's text?

Currently publications just have token multimedia usage, possibly because most publications do not have the time and manpower to put into creating multimedia packages for every article. When multimedia is used, the pieces tend to be part of larger news packages which merit this input of manpower, and which can draw from work done by others on the project. Largely, the additional multimedia options are meaningful, adding something to the story beyond being an eye-catcher. Thus, while publications are not necessarily using multimedia as much as they could be, when they do use it they use it well and with purpose.

CONCLUSION

This study examined six publications' online versions in order to determine if what standards of online journalism exist, and if they are shared across different publications. The publications were evaluated in light of the three categories of the study: transparency, interactivity and multimedia. For transparency, aspects of visibility of process were examined – is it possible to determine who the author is and find out more about him/her? Are the sources obvious, and is it possible to find more about them? Interactivity took into account three indicators of interactivity – sharing options, related stories and commenting. How extensive were they? How easy were they to use? Multimedia looked at offerings beyond text, like images, infographics, slideshows and video. Where these being utilized? Were they afterthoughts or did they aid the story-telling of the article?

Results

No overall winner emerged. Like people, each publication had an area in which it was relatively strong, and another in which it was relatively weak. In each area there was, however, a clear winner.

The highest scoring publication in the transparency portion of the study was *Salon*. *Salon* did an exceptional job of making their authors individuals. Bylines led to a page with a biography, illustration, e-mail address, and aggregation of clips, which gave context to the author's writing and made them seem more than a cog in the machine. While *Salon* did stand out, all publications did include bylines for their writers, and making those bylines link to biographies and contact pages was not all that uncommon. Every publication basically dealt with sources the same – the name

and position of the source was included, but only in rare situations, typically when the source was closely affiliated with a website, was any way to find more information about the source included.

In interactivity, *Slate* got nearly the highest score (*Salon* technically got higher, but *Slate* broke the mold of the analysis method). On some level, this makes a good bit of sense because they have always been an online publication. In addition to commenting at the bottom of an article, readers can get more involved in discussion at "The Fray," a forum set up particularly for discussing *Slate* articles. *Slate* used a plentitude of different sharing options, but in the case of a few social networking services, it also showed how many times other readers had shared the content, which *Time* also did. As far as related stories scores go, all publications got the same number of points. Including sharing options was very common, typically through a catch-all add-on like Add This or Share This, but Facebook, Twitter, Buzz Up and Digg were the most commonly displayed outside of this sort of mechanism. No clear standard on commenting became apparent, as the sample was split relatively even on whether or not to enable commenting. On some publications, all stories could be commented on, on others, none, and on still others, some articles allowed commenting and others did not.

New York Times stood out in the multimedia section. While it did not use video, it used slideshows and infographics. Each story evaluated from this publication used multimedia, regardless of how big of a story it was, versus other publications that only seemed to put that much effort in on features. *New York Times*, like all of the other publications, used the image-at-the-top-of-the-page layout which definitely revealed itself to be a standard. When dynamic multimedia was used, slideshows were

the most common, perhaps because of the relative lack of effort required. Infographics and video were the least commonly used, with only one publication – *Time* – incorporating it, and even then only on a major story.

Recommendations

Given the standards found above, recommendations for editorial and design practices were developed. Implementing these recommendations will hopefully draw in readers, keep them at the site and make them invested in it, which will in turn make online media more viable as a revenue source.

Transparency

All publications should use bylines at the top of their articles, and include whether they are a correspondent. Ideally, either on that page or a linked one, a biography for the authors as well as an aggregation of clips should be included. If individual interaction with authors is supported by the publication, include a way to get in touch with the authors, either by e-mail or a contact form.

Source names and positions should always be included, even if the source is just being used for context. If possible, include the source's website or some other way to find out more about the source – perhaps even a link to other stories involving that source on the publication.

Interactivity

Include a variety of sharing options. This can easily be done through third-party add-ons like Add This and Share This, so readers will not be discouraged from

sharing content through sites other than the popular ones like Facebook and Twitter.

To promote interest in sharing, include how many times an article has been shared

through a particular medium – this is particularly easy now with the integration of

Facebook into other sites.

Stories related by topic as well as popular stories should be included in link

lists. Layouts typically embed the thematically related stories in a left-aligned column,

whereas popular stories are in a column to the right with advertising and promotional

material.

Do not be afraid to enable commenting on all stories. Requiring registration

is customary, and can cut down on the abuse of commenting sometimes inspired by

anonymity. Consider providing alternate ways to log in, like through Disqus, Twitter

or Facebook.

Multimedia

Always include some type of image at the top of an article, whether it is a

photo of an event or an illustration of a theme. Slideshows can be used as a relatively

low-effort way to add multimedia, but add captions to give the contained photos

context. If the technology is available, use infographics and video. Beyond video,

however, do not feel pushed to use animation, audio, or any other sort of dynamic

content.

Problems and Potential for Further Research

Given the time and manpower available for this study, its scope was not as

all-encompassing and thus its results not completely infallible as they could have

been. If this exact study were to be redone, more articles from publications should be evaluated, potentially upwards of five, to provide a more thorough look at the publications and to ensure that the sample is indicative of the publication's content and not negatively or positively skewed.

Given more time, the background and theoretical research could also be expanded – while the included literature list does not include all literature read, as it is in keeping with APA standards, there is still a lot more out there that was not read, including some work published during the course of this study.

The number of publications studied could also be expanded. Obviously, the six publications studied are not an exhaustive list of credible text-based media that has a web-based version – it would be worthwhile to study publications like *Washington Post* and *USA Today*, among others. Also worth studying would be media not based in the print tradition, like CNN.com NPR, to see if, like Quandt (2008) found, their editorial and design practices, particularly in terms of multimedia, are different.

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Jan 18 2010, 3:48PM

Bernanke, Angelides, and the Bank Tax: Part I

On January 3, Fed chairman Ben Bernanke gave a long speech entitled "Monetary Policy and the Housing Bubble," in which he argued that the Fed's low interest rate policy in the early 2000s, which he supported, was not a significant factor in the housing bubble and resultant financial collapse. His arguments are unsound, self-serving, and harmful to economic recovery and financial regulatory reform.

John Taylor, in an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* on January 11, notes a number of the errors in the speech. Other errors have been pointed out in economists' blogs. The basic argument that Bernanke makes is that forecasted inflation at the outset of the 2000s was so low that pushing the federal funds rate way down (in fact, into negative territory in real--that is, inflation-adjusted--terms) was a prudent measure for stimulating the economy. And, Bernanke adds, although reducing the federal funds rate did lead to an increase in mortgage rates (even though the federal funds rate is short term and the mortgage rates long term at least in traditional 30-year fixed-payment mortgages, as distinct from the adjustable-rate mortgages that became popular during this period), the increase was too small to explain the extraordinary increase in housing prices. (So at least Bernanke acknowledges a link between short-run and long-run interest rates; his even more defensive predecessor as chairman of the Fed, Alan Greenspan, does not.)

The Fed's forecast was inaccurate (Taylor points out that private forecasts contradicted it). But accurate or inaccurate, the result was a huge increase in investment in housing, which pushed up housing prices. The increase in prices was inflationary. Negative interest rates are likely to cause inflation by flooding the economy with money, raising the ratio of money to output. The Fed was fooled because the flood of money, rather than creating a large surge in the consumer price index (in part because cheap foreign imports kept prices of most goods down), created asset-price inflation--and the principal asset inflated was housing. The Fed wasn't looking for asset-price inflation, and didn't see it.

Housing is a product bought primarily with debt (a long-term mortgage for between 80 and 100 percent of the market value of the house), so a fall in interest rates pushes up housing prices by increasing the demand for housing. It also leads to a reduction in mortgage standards, because when housing prices are rising, defaults decline, making risky mortgages less risky. In addition, very low interest rates stimulate lenders to make risky loans in order to maximize yield; hence house financing increasingly took the form of subprime mortgage lending. (When interest rates are very low, low-risk loans are not very profitable, and it is attractive to increase yield by making riskier loans.)

