FROM CONTROVERSIAL TO COMPATIBLE:
Newspaper Editors' Views on the Value of Reporter Beat Blogs

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by

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore newspaper editors’ perceptions of beat blogging by reporters.

The research was designed to answer the following questions:

—To what degree do top editors of large-circulation newspapers view reporter beat blogs as important to their online news sites, and why?

—Do these top editors believe reporter blogs should adhere to traditional professional norms and practices?

The answers to these questions help fill a void in the literature on the adoption of blogging by newspapers. Past journalism studies focused largely on the content of blogs and the perceptions of bloggers. None appears to have explored the strategic thinking of newsroom leaders who adopted an innovation that by its very nature has been controversial.

This study relied on a survey of editors of large-circulation newspapers and follow-up interviews with a sample of respondents. Editors surveyed were individuals with oversight responsibility for their newsrooms and carrying the title of executive editor, editor, senior editor, editor in chief, managing editor or vice president of news.

The findings provide a number of insights about why editors believe blogs by reporters are valuable to their newspapers’ credibility and authority at a time of great...
strain in the newspaper business, and about the degree to which editors believe these blogs should reflect core values of accuracy, objectivity and fairness.

It is hoped the findings will be useful to newspaper editors and other news leaders as they consider policies and practices for reporter blogging and also to journalism educators and students so that they have a clearer picture of the roll and uses of reporter blogs in today’s newsrooms.

It is only in the last five years that newspaper blogs have become everyday content on newspaper websites. Today, most large-circulation newspapers in the United States publish staff-written blogs (PEJ, 2008), with many of those produced by reporters who cover specific topic areas, activities or geographic areas.

The practice of reporter blogging has raised some interesting concerns. Among them is whether it encourages reporters to editorialize about subjects they cover; whether news organizations have co-opted the blog format for competitive reasons but watered down the practice to adhere to mainstream journalism norms; and whether editors are requiring reporters to blog but have had difficulty explaining what the blogs should or should not contain. It appears top editors, despite having at least some concerns about whether and how reporters should blog, adopted the use of blogging but redefined and modified the form to maintain their newspapers’ authority for competitive advantage.

This study is linked to two theories: diffusion of innovations theory and gatekeeping theory, somewhat reconceptualized for the digital age. Together, these theories help explain why editors adopted reporter blogging in the face of competitive challenges from individual bloggers and Internet sites.
Diffusion theory defines the factors that influence the decision and rate of innovation adoption, such as the adopter’s belief that the innovation will provide a “relative advantage.” Gatekeeping theory helps explain how and why journalists at large newspapers are using reporter blogging to achieve that advantage.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Diffusion theory and blog adoption

Everett Rogers’s diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1995) offered a valuable framework for exploring editors’ attitudes about the consequences of reporter blogging at large newspapers.

As a communications professor at the University of New Mexico, Rogers studied how ideas, innovations and technology are adopted or spread through social systems, and he created a well-regarded model that explains the process and the considerations involved in the adoption. His theory has been used widely in communications studies and other fields (Albarran, Chan-Olmstead & Wirth, 2006).

Rogers described an innovation as an idea, thing, procedure or system and said the decision to adopt an innovation and the speed of adoption are based on five key perceptions or characteristics:

—The benefits or relative advantage of the innovation.
—Compatibility with the needs and values of the potential adopter.
—The level of complexity.
—Trialability, or testing of the innovation.
—Observability, meaning that the results can be seen.
For all but complexity, Rogers found that as these elements increase, the rate of adoption is likely to increase.

Rogers described the diffusion of innovations process as having four main elements: 1) the innovation itself, 2) how it is communicated through channels, 3) time, and 4) the social system in which it is diffused. His finding that within social systems there are change agents, champions, and opinion leaders who influence this process supports the value of examining how top editors view the innovation of reporter blogging. As for the innovation itself, Rogers said it is common for innovations to be reinvented to suit the needs of the adopter during or after the adoption process.

Much of the available research involving newsrooms and diffusion has focused on the use of computer technology by news workers. Researchers, for example, have documented the advent of pagination systems (Russial, 1994); the growth in computer-assisted and Web-based reporting (Maier, 2000; Garrison, 2003); and the increased posting of dynamic content on news websites, including what the authors characterized as softer news (Treymane, Weiss & Alves, 2007). As a result of the adoption of computers generally and the use of the Web and online tools, roles in newsrooms have changed considerably, particularly for reporters, who have taken on more research and editing duties (Garrison, 2003).

Other diffusion-related studies in newsrooms have explored journalists’ reactions to the adoption of innovations. Singer (1998) noted the potential value of such study more than a decade ago, suggesting that diffusion theory as well as gatekeeping theory be used to explore “What sorts of reinventions—of roles, of content, of values, of practices—are
taking place as journalists become involved in online delivery of information?”

Six years later, Singer (2004) used diffusion theory to explain the reactions to convergence, or working in multiple media, by journalists in four newsrooms. She found that despite problems, journalists generally recognized the advantages of convergence, although they shared a variety of concerns about working for multiple platforms with multiple partners. She suggested the problems they identified could be overcome by changes in management policies and organizational structures and practices.

Although scholars such as Gill (2005) have included a discussion of blogs in considering diffusion theory—in her case correlating the growth of RSS feeds to blog use—there is a scarcity of research explaining the phenomenon of reporter blog adoption using Rogers’ diffusion prism.

*Shift in Editors’ Attitudes*

It is clear that editors’ attitudes have changed toward the practice of blogging. A decade ago, most editors might have considered blogging by reporters “heretical” given the freewheeling, opinionated, informal nature of blogs, which began as a feature of citizen journalism (PEJ, 2008).

Dan Gillmor was a technology columnist when he launched what is believed to be the first blog for a mainstream news organization, the *San Jose Mercury News*, in 1999 (Briggs, 2010), the same year that a software maker released Blogger, a program that made it easy for people to create and use blogs (Perlmutter & McDaniel, 2005). Four years later, it was still relatively rare for newspapers to sponsor reporter-written blogs.
(Kesmodel, 2005), let alone acknowledge the growth and increasing influence of independent bloggers (Perlmutter & McDaniel, 2005).

That situation changed as bloggers gave prominence to two political stories. The first was in 2002 when a blogger revealed that U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, while attending a reception for South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, made a racially insensitive comment. The incident wound up costing Lott his leadership position. The second was when bloggers challenged a report by CBS News anchor Dan Rather questioning President George W. Bush’s 1970’s National Guard Service. Rather was forced to resign. In these cases and others, bloggers criticized how traditional media handled the stories and prodded news organizations to change (Perlmutter & McDaniel, 2005; Lowrey, 2006).

The reaction by the mainstream press was considerable and yielded some lessons: old media vulnerabilities to new media are economic and psychological as well as technological, and old media portray new media as darlings and then, fearing new things might hurt their them, try to “dethrone” them (Perlmutter & McDaniel, 2005).

Mainstream media first attacked blogs as insignificant, filled with errors and lacking in credibility, and then reluctantly embraced them in an “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” approach (Tremayne, 2007). Newspapers framed blogs from 1995-2005 as more of a threat than a benefit and rarely considered them a valid form of journalism (Jones & Himelboim, 2010).

But by 2008, a majority of large-circulation newspapers in the United States reported that they were posting staff-written blogs, and the Project for Excellence in
Journalism was heralding the “Arrival of the Staff-written Blog” (PEJ, 2008). The *Los Angeles Times* launched 21 blogs that year, and in 2009 the *New York Times* had 65 active blogs (Briggs, 2010).

One prominent media analyst estimated that in 2010, journalists at daily newspapers in the United States were producing 2 million blog posts a year (Doctor, 2010). A survey of 155 newspapers with a circulation of 30,000 or more found that reporters blogged at 95 percent of them (Russial, 2009). Audience research shows the top 10 online newspaper blogs drew nearly 30 million unique visitors in 2005 (Nielsen/Net, 2006).

*Transformation Triggers*

Findings by Van De Ven (1991), who studied innovation diffusion in hospitals, help explain the transformation, particularly in light of the major challenges the newspaper industry has been facing.

“Shocks are needed to trigger innovation,” Van de Ven said, explaining that the three hospitals he studied were compelled to innovate in the face of serious problems, including competition from other hospitals. He said Rogers’s theory recognized that “necessity, opportunity, or threat is the mother of invention.”

Lowrey (2006) identified four general ways in which mainstream news organizations were competitively vulnerable to bloggers: they shunned partisanship, abandoned stories quickly, favored elite sources and had difficulty addressing specialized and complex content areas. He found that when journalists are vulnerable, they will
reassess and change professional processes in order to control information work and protect the occupation. He said the blogging movement had challenged the “jurisdictional claim” of journalists and, as a result, the journalists’ “strategy for control” was “to directly seize a treatment area from a rival.”

Reinvention

In adopting the use of blogs, news organizations have modified the innovation to include any number of forms (Singer, 2005; Robinson, 2006). The earliest blogs were lists of hyperlinks and/or combinations of hyperlinks, commentary and personal essays or thoughts (Blood, 2000).

Today’s newspaper blogs take several forms: a reporter’s notebook of news tidbits and incidentals; a straight column of opinion for the Web; a question-and-answer format by editors; a readership forum; a diary written by a reporter about his or her beat; a roundup of news summaries that promote the print publication; and a rumor-mill blog that a reporter uses as an off-the-record account (Robinson, 2006).

Rogers (1995) said such reinvention is often part of the adoption process and occurs to varying degrees, usually in the implementation phase, based on a variety of factors including what he called “local pride of ownership.”

Blogs, Gatekeeping and Competitive Benefits

Research suggests one reason newspapers have adopted reporter blogs is to help them maintain their gatekeeping authority and, as such, their competitive advantage. In traditional terms, gatekeeping has referred to limiting what readers see or keeping items
out of circulation. Online journalists, however, view their gatekeeping function as exercising editorial control by vetting items for their veracity and helping readers make sense of information (Singer, 2007).

The term “gatekeeper” was first applied to journalism more than 60 years ago in a 1950 study analyzing the process and considerations an editor used to select wire stories to run in a small Midwestern newspaper (White, 1950). In time, the concept became shorthand for the role editors have in deciding what information is included in or omitted from news reports.

Over the years, gatekeeping theory was expanded to go beyond just explaining the processes of selectivity. It was used to explore the factors that influence journalism decisions, levels of decision-making in organizations and how journalists view their roles (McQuail, 2005). For example, during the Vietnam War era Janowitz (1975) described the gatekeeping ideal as emphasizing “the search for objectivity and the sharp separation of reporting fact from disseminating opinion.”

By the end of the 20th century, when gates no longer seemed to exist, Singer (2001) found that editors who chose stories for online versions of newspapers emphasized their role as providing quality control. They began to reconceptualize the role of gatekeeper, she said, by describing their role as less about selecting stories for dissemination and more about using news judgment and practices such as verification to bolster the value of what they published.

Since then, as the ubiquity of information has multiplied with the use of the Internet, the emphasis in newsrooms has continued to shift from regulating the quantity
of information that enters public discourse to trying to ensure the quality of information (Singer, 2007).

Surveys of American journalists (Beam, Weaver & Brownlee, 2008) also support this view, finding that most contemporary journalists view their most important roles as disseminators of information and interpreters of events or what some have called “sense-making.” Both functions are apparent in reporter blogs, many of which take the form of nonopinion news digests or provide news analysis.

In a content analysis of 20 political bloggers at mainstream media sites, including 10 mostly metro newspapers, Singer (2005) found the news organizations were using blogs to retain their gatekeeping authority. She found most blogs were essentially nonopinion news digests and used hyperlinks extensively but mostly to other mainstream journalism sites. She concluded that journalists were “normalizing” blogs as an element of traditional coverage.

It appears many traditional news sites adopted the practice of blogging to “answer competitive challenges” from independent bloggers and the Internet (Robinson 2006). And they have had success doing so. Although the Internet and social media have expanded control of what people see and hear, Singer (2005) found that news consumption was still dominated by major mainstream news sites, which retained “their role as gatekeepers of what is credible and worthwhile.”

**Impact of Diffusion**

The adoption of reporter blogging by newspapers has led to considerable debate. One argument has centered on whether blogging is an appropriate practice for reporters
who by convention are expected to keep their opinions out of news coverage. That argument arose because independent blogs typically have been opinionated while modern reporting has aspired to objectivity, which is generally considered to be unbiased, accurate, fair and balanced reporting that is separate from the reporter’s views or opinions (Knowlton & Freeman, 2005).

The issue has been discussed widely among journalists but appears to have received relatively little attention from scholars. The issue was brought to the fore in 2010 in professional journalism circles by the resignation of a Washington Post staffer after it was revealed he made disparaging remarks on a non-Post website about blogger Matt Drudge and other well-known conservatives. The staffer, Dave Weigel, had been hired by the paper to blog about political conservatives. His remarks drew protests that he was biased and could not be fair to those he covered (Kurtz, 2010).

The Post ombudsman at the time, Andy Alexander (2010), wrote in his Sunday column that the newspaper’s policies about blogs fueled confusion among readers and reporters about whether Post journalists were supposed to be impartial about what they cover. He wrote:

Internal guidelines say reporters should not “offer personal opinions on a blog in a way that would not be acceptable in the newspaper.” But they also are encouraged to blog with attitude and “voice,” which seems incompatible with neutrality.

He also told his readers that he had talked with a dozen or so reporters in the Post newsroom but none knew the paper even had a written policy on blogging. The confusion seems to confirm diffusion studies, which show that it isn’t unusual for organizations to
adopt innovations without having fully evaluated or recognized the potential consequences (Rogers, 1995).

Journalism bloggers themselves have expressed concern that standards for reporters’ blogs are lower than for other material they produce. Schultz and Sheffer (2008) reported that a majority of sports bloggers they surveyed at local newspapers reported their managers pushed them into blogging without understanding “how it works or a dedication of resources to make it effective.” Many considered blogging a way management could get them to do more work without paying them more.

Robinson’s study (2006) found that journalism blogs are in fact less subject to traditional standards and practices and often blur the lines of independence. Editors say most of their staff blogs are not edited before publication (PEJ, 2008).

Editors have generally described staff blogs as being more casual in tone than traditional news stories but still reflecting core values. In a column introducing several new blogs to his newspaper readers in Minneapolis, then–Executive Editor Anders Gyllenhaal (2006) said:

Where most blogs are built on attitude and opinion, reporters are trained to keep themselves out of their work. Where many blogs are known for loose talk, newspaper blogs must rely on accuracy, precision and the same standards used to put out the paper.

He also said it was “still an open question whether a digital phenomenon developed in part to compete with mainstream media will truly thrive on a newspaper website.”

John Robinson, editor of the News & Record in Greensboro, N.C., described his reporters with blogs as having two voices: one is institutional for what’s published in the newspaper, and the other is “more collegial and accessible” in blogs (Robinson, 2005).
Ken Sands (Briggs, 2010), former online editor at the Spokesman Review newspaper, said the rule is simple for reporters who have blogs related to their jobs.

Don’t do anything online that would jeopardize your credibility and journalistic standing. Some reporters might think being awarded a blog means they can spout off their opinions. No. A blog should simply be an extension of the beat into a different medium.

Conversely, media professor Jay Rosen (2010), in a piece prompted by the Weigel resignation, said that reporters should be able to use a range of styles rather than be limited to either “neutrality” or “ideology.” Rosen has been a vocal advocate of beat blogging:

I recommend a range of approaches that permit journalists to report what they know, say what they think, develop a point of view in interaction with events, and bid for the trust of users who have many more sources available to them. A plurality of permissible styles recognizes that trust is a puzzle unsolvable by a single system of signs.

But research suggests mainstream news organizations aren’t likely to make an overt leap in that direction, or at least not say publicly that they will. The tendency of mainstream media organizations is to publicize practices they believe play to their strengths, and those include traditional values and practices (Lowery, 2006).

As David Carr of the New York Times (2010) said in his own column on the Weigel incident, “As mainstream media tries to co-opt and deploy some of the tools (and voices) of the insurgency, the intersection is going to be tricky for some time to come.”
**Hypotheses and Research Questions**

The literature review indicates that mainstream media, including large-circulation newspapers, adopted blogging and reinvented the form to maintain their competitive advantage. As a result, this study sought to test the following hypotheses:

**H1**: The diffusion elements will be correlated with the perceived competitive benefits derived from the adoption of reporter blogging.

**H2**: The diffusion elements and perceived competitive benefits will be correlated with editors’ views on the need for reporters to blog and the number of reporter blogs at their newspapers.

The study also sought to provide descriptive analysis for the following research questions to shed light on the degree of acceptance of reporter blogs by top editors and their expectations about the practices and norms for producing them:

**RQ1.** What do editors perceive as the relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and demonstrable results of reporter beat blogs on their websites?

**RQ2.** To what degree do top editors of large newspapers view reporter beat blogs as important to their websites?

**RQ3.** What role do editors believe accuracy, objectivity and fairness have in reporter blogs?

**RQ4.** Do editors believe beat blogs should be edited before being posted?
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study relied on quantitative and qualitative data to explore newspaper editors’ perceptions of the value of blogging by their reporters. Collection methods included an online survey and brief interviews with six respondents. This methodology, known as a sequential explanatory strategy, is one of six major mixed-methods approaches and gives priority to quantitative data (Creswell, 2003). The interviews following the data collection were used to help interpret the data and provide details for some of the survey responses.

Survey Sample

Following approval by the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB), 96 editors of large-circulation newspapers on a list provided by the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) were sent an email invitation with a link to the survey on the SurveyMonkey website. Each of the newspapers had a daily circulation of 100,000 or more. The decision to survey editors at large-circulation papers was based on research that shows staff blog adoption is more prevalent at large newspapers than at smaller ones (PEJ, 2008). Two additional email messages were sent to encourage more responses.

Editors completed surveys in the first two weeks of January 2011 prior to the phone calls with six of the editors.
Design of the Survey

Design of the survey was informed by a questionnaire developed by Moore and Benbasat (1991). Those researchers based their questionnaire primarily on Rogers’ diffusion of innovations theory (1995) and the elements he said determine whether and how fast an innovation is adopted. These elements include relative advantage, compatibility, ease of use or complexity, results demonstrability and trialability.

Moore and Benbasat developed their questionnaire as a tool that could be modified and used in a variety of disciplines to measure the perceptions of innovation adopters, which are key to whether an innovation diffuses. For their own study to test the tool, they surveyed users of personal work stations.

The Moore and Benbasat questionnaire has since been modified and tested on users of a variety of innovations, including distance learning by university students (O’Malley and McGraw, 1999). For this study, the Moore-Benbasat survey was modified and expanded to focus on editors’ perceptions about the use and quality of reporter blogs on their websites.

Surveys by Chung, Kim, Trammell and Porter (2007), Borden (1997), Singer (2004, 2005) and Robinson (2006), also provided guidance and/or questions modified for this survey to measure editors’ attitudes.

Chung, Kim, Trammell and Porter measured 21 different perceptions of blogs by journalism professionals and educators using a Likert scale that ranged from 1 = “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Strongly Agree.”
Borden researched how journalists manage the conflict between organizational and professional values. She devised a list of 20 values commonly celebrated by newspapers. These included core journalism values such as objectivity, fairness and accuracy and organizational values such as news judgment, competitiveness and credibility.

Both Singer and Robinson conducted content analyses to determine how mainstream news organizations were using blogs to maintain journalism norms and authority, and, as such, their gatekeeping role.

For example, Robinson identified seven formats of mainstream journalism blogs such as news digests and Q&As. Her findings led to a question for editors in this study about which blog formats their beat reporters used most. A question from Singer’s study (2005) on diffusion theory and convergence in four newsrooms provided the model for RQ1. This study substituted “blogging” for “convergence” in the question to explore editors’ perceptions of the five diffusion elements.

The questionnaire for this study included open-ended, dichotomous, partially structured and structured questions, some using a five-point Likert scale, others using lists that allowed more than one answer. (See Appendix A.) The results were entered into SPSS statistics software for calculation and analysis.

The study included two sets of Pearson correlations to explore H1 and H2. The correlations for H1 were calculated using the mean scores of questions related to the five diffusion elements and the mean of seven questions about the perceived competitive benefits of reporter blogging. (See Tables 1 and 2.)
The means for the questions on the diffusion elements (relative advantage, compatibility, demonstrability and trialability) were the results of responses to a set of 16 questions asking the editors to provide their opinions using a five-point Likert scale, from 1 = “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Strongly Agree.”

