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Blogs and Journalism

By Gunnar Berglund

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The world has seen the emergence of a new style of journalism, based on a 'raw feed' directly from the source. And the common notion that surrounds the emergence of serving 'raw feed' is that the journalists testing the new waters are bound to wreak havoc on institutionalized media. Also a popular notion is that Weblogs changes the nature of 'news' is in the migration of information from the personal to the public.

Unquestionable, a blog is a medium that gives maximum exposure to one's creativity. Just by hitting the 'post' button and any personal writing becomes published writing.

Weblogging is driving a powerful new form of amateur journalism. Today, millions of Net users – young people especially – have taken up the role of columnist, reporter, analyst and publisher while fashioning their own personal broadcasting networks.

For the inexperienced, a blog consists of a running commentary with pointers to other sites. Some, like Librarian.net, Jim Romenesko's Media News or Steve Outing's E-Media Tidbits, cover entire industries by providing quick bursts of news with links to full stories.

Journalism and blogging together is becoming popular day by day, more than any other form of blogging. Following reasons are considered to extensively contribute to its increasing popularity:

Creative Freedom

Part of a blog's allure is its unmediated quality. For a journalist, there's no luxury like the luxury of publishing unedited essay. The freedom in being able to present yourself precisely as you want to is of enormous joy. It does not matter how sloppily, irrationally or erratically the content is written. The idea is to publish what you think in the way you think.

Instantaneity

To a few writers, even writing for a weekly magazine may seem like taking ages to print. With a Weblog, you hit the send key and it is out.

Interactivity

It is a kick to receive feedback from people who have taken interest to read and criticize your work. These are the people you have never heard of; who stumble on your Weblog and become a part of your thinking process.

Lack Of Marketing Constraints

When blogging it is not necessarily to tailor a work piece for a certain readership or demographic. People interested in a perspective finds its author – the blogger, instead of the blogger finding a publication that reflects people's interests.

Most of the time, the Weblogs tend to be less about actual reporting and more about analysis and punditry and opinionated commentary. The 9/11 terrorist attacks fuelled the public's appetite for information, analysis and news, if only to make sense of the tragedy. Bloggers rose to prominence by feeding this desire.

Blogging has taken off in remarkable fashion; in a way, it has made good where newsgroups have failed. It has kept the promise that the Internet would provide real community to Web surfers. Tuning in to some of the newsgroups devoted to the terror attacks; one may sometimes feel to be in the middle of a verbal war zone with so much noise passing for informed discussion.

Weblogs run from single person operation to large teams and communities, to business organizations spread throughout the world. They offer a great way for readers to find constantly updated news and information. It also allows authors to connect to thousands of readers in a personal way and add the honest, unedited voice of thousands to increasingly commercializing Web.

The plethora of tools that helps managing the weblog capitalizes on the ease of publishing posts to even greater extent.

These are probably the reasons why they have been widely adopted and maintained – for several years in some cases.

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Technorati And Associated Press Merger – How This Affects The Blogosphere

By Danny Wirken

The News

In the morning of May 23, 2006, Technorati and Associated Press (AP) initiated a new service that was guaranteed to make news in the blogosphere and give more PR for blogs. The service includes having Technorati search for blogs that link to AP articles. Those blogs will then appear on websites that use the AP Hosted Custom News and who opt for the new feature. The new feature includes having a Blog Roundup section that consists of the links to blogs containing the most relevant information on the "Top Five Most Blogged About" AP articles in the past 48 hours. Under each most relevant blog there is also a link to a list of the next 24 relevant blogs for people who want to read more on what the blogosphere have to say about the article. In addition to the Blog Roundup section clicking on a particular AP article will prompt Technorati to produce a list of "Who's Blogging About" that article.

The Effect to the Blogosphere

This new service is undoubtedly beneficial to the blogosphere. As a Digital Grit article mentioned, the new partnership would be of much interest for those who want better visibility for their blogs or for those bloggers who are SEO-minded. For those in the know being linked back by the press is a bonus for your page rank. However, it has always been a challenge for bloggers, even for the popular bloggers, to be noticed by the press much less get link back by them. The Technorati-AP partnership changes all that. Instead of having to think of ways and gimmicks to get noticed by the press and still just end up with nothing all a blogger has to do now is to write posts in connection to current AP articles and link back to those articles. Technorati then submits that post along with other relevant posts to AP for affiliate websites to display on the blog roundup. Note, however, that the number of blogs that will be linked back to is limited. This means that for your blog to be linked back by AP your post has to be perceived by Technorati as among the most relevant posts in blogosphere. So for blogger that think that simply linking to AP articles will do the job for them is seriously deluded. As always good content is still the key to rising in popularity in the blogosphere.

Aside from making it easier for some bloggers to get a higher page rank, the Technorati-AP merger has a more universal effect on bloggers. Even if only selected bloggers will appear on AP stories, the arrangement will still result in more awareness of the blogosphere as a whole. People who previously had no knowledge at all about the existence of the blogosphere or at least do not read blogs as part of their regular ritual will not only be exposed to the idea of the blogosphere as an additional or supplementary source of information regarding current events. The links, which are updated regularly and are always relevant to current issues, will also encourage news readers to regularly read the blogs as well. This will undoubtedly suck in some of the news readers to be regulars in the world of blog and thus create more audience for bloggers.

The Technorati-AP partnership also does much for the blogosphere's credibility as a news source. Not only will it create awareness of blogs' ability to supplement the news it will also show that blogs have something more to contribute to the story. As Peter Hirshberg wrote in the Technorati weblog, "Increasingly, what the blogosphere says about a news story becomes part of a more complete story, lending diverse perspectives and often expert commentary. The AP believed it was increasingly important to deliver the living blogosphere as a compliment to their core professional news product."

Blogs and Journalism

The new service that AP offers to its readers is a nod to the blogosphere's ever increasing contribution to the news network. In fact the motivation behind the partnership is actually AP's belief that "citizen-generated media could enhance the AP in their mission to be the essential global news network." The service has caused much excitement in the blogosphere and as Hirshberg put it, "is a deep validation of the power of citizen media and how each person is gaining more power – power to have their opinions and thoughts heard, in a truly democratic process."

As the deal legitimizes blogging even more it also blurs further the line between press and bloggers. Some journalists are offended that some bloggers feel that what they do amounts to journalism. According to the journalists what bloggers do isn't journalism but simply collecting stories that are reported by the real journalists who do the hard work of actually going out there to catch stories. They resent the idea that bloggers, who do their story telling in just one place should be given recognition as journalists for delivering commentaries on new stories. However, according to Jane Seagrave, AP's vice president of new media "The truth is there are not that many of us who are breaking news anymore, that have people on the ground ... the whole notion here is to spotlight those who are real content creators and not make news such a generic commodity on the Web." This means that they are focusing on worthy bloggers out there who produce quality content and have something of real value to offer and add to the telling of news stories.

What it Does for AP

As for AP, the move itself is also strategic since more and more bloggers are sure to link more to their articles instead of their competitors'. There are currently many news sources out there that bloggers individually follow and comment on. AP's new service will surely encourage bloggers to make AP articles their primary source of new stories and link to them, which would lead to greater traffic to AP affiliated sites from the blog world.

In terms of monetary returns, however, the project isn't expected to generate revenue for either AP or Technorati. The two companies will be sharing the profit made from the ads on the web pages but this profit is expected to cover only the cost of the project. This says something about both companies in terms of their desire to give better service to their users and in furthering the sharing of information in the Internet.



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