Atlantic Online
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Feb 5 2010, 10:34 am **by Chris Good**

Jobs! Nevermind The 20,000 Lost--Double-Digit Unemployment Is Gone

The January unemployment figures are in, and the national unemployment rate has fallen below 10%, now at 9.7%, but the economy lost 20,000 jobs. So what's the political take-away?

Double digits have always been the psychic barrier for unemployment: the White House braced itself for double-digit unemployment for months after it took office, amid rising GOP criticism in anticipation of the 10.0% mark being broken. It did, and now it's back down. Time to celebrate? Perhaps.

Cable news this morning has highlighted the double-edged sword here: yes, unemployment is down overall, and some sectors (manufacturing and retail, for instance) gained, but the economy (including the construction sector) *lost* jobs. About 409,000 more people were counted as marginally attached to the labor force, because they hadn't looked for a job in the past month, and thus weren't counted as unemployed.

There is disagreement over whether the new numbers are good or bad.

The White House reaction was consistent with how it's handled cosmetically good economic news like falling unemployment and GDP growth in the past few months: the reactions are tentative, and the message is that it's good news, but things are still unacceptably bad and we still need to pass a jobs bill.

The White House is still trying to pass a jobs bill through Congress, along with President Obama's proposal for small business assistance. That initiative was evident in Council of Economic Advsers Chair Christina Romer's statement on the numbers:

> ...Even as today's numbers contain signs of the beginning of recovery, they are also a reminder of how far we still have to go to return the economy to robust health and full employment. Indeed, with the benchmark revision announced today, we now know that the total job loss over the recession was more than 1 million larger than previously estimated. That is why at the same time that he released a plan for reining in the budget deficit over the medium and long run, the President has called on Congress to enact responsible, targeted actions to jump-start job creation. His proposals for a small business jobs and wages tax cut and a new program to encourage small business lending are important steps to help the businesses that are essential to robust job creation. Today's numbers showing continued decline in construction and state and local government employment emphasize the importance of two other of the President's priorities--continued infrastructure investment and additional aid for strapped state and local governments...

But the cosmetics of the new numbers can't be ignored. The national unemployment rate has been used more consistently than any other figure as a broad, popular indication of how the economy is doing. Conservatives who talk about "real" unemployment, and analysts who highlight the changing pool of the labor force and its effect on the numbers, are essentially arguing against the easily consumable piece of data.

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Pollster.com Obama Average Job Approval	47.8%
Pollster.com Obama Favorability	52.9%
Pollster.com Right Direction / Wrong Track	36.1% / 59.4%
Pollster.com Congressional Approval	18.3%
Standard & Poor's S&P 500	1,066.19 (up 232 points since 1/20/09)
National Federation of Independent Businesses Small Business Optimism Index	88.0 (down 0.3% from November)
ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index	49 points below zero
U.S. Department of Labor Initial Weekly Jobless Claims	480,000 (down 105,000 since 1/20/09)
Bankrate.com Interest on 30-Year Fixed Mortgage	5.05%
RealtyTrac Newly foreclosed properties in December	349,519
U.S. Department of Labor Unemployment	9.7%
U.S. Department of Labor Consumer Price Index	+0.1 in December
Mortgage Bankers Association Quarterly Delinquency	9.64%
National Association of Realtors Sales of Existing Homes, Annual Rate (Monthly)	5.45 million in December (down 16.7% from November)

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Commercial real estate is dominated by financial professionals, not hustlers looking for a quick flip. So why is the market about to melt down?

by *Megan McArdle*

Capitalist Fools

IMAGE CREDIT: MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

FEW PLACES IN New York are less likely to inspire grand dreams than Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, the twin housing projects that sprawl across 80 acres of the Lower East Side. Built by MetLife in the 1940s, the project encompasses block after block of boxy brick apartment buildings and stolid public spaces, entirely barren of inviting corners or eye-catching detail. The critic Lewis Mumford dubbed it "the architecture of the Police State"; a slightly kinder motto might have been "What do you expect for $68.50 a month?"

Yet when MetLife spruced up the complex and put it on the market in 2006, real-estate moguls jetted in for the sale. A joint venture put together by Tishman Speyer and BlackRock carried the day through its willingness to, as *The New York Times* noted, "pay up—way up—to unlock future profits in the sprawling Manhattan properties." At $5.4billion, their winning bid made the sale the most expensive real-estate deal of all time.