Means were determined for each of the five elements. The results for “relative advantage,” for example, were based on responses to three of the 16 questions in the set. Four of the 16 questions were framed as negatives to avoid the appearance of asking loaded or leading questions and to determine what disadvantages, if any, the editors see in reporter blogs. The answers to those were reverse coded for analysis. Chronbach’s alpha was used to test the reliability of the question sets.
Table 1

*Questionnaire Construct for Diffusion Elements*

**Relative Advantage:**
- My website serves audiences better because of reporter blogging
- Audience reaction to reporter blogging has been positive
- Reporter blogging gives us a leg up on our competitors
  (Cronbach’s alpha=.60)

**Compatibility:**
- Blogging is compatible with being a reporter
- Reporter blogs are good supplements to traditional reporting
- Reporters are confused about what editors want in their blogs
  (Cronbach’s alpha=.64)

**Complexity:**
- It is easy for reporters to create and maintain blogs

**Demonstrability:**
- The results of blogging are apparent to me
- I keep track of the audience numbers for reporter blogs
- Using blogs is now a standard journalistic tool
- The practice of reporter blogging is now a passing fad
  (Cronbach’s alpha=.74)

**Trialability**
- Reporters need training to produce good blogs
- Disadvantages:
  - Reporter blogging takes away from important reporting
  - The disadvantages of reporter blogging outweighs the advantages
  - Reporter blogs create suspicion reporters are biased
  - The use of reporter blogs has caused us to lower our standards
    (Cronbach’s alpha=.59)

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Table 2

*Questions about Competitive Benefits*

- Reporter blogs improved my newspaper's authority
- They help reporters connect to readers
- They give readers a chance to be heard by reporters
- They convey information that otherwise wouldn't be published
- They improve the newspaper's credibility
- They attract readers who might otherwise not read us
- They help us compete with bloggers and websites in our market
  (Cronbach's Alpha=.86)
For H2, the mean scores of the diffusion elements and the mean of the competitive benefits responses were calculated with the mean responses to two other survey questions asking editors how important reporter blogging was to their websites and how many of their reporters blogged.

Questions RQ1–RQ4 were explored using Likert scale questions about professional standards and informed by open-ended questions on the benefits and problems of producing reporter blogs. The research questions were also explored with the six editors chosen for followup interviews based on their survey answers but also with demographic and geographic diversity in mind.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results of this study are based on the responses of 39 of 96 editors of large-circulation newspapers asked to take the survey, a roughly 40 percent response rate, plus short telephone interviews with six of the respondents. Not all editors, however, answered every question. Appendix A provides complete results for the survey.

The results help explain why blogging by beat reporters has become an everyday practice in large newspaper newsrooms. Editors believe beat blogs allow them to publish information that wouldn’t otherwise be available and make their news organizations more competitive. At the same time, many acknowledge their reporters are confused about what should be in their blogs. The editors also believe blogs should adhere to the professional norms of fairness and accuracy but appear less committed to the idea that all reporter blogs should be objective.

Descriptive features of the survey

Number of blogs and formats

Reporters in the respondents’ newsrooms numbered as few as 20 and as many as 200. Two-thirds of the editors said they had 50–100 reporters on their staffs; 22 percent had fewer than 50 reporters; and 13 percent had 100 or more reporters. (See Appendix A, item 1.)

All of the editors said they had beat reporters who blogged. The number of beat reporters who blogged in each newsroom ranged from 3 to 80.
Sports was the dominant subject of reporter blogs at the editors’ papers, as shown in Table 3. All of the editors reported having at least one beat blog by sports reporters.

Arts and entertainment was the second most frequent blog topic, followed by food, business and general news.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Number of editors with blogs on topic</th>
<th>Percent of editors with blogs on topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Entertainment</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General News</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzz</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government/Politics</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of blog format, all 39 editors said they had reporter blogs that used a “news and notes” approach, as shown in Table 4. Additionally, 33 of the editors said they also had reporter blogs that provided analysis; 19 used opinion and commentary; 10 gave reporters a chance to blog in personal diary style; and 9 used a gossip format. Some editors reported the use of other formats, including one video blog.
Table 4

Frequency of Blog Formats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog format</th>
<th>Number of respondents using blog format</th>
<th>Percent of respondents using blog format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News/notes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion/commentary</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossip</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test of Hypotheses and Research Questions

H1: The diffusion elements will be correlated with the perceived competitive benefits of reporter blogging.

The study revealed significant correlations between three of the diffusion characteristics—relative advantage, compatibility and demonstrability—and the overall mean of answers to the seven questions that explored what editors perceive as the competitive benefits gained from reporter blogging. (See Table 5.)

The overall mean for responses to the competitive benefits questions was 4.2. The highest mean scores in the set were in response to the statements, “Blogs give readers a chance to be heard by reporters” and “Blogs help us compete with bloggers and websites in our market.” (See Table 6.)

The positive relationship between the three diffusion elements and competitive benefits was also supported by survey responses to an open-ended question about the benefits of reporter blogging. Some of the responses included:
— “It drives traffic to our website and expands our audience.”
— “Blogging is a great way to report tidbits that otherwise would go unreported.”
— “We reach wider audiences. We receive many actionable story tips.”
— “The sports blogs in particular have boosted our page views and made the reporters the premier voices on their beats.”
— “Draws readers, develops sources, creates interactivity, really puts reporters in touch with what readers are thinking, great vehicle for feedback.”

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diffusion Characteristics</th>
<th>Mean Competitive Benefits</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Editors responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantage</td>
<td></td>
<td>.572</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantage</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.335</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>.731</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td></td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trialability</td>
<td></td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.421</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrability</td>
<td></td>
<td>.710</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Competitive Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

*Competitive Benefits of Blogs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q) Reporter blogs improved my newspaper's authority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r) They help reporters connect to readers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s) They give readers a chance to be heard by reporters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t) They convey information that otherwise wouldn't be published</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u) They improve the newspaper's credibility</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v) They attract readers who might otherwise not read us</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w) They help us compete with bloggers and websites in our market</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**H2:** Diffusion characteristics and perceived competitive benefits will be correlated with editors’ views on the need for reporters to blog and the number of reporter blogs at their newspapers.

As with H1, the study found positive relationships between three of the diffusion elements—relative advantage, compatibility and demonstrability—and the importance editors placed on reporter blogging. There was also a correlation between editors’
perceptions of the competitive value of blogging and their beliefs that reporters need to blog.

However, there were no correlations between the number of reporters who blog at each paper and the diffusion elements or the perceived competitive benefits of reporter blogging. (See Table 7.)

This may be explained by survey data and interview comments that suggest that even editors who consider reporter blogging important don’t feel it’s important for all reporters to blog. Editors interviewed said the number of reporters who blog for their papers depends on a variety of factors including whether they’re in competitive beats in their markets and whether tracking statistics show their blogs are being read.
Table 7

Correlations of diffusion characteristics and perceived competitive benefits with importance of blogging and number of reporter blogs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Correlation (Need to Blog)</th>
<th>Correlation (Number of Reporter Blogs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relative Advantage</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantage</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatibility</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.332*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trialability</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrability</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.367*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Benefits</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R1. What do editors perceive as the relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and demonstrability of reporter beat blogs for their websites?

In response to survey questions about relative advantage, more than 90 percent of the editors said that their websites served audiences better because of reporter blogging and that audience reaction to these blogs has been positive. In addition, 70 percent said the practice had given them “a leg up” on their competition. (See Table 8.)
On the characteristic of “compatibility,” most of the editors surveyed agreed that producing a blog is a good fit with being a reporter and that blogs are good supplements to traditional reporting. Nevertheless, 19 of 37 answered “strongly agree,” “agree” or “neutral” when asked about the statement, “Reporters are confused about what editors want in their blogs.”

In followup interviews, two editors said they had problems with sports reporters’ writing about subjects not on their beats. One editor said he admonished his hockey reporter for blogging about whether it is a good idea for women sportscasters to broadcast football games. (See Appendix C for summaries of the six editor interviews.)

