

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Author's note	iv
Abstract	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 What is a weblog?	2
1.2 What is the blogosphere?	3
1.3 Motivations for research	3
1.4 Details of research	4
1.4.1 Research methodology	4
1.4.2 Literature review	5
1.4.3 Limits of research	5
Chapter 2: 9/11 and its repercussions for the media	7
2.1 New York, September 11, 2001	8
2.2 Coverage of the event	8
2.2.1 The potential of news online	8
2.2.2 The news in action	10
2.3 The public becomes the media	12
2.3.1 Filling the information gap	13
2.3.2 Do-it-yourself journalism	14
2.4 Questions of accuracy	16
2.5 Weblogs: a source of news, or a source of perspective?	18
2.6 After 9/11	19
Chapter 3: Redefining the media environment post-9/11	21
3.1 Cultural chaos	22
3.1.1 The 'Long Tail'	23
3.2 The birth of the blogworld	25
3.3 The rise of the warblogs	26
3.4 Watchdogs – or wolves at the door?	27
3.4.1 Memogate	28
3.4.2 Eason Jordan	30
3.5 The new correspondents	31
3.5.1 Chris Allbritton	31
3.5.2 Kevin Sites	32
3.5.3 The Baghdad Blogger	34
3.6 Moving forward	35
Chapter 4: The tsunami, 7/7 and beyond: new questions for journalism?	37
4.1 The Asian tsunami	38
4.1.1 Coverage of the event	38
4.2 London, July 7, 2005	40

4.2.1 Coverage of the event	40
4.3 Exploring the issues	43
4.3.1 How far has the blogosphere come since 9/11?	43
4.3.2 The immediacy issue	43
4.3.3 The attempted attacks and the Stockwell shooting	45
4.4 Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath	47
4.4.1 Gatekeepers or gatecrashers?	47
Chapter 5: Bloggers and journalists on the new media environment	50
5.1 Overview	51
5.2 The Harvard Conference	51
5.2.1 Trends at play	51
5.2.2 Trust and credibility	52
5.2.3 Connecting the dots	53
5.2.4 What are blogs for?	54
5.3 The interviews	55
5.3.1 The internet and working habits	55
5.3.2 Reciprocity	56
5.3.3 The media's participation in the blogosphere	57
5.3.4 The media's understanding of the blogosphere	58
5.3.5 Citizen journalism	59
5.3.6 Journalists' take on the London bombings	60
5.3.7 Are weblogs enriching journalism?	61
5.3.8 Final analysis	62
Chapter 6: Conclusions	64
6.1 A blogosphere of influence?	65
6.2 Remaining questions	68
Bibliography	70
Appendix A: Index of interviews conducted	74
Appendix B: Index of relevant web sources and further readings	75

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following for taking the time to answer my awkward questions: Mark Comerford, Dan Gillmor, Mathew Honan, