

Chapter 2

Online Journalism Structures

Chapter Overview

This chapter begins by addressing some of the basic operational considerations of producing online journalism content, including the 24/7 news cycle, modular content and the increasingly blurred definition of what it means to actually be a journalist. Next, it addresses some new forms of online journalism, such as news aggregators, hyperlocal sites, blogs and forms for mobile and other devices. The final section of the chapter presents case studies of three legacy media organizations and their approach to online journalism: The *Washington Post*; The Dispatch Printing Company's online operation, based in Columbus, Ohio; and 13abc.com, the website of WTVG-TV in Toledo, Ohio. In looking at these three organizations, the intent is not necessarily to imply that they are prototypical "large," "medium" and "small" organizations but rather to provide a sense of some of the approaches legacy media organizations are taking to adapt to the online world.

In a sense, this chapter and the following one are companions. While Chapter 2 looks at the professional structures that support online journalism and journalists, Chapter 3 looks at the audience's increasing role in contributing to journalistic content.

Goals

- To introduce basic issues involved in the online journalism production process
- To discuss the concepts of convergence and modular content as they relate to online journalism
- To discuss new forms of online journalism, including news aggregators, blogs and hyperlocal sites, that are supplementing traditional forms
- To illustrate the wide range of online journalism organizations by looking at case studies of large, medium and small legacy Web operations

Quiz Questions

1. Which of the following is the original media operation, such as print or broadcast, that gave rise to an online operation?
 - A. Legacy media
 - B. Hyperlocal site

- C. News aggregator
 - D. Streaming media
2. Which of the following is the term used to indicate the combining or sharing of news operations across different media?
- A. Convergence
 - B. Dayparting
 - C. Blogging
 - D. Streaming
3. A Web operation that does not report news of information itself but rather compiles news and links from other sources is called which of the following?
- A. Legacy media
 - B. Hyperlocal site
 - C. News aggregator
 - D. Streaming media
4. A website structure that is like an electronic diary with individual postings, multimedia and links to other information is known as _____?
- A. Blog
 - B. Daypart site
 - C. Shovelware
 - D. Web extra
5. Which of the following is a website that focuses on a very narrow geographic or interest area?
- A. Daypart site
 - B. Hyperlocal site
 - C. News aggregator
 - D. Blog
6. Which of the following is NOT true about the *Washington Post's* Internet operations, as discussed in the chapter?
- A. Internet content is produced by a team of journalists separate from their print-based counterparts.
 - B. It is located in the *Post's* Washington, D.C. newsroom.

- C. The home page is normally handled by a dedicated home page editor.
 - D. The home page is updated numerous times throughout the day.
7. How do *Washington Post* employees refer to the large, semi-circular desk in the newsroom that has workstations for various personnel?
- A. The Universal News Desk
 - B. The WPNI Desk
 - C. The Content Management System (CMS)
 - D. The Hyperlocal Desk
8. What phrase is used by WPNI's Chet Rhodes to summarize the type of video content he is looking for from print reporters?
- A. "Make it sing."
 - B. "Do the print story for broadcast."
 - C. "Make it look like the evening news."
 - D. "Give me a taste."
9. Which of the following is true about The Dispatch Printing Company's diverse media holdings?
- A. They are all located in Columbus, Ohio.
 - B. They operate out of a single newsroom.
 - C. The individual media operations are all print based.
 - D. The individual media operations are not centrally located.
10. What term is used by The Dispatch Printing Company's Jon Schwantes to refer to people with technical skills who can help reporters adapt to new media?
- A. Bridge specialists
 - B. Luddites
 - C. Backpack journalists
 - D. Managing editors
11. Describe some of the ways in which the changing definition of who is a journalist, the 24/7 news cycle, convergence and modular content affect the creation of online journalism.
12. Name and discuss four of the six ways that blogs can contribute to journalistic discourse, as identified in the "We Media" report.

Class Activities

1. If there is a good-sized Web journalism operation located near your college or university, make arrangements to visit it as a class. If you have only smaller Web operations nearby, invite someone to come to talk to your class.
2. Discuss in greater detail the concept of modular content and how it affects the gathering and presentation of online news. Do students agree with Adrian Holovaty that nearly every journalistic story could in effect be broken down into individual, database- and CMS-friendly chunks of data?
3. Brainstorm some story ideas with the class and then discuss how the stories could be covered in a converged news operation. Try to tailor different aspects of the story to different media where they could be told most effectively. In general, what kinds of stories work well for print, broadcast and the Web? How would the concept of modular content be applied to how these stories are gathered and presented?
4. Have students look at some blog sites. Then ask them to discuss whether they think blogs are a good outlet for journalistic content.
5. Have students look at some hyperlocal sites. Then discuss the content on the sites and how it differs from more “mainstream” sites.
6. Tell the class that they have been hired by a mid-sized paper to establish a more comprehensive Web presence. They are able to hire five employees. How would they divide the job duties, and what kinds of people would they hire?

Answers to Quiz Questions

1. A
2. A
3. C
4. A
5. B
6. A
7. A
8. D
9. D
10. A
11. See pages 22–28 of the text.
12. See pages 31–32 of the text. (1) Commentary: opinion and analysis of news events or news coverage; (2) filtering and editing: guiding and directing users

to particular coverage or information; (3) fact checking: challenging or verifying information previously written in the blog or in mainstream media content; (4) grassroots reporting: providing eyewitness or firsthand accounts of news events; (5) annotative reporting: supplementing a given story with additional source or background information; (6) open-source reporting and peer review: submitting traditional reporting and information to review and revision by readers and other journalists.