The findings and comments lend weight to the belief that some editors gave a green light to reporter blogs without their reporters’ having a clear sense of what should be in them. However, when asked in the survey about problems they had with beat blogs, editors most frequently cited the time they demand rather than content issues. As one editor said, “It is a challenge for reporters to strike the right allocation of time between stories, blogs, tweets, and other social media tools.”

In terms of “complexity” and “trialability,” the study shows that editors do not view blogging as either particularly hard or easy to do. However, most editors said they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement that “reporters need training to produce good blogs.”

All but a few of the editors said that the results of blogging were demonstrable and that they believe reporter blogs have become a standard journalism tool. Of the 37
respondents to the pertinent question, 32 said they keep track of the audience numbers for reporter blogs.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions, by diffusion characteristic</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relative Advantage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My website serves audiences better because of reporter blogging</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience reaction to reporter blogging has been positive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter blogging gives us a leg up on our competitors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compatibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging is compatible with being a reporter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter blogs are good supplements to traditional reporting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters are confused about what editors want in their blogs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complexity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy for reporters to create and maintain blogs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The results of blogging are apparent to me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep track of the audience numbers for reporter blogs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using blogs is now a standard journalistic tool</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The practice of reporter blogging is now a passing fad</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trialability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters need training to produce good blogs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter blogging takes away from important reporting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The disadvantages of reporter blogging outweighs the advantages</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter blogs create suspicion reporters are biased</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
R2. To what degree do top editors of large newspapers view reporter beat blogs as important to their websites?

The results clearly show that editors view reporter blogs as important content. More than half of the editors said it was “very important” for reporters to blog for their newspaper’s website. The rest said it was either “important” or “moderately important.” (See Table 9.)

**Table 9**

*Frequency: Need to Blog*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of little importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings about the importance newsrooms place on blogging were supported by editors’ answers to survey questions about whether blogging is required and whether they have written policies or examples describing the dos and don’ts of reporter blogs.

Two-thirds of the editors said blogging was mandatory for all or some of their reporters. About a third also said they agreed with the statement, “Reporters feel pressured to blog even though they don’t want to.”
Here are a few examples of how editors described the situations in their newsrooms in answer to an open-ended survey question asking whether blogging was voluntary or involuntary:

— “Yes. To both (voluntary and Involuntary). We encourage it in many situations, give others leeway. But the pressure is to blog.”

— “It’s strongly encouraged. People are evaluated on their online contribution.”

— “All have to participate in certain group blogs, but no one has to have his or her own blog.”

— “It's part of the job, so it's no more voluntary or involuntary than writing stories.”

About 60 percent of the editors said their newsrooms have written policies or examples they use to guide blogging practices. All of the editors interviewed said there are frequent discussions in their newsrooms with editors and reporters about what’s appropriate content for blogs.

**Professional Norms**

**R3. What role do editors believe accuracy, objectivity and fairness have in reporter blogs?**

Ninety-five percent of the editors found it “very important” or “important” that blog content was fair and balanced, and verified by reporters before being posted.

The editors were more divided on the importance of objectivity, with 54 percent saying it was “important” or “very important” for reporters to keep their views out of
blogs. That compared to about 43 percent who said it was of “moderate” importance. (See Table 10.)

In survey responses, four editors specifically mentioned the mixing of fact and opinion as a problem:

— “The more informal nature of blogs sometimes blurs the line between news, analysis and opinion.”

— “Reporters occasionally write things in blogs that don't meet our print standards and drift into opinion.”

— “A few have confused ‘blog’ with opinion, trivia, rumor. That’s not what we're looking for at our news org.”

— “Mixes in personal opinions with reporting of news.”

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Objectivity</th>
<th>Fairness</th>
<th>Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>Percent of respondents</td>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of little importance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R4. Do editors believe beat blogs should be edited before being posted?

According to the data, 23 percent, or 9 of 39 editors, put a premium on editing before posting. Another 46 percent said it was “moderately important” that editors
review blog posts before they are published online, with about 30 percent saying it was of little or no importance. (See Table 11.)

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of little importance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to determine the degree to which top editors surveyed view reporter beat blogs as important to their online news sites and why, and whether these editors believe reporter blogs should adhere to the standards for accuracy, fairness and objectivity generally used in print newspapers.

These findings clearly show that reporter blogging has diffused and that editors view the practice as an important and standard tool of the profession, at least for the foreseeable future. Editors have used these blogs to help them maintain their organizations’ gatekeeping and overall journalistic authority and, as such, build audience, revenue and value for their digital websites.

The findings suggest editors’ comfort with reporter blogging, which five years ago was still a relatively rare practice in newspaper newsrooms, and stems from the use of a variety of blog formats they believe are compatible with specific competitive realms in which reporters work. For example, editors interviewed said they allow sports reporters to provide analysis and commentary in blogs because they believe readers want the kind of analysis and opinion offered on talk radio, ESPN and outside blogs. By comparison, they require reporters who cover news beats such as local government to post only fact-based items because that “voice” is more in keeping with what they believe general readers, particularly traditional newspaper readers, expect. Some newsrooms in the survey reported using five or six different blog formats on their sites.
“We want to create content that’s pitch perfect for the perceived audience,” explained one editor interviewed for this study. (See Appendix 6 for summaries of the six editor interviews.)

Another editor, whose newsroom has a written blog policy, said in an interview that he found it relatively easy to decide and convey which blogs should include opinion and which should not. He said, for example, it is okay for a sports reporter to say a quarterback “stunk up” the stadium with bad plays, but he would not allow a political reporter to say the same thing about a politician who introduced a bill at the state capitol.

Another editor said his paper’s blogs essentially reflected the kind of writing found in various sections of his newspaper, with more colorful writing appearing in features and sports sections than in news sections.

It make makes sense that “news and notes” blogs were reported as the most widely used of the blog types. They bear the closest resemblance to traditional reporting for print. Generally, the “news and notes” blogs are objective in tone and contain short entries of factual information. Editors prize the format because it encourages reporters to file frequently, which in turn encourages readers to check blogs for fresh updates, which in turn drives page views.

“We’re back in the frequency business,” said another editor interviewed. He described the sensibility in his newsroom as, “Give me a fact, and I’ll give you a story.”

For some short-staffed editors in need of copy for their print editions, the “news and notes” format is also valued as content suitable for “reverse publishing” into the paper.
Still, blog formats are not being so sharply drawn that editors don’t run into problems or have concerns about content. Even some of the 60 percent of editors with written policies or examples to guide reporters said they find it valuable, if not necessary, to engage in ongoing discussions about what is acceptable and what is not.

In the followup interviews, some editors acknowledged the difficulty they have explaining the difference between analysis and opinion, or between “voice,” which many editors want from news reporter blogs, and “viewpoint,” which many don’t want. “It’s like pornography. I know it when I see it,” one editor said.

“For all of the front-end work we do, reporters struggle with the question of voice and what goes in their blogs,” another editor acknowledged in an interview.

He said the confusion over what to put in blogs is not just about blog content but about how much reporting should be done for blogs versus the print newspaper.

But the problems have been infrequent enough, complaints from readers few enough and the popularity of blogs clear enough that editors believe they have struck the right balance in their adoption of blogging practices.