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Africa's continental divide: land disputes

African land reform, plot by plot, may be the foundation for solving so much else — from famine to poverty to genocide.
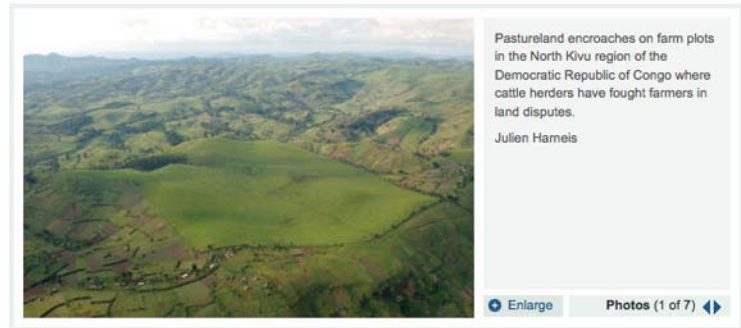
Pastureland encroaches on farm plots in the North Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo where cattle herders have fought farmers in land disputes.

Julien Harneis

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By *Jina Moore* / Correspondent / January 30, 2010

Zuluyee, Liberia; and Kailahun, Sierra Leone

The specialists know the warning signs. Analysts and scientists and field officers and academics spend years writing white papers, issuing reports and holding conferences, trying to provoke interest in issues that often seem arcane. Please, they have urged governments and the United Nations and activists, think about something that sounds boring – land disputes – before it turns into something that is not – war.

Those uncertainties are underscored by the

Land, at the very heart of security and survival, looms behind most of the African conflicts we've all heard of and dozens of others we have not. The Rwandan genocide, some argue, was as much about the dwindling land availability in Africa's most densely populated country as it was about enmity between ethnic groups. The wars recounted in the movie "Blood Diamond" in Sierra Leone and Liberia saw land grabs by warlords eager to exploit commodities like diamonds and timber. The violence following Kenya's 2007 election reflected generations of dissatisfaction with land policy that favored different ethnic groups over time. Beneath the genocide in Darfur is a broken land tenure system, full of fights over soil that climate change is making increasingly unproductive. Somalia's infamous pirates gain cover for plundering from political chaos in the country, whose warring clans fight not only for power but

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Shark attack: Lifeguard hailed as a hero in rescue attempt

Lifeguard Dan Lund, who'd once been bitten by a shark himself, paddled out to bring back surfer Stephen Schafer, the victim of a shark attack Wednesday.

Stephen Schafer coming out of the water after kiteboard surfing in 2007. He did not survive a shark attack Wednesday, but the lifeguard who went to his rescue is being hailed as a hero.

Chris Shultz/Marketing Concepts/AP

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By *Warren Richey* Staff writer / February 4, 2010

Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
Lifeguard Dan Lund had no idea that the kite surfer bobbing a quarter-mile off a Florida beach Wednesday afternoon was surrounded by sharks and bleeding.

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He and other lifeguards on Hutchinson Island's Stuart Beach thought the man's equipment had simply malfunctioned. So Lund decided to paddle a rescue surfboard out through heavy waves and thick chop to help the kite surfer back to shore.

"I get to him, I'm probably within 20 yards or so from him, and there's just a lot of blood in the water," Lund told the Associated Press on Thursday.

The kite surfer, 38-year-old Stephen Schafer, was still conscious, but struggling. He called out to the lifeguard: "I got hit. I got hit by a shark." Sharks were still there, circling.

Lund did not hesitate. He grabbed Schafer and pulled him and the kite onto his 12-foot rescue board and headed for shore.

Although Shafer later died of his wounds, Lund is being hailed as a hero by fellow rescue workers.

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BEIJING JOURNAL

Stitching the Narrative of a Revolution

Peasants recited quotations from Mao's "Little Red Book" before toiling in the fields in a village near Beijing in July of 1967.

Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

By XIYUN YANG and MICHAEL WINES
Published: January 25, 2010

BEIJING — It was the height of the Cultural Revolution, but in the heart of China's capital, in range of the prying eyes of foreign embassies, young Beijingers had embraced the tenets of capitalism.

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Corrupted by dreams of profit, crowds of 500 or more were gathering every Sunday on a street in the city's embassy district to ply a shameful trade. "They are learning how to do business and raise money," one city official wrote darkly. "This is seriously harmful to the healthy growth of the successors of the proletariat revolution."

Such was the state of affairs in 1966, when selling pigeons at an impromptu street market was seen as an obstacle to the triumph of socialism — and, the official added, as a waste of bird feed, too.

The records on the Beijing pigeon market, like thousands of other Cultural Revolution documents, lay silent for decades, deemed state secrets by a government hardly eager to highlight Mao's excesses. But last year, China quietly opened the archives of selected declassified government files from that era, in Beijing, Shanghai and Xi'an.

And so a veil has begun to lift on this and other prosaic stories of the Cultural Revolution — some sad, some funny, most humdrum to an extreme.

The files of the Cultural Revolution, which raged from 1966 until Mao's death in 1976, make up a mere 16 of the 91,568 volumes that the Beijing Municipal Archives has made

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Clervil Orange, a patient at what remains of Haiti's only TB hospital, getting a haircut this week. "Why don't you just leave us to die?" he asked the lone nurse there.

Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

By IAN URBINA
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PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — At a fly-infested clinic hastily erected alongside the rubble of the only tuberculosis sanatorium in this country, Pierre-Louis Monfort is a lonely man in a crowded room.

Haiti has the highest tuberculosis rate in the Americas, and health experts say it is about to drastically increase.

But amid the ramshackle remains of the hospital where the country's most infected patients used to live, Mr. Monfort runs the clinic alone, facing a vastness of unmet need that is as clear as the desperation on the faces around the room.

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"I'm drowning," said Mr. Monfort, 52, flanked by a line of people waiting for pills as he emptied a bedpan full of blood. All of the hospital's 50 other nurses and 20 doctors died in the earthquake or have refused to return to work out of fear for the building's safety or preoccupation with their own problems, he said. Mr. Monfort joked that the earthquake had earned him a promotion from a staff nurse at the sanatorium to its new executive director.

In normal times, Haiti sees about 30,000 new cases of tuberculosis each year. Among infectious diseases, it is the

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Venezuela: Opponents Hope to Strike Out Chávez

By CHARLIE DEVEREUX / CARACAS   Sunday, Feb. 07, 2010

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No event on the sporting calendar gets Venezuelans more animated than the rivalry between the country's two largest baseball teams, the Lions of Caracas and the Navigators of Magallanes, based in Valencia. But this season's championship series had an extra — and unexpected — ingredient thrown into the mix: politics. During the seven-game play-off, fans displayed banners bearing the slogan: "One, two, three. Electricity, water, crime. President — you've struck out!"

Hugo Chávez, a huge Magallanes fan, wasn't at the games but he was certainly watching. "How do they think they're going to strike out Chávez? They're the ones who have struck out," he said, visibly riled, on television on Thursday. Referring to his electoral victories, he declared, "I've struck them out eleven times and I'll strike them out again." The opposition can claim only one poll victory — a referendum in December 2007 — against Chavez since he took office in Feb. 1999.
(See Hugo Chávez's grip on Venezuela's presidency.)

But Chávez is indeed under pressure from a mounting list of domestic problems, especially the three brought up by the protest banner: power and water shortages and a rise in crime. He blames water and electricity shortages on a drought caused by El Niño. A report released at Christmas by one of the state electricity companies predicted a national collapse within 120 days if drastic measures were not taken. Venezuela is experiencing a crime wave, recording 14,467 murders and 518 kidnappings last year, a rise of over 40% from 2008.
(See Venezuela's plague of kidnappings.)

To alleviate drought, Chávez has turned to Cuba for "cloud seeding" technology. He has also instituted unpopular water and electricity rationing to ensure the country's hydro-electric dams are not drained before the rains come in June. State employees are being sent home at lunchtime and factories forced to cut hours.