By using multiple formats, they have simultaneously been able to maintain some norms and modify others to satisfy competitive needs and professional standards and also deal with the practical reality of shrinking resources. This balance was highlighted by editors’ survey responses to a question about whether blogs should be reviewed by editors before being posted. Traditionally, nothing appears in print editions until it has been edited. But some editors have dropped that practice for blogs.
Of those surveyed, about 30 percent said it was not important for a reporter blog to be seen by an editor before being posted, with 46 percent saying it was only “moderately important.” Fewer than 25 percent said it was important or very important that blogs be edited before being seen by the public.

Several factors have caused this change in editing standards. News staffs are under pressure to break news on their websites and update content frequently. Editors trust news reporters will post information that is fair and accurate and will refrain from making personal attacks. Editors are willing to tolerate grammar and spelling errors for short periods online because they are easy to fix. There are not enough hands-on editors to process the work as it comes in.

Getting newsrooms to make and accept changing practices has become a key part of editors’ jobs. Like other media managers today, they must help guide newsroom perceptions about the advantage, compatibility and other elements Rogers identified in order to help make innovation adoption easier (Wicks, Sylvie, Hollifield, Lacy & Sohn, 2004). With reporter blogging, it appears these editors were willing to adopt the practice despite having concerns because they could expand the definition of blogs and could reinvent the form and editing practices as needed to fit their mission and goals.

Some critics have argued newspapers co-opted the blog form and watered it down, diminishing opportunities for others in the community to be heard. But editors would counter that they could not afford to cede ground to competitors and that their obligation was and is to provide news, information and commentary that serves and engages their readers.
Editors also acknowledge that their own cachet is linked with their willingness and ability to adapt to the evolution in technology and readers’ interests.

“I don’t want to be seen as a traditionalist,” an editor said. “I want to be a person who’s seen as being able to roll with the changes.”

**Future Research**

The goal of this study was to illuminate editors’ perceptions about an innovation that is still relatively new to their newsrooms. The study explored editors’ reasons for adopting the use of reporter blogs, how they are using them and the implications for professional practices. A limitation of the study is that the respondents came from a select group of editors and were not randomly chosen, so the findings cannot be generalized. The study also measured the perceptions of just one stakeholder per newsroom and, as such, did not provide a picture of how news staffs as a whole regard reporter blogging.

It is hoped, however, that these findings will be useful to newspaper editors and other news leaders as well as to journalism professors and students.

For editors, the results suggest there would be value in using an analytical tool or practical guide to help them assess the potential ease or difficulty of adopting innovations, based on Rogers’ five factors. A general tool or process to aid analysis could be developed and tested as a part of a case study in a single newsroom considering adoption of technology or another type of innovation.

Future research could also explore more about reporter blogging itself, including the degree to which reporters are confident or not about what to include in blogs and how
blogging affects their work. It could be useful to have reporters who blog look at examples of written policies to determine whether some guidelines or examples are particularly helpful. That could help editors address concerns about reporter confusion cited in the study.

For journalism professors and students, the study points not only to the need for students to learn how to blog, which many already do, but also to help them blog using multiple formats so they understand the differences in the formats and purposes of blogs used on newspaper and non-newspaper websites.
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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND FREQUENCIES

Consent statement

In an effort to better understand the views of editors on the topic of reporter blogging, I am conducting a study of the editors of the largest newspapers in the United States. You have been selected to participate in the study. The survey is voluntary and confidential. Results will not be attributed to a specific individual unless the individual chooses to reveal himself or herself. You can refuse to answer any question. Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate in this project. To participate please continue to the first question.

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University of Missouri IRB
573 882-9585 phone
573 884-0663 fax

Questions and responses

1. How many reporters are on your staff?

Responses (open-ended, sorted from most to least):

47
340 ftes in the newsroom with about 70 more in niche operations. We don't break out by function for public consumption.

About 200
150
120
115
100 approximately
94
90
approx 90
82
80
80
80
approximately 80
75
75
70 reporters; 80, counting columnists.
65
65
63.5 FTE's
60 plus
60
60
55
53 reporters
53
50
50
45
40
About 35
34
33
31
22
20

not enough, and fewer than last week

2. How many of your reporters blog for the paper about their beat or coverage area? If your answer is NONE, please explain why you do not have reporter beat blogs and then skip to Question 11.

Responses (open-ended, sorted from most to least):

All of them
All beat reporters are required to blog.
all -- many are contributing to breaking news blog, not individual blogs.
almost all of them
Almost all of them. We have news blogs almost around the clock.
Reporters, columnists and critics all blog.
We have 28 staff-written blogs, but not all are done by reporters. We have many other community and
freelance blogs.

Roughly half

Our staff is encouraged to "blog" in terms of aggregating coverage about their beats or interests.

Currently these posts do not live on "blogs" but are the main source of content for our entire web site. We are one big happy blog that may down the road turn into individual "beat" blogs.

About 33 percent

Haven't counted

70 or so

50

50 (including photogs and editors)

44

40

33

31 (and more being trained as we speak)

30+

30

27

25-30

25

25

25

22

20

20

approx 20-25

Probably 20 contribute on a regular basis

about a dozen, maybe more

a dozen or so

11

10

6 to 10

6

5

3

3. Please put a check mark by the topics of the blogs written by your beat reporters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Response %</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/Finance</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzz/Gossip</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General news</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food/Dining</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Is blogging by beat reporters at your paper voluntary or involuntary?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanations of “other” (verbatim):

- Yes. To both. We encourage it in many situations, give others leeway. But the pressure is to blog.
- We have both voluntary and involuntary, depending on the beat/topic blogs are voluntary but strongly encouraged.
- All have to participate in certain group blogs, but no one has to have his or her own blog.
- Everyone is expected to contribute to the daily news update and daily breaking news blogs. Some have carved individual blogs -- mom's blog, entertainment blog, politics blog.
- Both voluntary and involuntary
- We have requirements for all bloggers. If bloggers aren't building a reasonable size audience for the topic, their blog is discontinued.
- We require it of some, particularly in sports.
- It is voluntary for some, mandatory for others. All sports and political reporters blog. We are beginning to require all of our topic reporters, for example, to have beat blogs.
- It is how, in our converged newsroom, we produce content for web and print. We have a different system, as described above, that doesn't fit into the "blog" description. For us its an act, not a destination.
- It's strongly encouraged. People are evaluated on their online contribution.
- Mandatory
- Both
- Strange terminology. It's part of the job, so it's no more voluntary or involuntary than writing stories.
- It is both voluntary and, for some beats, a part of the job requirements
- A combination. Required on some beats. Encouraged on others.

5. Do you have a written policy or examples you give to reporters describing the dos and don'ts of reporter blogs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. In what ways do you think blogging by reporters has been a benefit to your organization?

Response text (verbatim):

- Increases the conversation with readers ... gives opportunities to get a level of news out to the public that won't make print ... allows a little more voice.
- Keeps them and the readers amused more connection with readers and greater immediacy. It actually gets reporters to
- start thinking earlier about news and their stories
- In our quest for immediacy, relevancy and diversity of coverage, the blogs have enhanced our overall news report. For breaking news, we've used our bloggers for many stories. Breaking news quickly. Allowing reporters to interact with viewers.
- Develops relationships with audience members; adds information/reasons to use our digital space
- Draws readers, develops sources, creates interactivity, really puts reporters in touch with what readers are thinking, great vehicle for feedback
- It draws and connects a wider audience to us.
- It helps keep our online content fresh and timely, adds a more human touch and creates interaction between staff and readers. Blogs round out our reporting by providing wit, behind-the-scenes stories and insight. Often blog posts are reversepublished as stories. And they can provide an outlet for interesting items that we don't have room for in the print paper, and don't really amount to a story. Another interesting benefit is reporters who have trouble writing conversationally for print sometimes find their voice in blogs. And we can help them use that voice when they write stories.
- A more personal connection with users and easier to use social media as a tool for distribution.
- It has helped reporters reach new audiences and be more immediate. It also helps them develop possible story ideas for print.
- Further engagement with readers.
- Helps them understand how we have to change to survive; makes us more "immediate" and relevant, promotes cooperation on beats
- We have been able to create a more engaged audience. The technology platform that bloggers use increases speed to the customers.
- It has increased both online traffic and engagement with readers.
- It us more immediacy in our reporting. It show the expertise of our reports and columnists.
- The sports blogs in particular have boosted our page views, and made the reporters the premier voices on their beats - USC, UCLA, Kings, etc.
- It drives traffic to the website and expands our audience.
- It has allowed them to be more agile, as well as expand our range of source to include our competition where in the past we would have two choices: ignore or go do our own story. Here we can point our readers to the best coverage anywhere, even if its not our own.
- Blogging is a great way for reporters to publish tidbits that otherwise would go unreported. Because we reverse publish in a weekly feature ("Best of the Blogs"), these tidbits often end up in print too.
- It has allowed us to expand our published offerings and interact with readers.
- Lends perspective and understanding to a particular subject; keeps online traffic up.
- We reach wider audiences. We receive many actionable story tips. Just to name two.
- We have taken a digital first strategy on breaking news, so it has helped to clarify the role of the paper as investigative, watchdog, and explanatory in nature.
- Reporters who cultivate an audience, gather followers, and interact with their readers are more effective at identifying and executing stories.
- Builds web traffic and drivers readers to print product; deepens source base; promotes interactivity with readers; produces story tips. Gets out news and information that doesn't fit into print products.
- Builds traffic, builds reporter identity and personality, makes us full participant in the web, expands range of material we can offer readers (full stories unnecessary).
- It opens doors with readers, creates a sense of transparency, and increases web traffic
- These are vehicles for reporting for niche audiences within the broader readership, so they provide a way to be vital to people who follow a team or other special interest
- It is a strong vehicle for timely and updated coverage and has made us more effective aggregators of content. For the reporters, it is another tool for source development and has helped them build an interactive community of interest around their beat while building their brand in the market. It is more flexible than our story formats for integration of images, multimedia and data.
- Helps reporters establish profile as subject matter experts. Helps them keep finger on pulse and get
feedback and tips.

- Lends personality and immediacy. Allows for interaction.
- More immediate, especially when news is breaking. The blogs, in many cases, also allow for a higher degree of interaction with readers, and allow reporters to experiment with new techniques and technology, such as video.
- Better interaction with our audience, helps build loyalty. And increases the reporters' attention to his/her beat.
- drives traffic...gives reporters outlets to write items that are not full stories...sometimes they marry it up w ith their tweets...gives readers a sense of being in the know before the paper comes out
- Name recognition for reporters - that's about it.
- breaking news, understanding audience (via comments), lede generation
- We have no idea
- We get tips from comments on blogs that result in stories and it gives us another way to communicate with our readers

7. In what ways do you think blogging by reporters has been a problem for your organization?

- Just the time balance ...
- None
- reporters occasionally write things in blogs that don't meet our print standards and drift into opinion
- Finding time to blog and to write for the paper has been a challenge.
- Spelling errors. Allowing reporters to interact with viewers.
- Time issues
- not sure it has been a problem. reporters do have to learn to manage their time more carefully.
- n/a
- Hasn't been a problem.
- blogging isn't the problem. it is trying to convince the non-believers that they can take a few minutes out of their existing work days to post a quick blog item without it turning it into a 10 inch version of a print story.
- My fear is that normal editing and reporting processes are not as thorough as for print reporting, which is more deliberate.
- It's another task. And blogs are quickly being outstripped as useful outlets by Twitter.
- Some reporters have to constantly be reminded to blog, so just one more thing for managers to have to do
- The multitasking is overwhelming for some, and the time spent blogging and interacting with readers is time they are not mining their sources.
- Reporters update the blog and write much less for the print product
- People are so fractured blogging and tweeting that sometimes it minimizes their ability to write exclusive stories for print.
- It takes practice, patience and perseverance. It has been a "problem" in the sense that it is disruptive growth and it has taken some time in getting them to see how to produce content this way.
- Because blog posts generally are not edited, sometimes we've posted content on blogs that was not up to our standards.
- It takes time from the deeper, more thoughtful reporting we need to publish in print if the paper is to maintain its value to readers.
- None so far.
- Trade offs with anything. Sometimes takes away from enterprise reporting. Blogs vary in quality.
- We are increasingly requiring reporters to blog, take video and produce app-only content. You do wonder what the capacity is as we grow the responsibilities for each staff member.
- a few have confused "blog" with opinion, trivia rumor. that's not what we're looking for at our news org
More work, less time to do it. Adds to already high stress levels.

We've not had any significant problems.

It is a challenge for reporters to strike the right allocation of time between stories, blogs, tweets and other social media tools. The more informal nature of blogs sometimes blurs the line between news, analysis and opinion. Sometimes it is hard for editors/producers to keep up with the pace of staff posts, all of which are reviewed by someone before publication. Rolling blog coverage can sometimes fragment key elements of a story for readers who want the more digestible format of a story.

It hasn't been.

It's not possible to closely supervise so occasionally a reporter will get off track or a grammatical/typographical error gets by.

It has caused questions from time to time about the differences in acceptable sourcing between what is on a blog and what can appear in the printed newspaper. These have mainly been addressed on a case-by-case basis.

It is not a significant problem. Obviously, it takes time away from something else, but I don't consider it to be problematic.

inconsistency as to how much each of them blogs...not firmly figured out if the right writers are blogging and on the right topics..we've had no survey assessing the pros and cons of our current plan.

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It is not a significant problem. Obviously, it takes time away from something else, but I don't consider it to be problematic.

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It is not a significant problem. Obviously, it takes time away from something else, but I don't consider it to be problematic.

managing comments

It has not yet been a problem

Extra work as all has to be backread at some point.

8. Which of the following formats do your reporter blogs use? 
(For frequency responses, see Table 2)

“Other” explanations (verbatim):

• Opinion/commentary/analysis are more the province of sports reporters

• we stress that whatever a reporter does publicly he or she represents the Tribune and journalism.... so NO opinions, but observations and analysis ok

• Occasional participation in comment streams appended to stories.

• We have a very popular entertainment blog that's become its own community. Bloggers talk about entertainment, celebrity gossip, news topics, books, and just about anything that's generating buzz. They have parties, tweet-ups, and a book club.

Also, we have a photo blog in which photographers share work, often unpublished, and tell stories about how they got the pictures.

• Exchanges among reporters in a given area; matches even between news and editorial writers in areas where both demonstrate expertise.

• Beat reporting

• It's a little hard to pigeonhole the blogs into firm categories

• Video by food writer

• gossip, not really rumor. analysis and opinion is done by reporters labeled or known as having opinions

9. Using a scale from (1) "Unimportant" to (5) "Very Important," please tell me how you feel about the following:

a) The need for reporters to blog for your newspaper's website.

For responses, see Table 4.
b) Information in reporter blogs is verified before being posted.
   For responses, see Table 5.

   c) Reporters keep their own views and opinions out of their blog posts.
      For responses, see Table 5.

   d) Reporters strive to be fair and balanced in their blogs
      For responses, see Table 5.

   e) Editors review blog posts before they're published online
      For responses, see Table 6.

10. The following questions are about perceptions editors have about the advantages and
disadvantages of reporter blogs. Please tell me how you feel about the following
statements using a scale from (1) for "Strongly Disagree" to (5) for "Strongly Agree."
### Table: Responses to Questions on Reporter Blogging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) My website serves audiences better because of reporter blogging</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Audience reaction to reporter blogging has been positive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Reporter blogging takes away from important reporting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Reporter blogging gives us a leg up on our competitors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) The disadvantages of reporter blogging outweighs the advantages</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Reporter blogs create suspicion reporters are biased</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) The use of reporter blogs has caused us to lower our standards</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Blogging is compatible with being a reporter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Reporters are confused about what editors want in their blogs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) Reporter blogs are good supplements to traditional reporting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Reporters need training to produce good blogs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) It is easy for reporters to create and maintain blogs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m) The results of blogging are apparent to me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n) I keep track of the audience numbers for reporter blogs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o) Using blogs is now a standard journalistic tool</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p) The practice of reporter blogging is now a passing fad</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q) Reporter blogs improved my newspaper's authority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r) They help reporters connect to readers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s) They give readers a chance to be heard by reporters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t) They convey information that otherwise wouldn't be published</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u) They improve the newspaper's credibility</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v) They attract readers who might otherwise not read us</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w) They help us compete with bloggers and websites in our market</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x) Reporters in my newsroom feel pressure to blog even though they don't want to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>y) My publisher expects reporters to blog</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>z) I feel pressured to have reporters blog event though I don't really want them to</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Responses to the following questions were confidential.

11. Please provide the name of your paper.
12. What is your title?
13. How long have you been in your current role?
14. What is your age?
APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need to blog (9a)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>.758</td>
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<td>Verify (9b)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.915</td>
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<td>No opinion (9c)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>.838</td>
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<td>Fair (9d)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.739</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edited (9e)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>.882</td>
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<td>Serves audience (10a)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Positive reaction (10b)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Takes away from reporting (10c)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.959</td>
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<td>Leg up (10d)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.941</td>
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<td>Disadvantageous (10e)</td>
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<td>Raises bias suspicion (10f)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.906</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.555</td>
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<td>Results apparent (10m)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>.727</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>.924</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Readers are heard (10s)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.30</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>.688</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve credibility (10u)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.759</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attract readers (10v)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>.566</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help us compete (10w)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.552</td>
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<td>Reporters feel pressure (10x)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>.948</td>
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<td>Publisher expects blogs (10y)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.071</td>
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<td>I feel pressure (10z)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: SUMMARIES OF SHORT TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH SIX EDITORS

Editor 1

Reporter blogs use different voices for different blogs. Sports is different from politics. “We still employ the same standards as we do for the newspaper.” He said there is frequent discussion in the newsroom about standards. The paper has a team, led by the digital editor, to vet proposals for blogs. “For all of the front-end work we do, reporters struggle with the question of voice and what goes in their blogs.” He said the confusion over what to put in blogs is not just about blog content but about how much time should be used for blogging versus reporting and writing for the print newspaper. He said today, formats are overlapping/less differentiated than at times in the past. The paper has a written policy but doesn’t specifically address viewpoint and voice.

Editor 2

He said his paper’s blogs essentially reflect the kind of writing in various sections of his newspaper, with more “colorful” writing appearing in features and sports sections than in news sections. “We want to create content that’s pitch perfect for the perceived audience.” The energy blog, for example, has a different tone from the baseball blog. He said the difference between viewpoint and voice is sometimes a matter of nuance. Some
reporters understand that; others struggle. In sports, readers have a talk-radio mindset, so they want more commentary. He says today it is important to recognize that the paper has an older audience and that audience wants news presented in a traditional, objective way. Web audiences should have a younger voice, he said.

**Editor 3**

He said blogs are important. They extend his paper’s brand, help it maintain authority, provide return on investment, build reporters’ own brand. His community has hockey bloggers who don’t even go to games, but his reporters go to every game. “We’re back in the frequency business,” he said, adding that they have a newsroom saying, “Give me a fact, and I’ll give you a story.” He says blog formats “align with what the norms are in the paper.” He found it relatively easy to decide and convey which blogs should include opinion and which should not. Voice is a reflection of the competitive environment the reporter is operating in. He said it is okay for a sports reporter to say a quarterback who made bad plays “stunk up” the stadium, but he would not allow a political reporter to say the same thing about a politician who filed a bill at the state capitol. He said some reporters are confused about what to include in blogs. He said he had to admonish his hockey reporter for blogging about whether women should be broadcasters at football games. As for personal motivations for making change, including adopting blogs, he said, “I don’t want to be seen as a traditionalist,” and, “I want to be a person who’s seen as being able to roll with the changes.”
Editor 4

This editor said his paper had many more blogs at one point but decided that they weren’t worth the effort. They weren’t drawing enough readers and took time away from reporting. He thinks blogs may be “already yesterday.” The paper has blogs for beats but doesn’t necessarily believe they have a ton of value. He says news blogs have small audiences and doesn’t want opinion in blogs per se because he doesn’t think readers want it. He said he had a sports writer who blogged about something that wasn’t a part of his beat. Bloggers should not “venture outside their expertise,” he said.

Editor 5

Editors said it is okay to publish blogs before they are read; editors have to trust reporters. Plus, there’s a feedback loop in which problems are generally caught by readers, pointed out, and corrected. He said reporters who have posted a blog item email their editors to let them know. Most blogs are news and notes, and the paper also reverse-publishes these blogs in the paper. “I don’t want reporters taking sides,” she said. News and notes blogs are used to get behind the scenes but don’t include opinion. Sports blogs may go a bit further in terms of commentary/analysis. She says she doesn’t have a policy describing the difference between voice and opinion but said: “It’s like pornography. I know it when I see it.” She said newsrooms have to adopt new tools: “If you sit back and wait, you’re way behind your readers.” She said, “Everything we’ve
done in the last five years has been experimental. We can no longer wait to nail everything.”

**Editor 6**

This editor says voice and formats in blogs are fairly consistent with what the newspaper does in print. Reporter blogs are newsy, while political blogs may offer more analysis. He thinks blogs may be dying out because of social media. He wants personality in news blogs but not opinion, wants them to be conversational and collegial. He says innovation adoption should continue quickly: “Everything happens fast in our industry. We need to fail quickly and move on.”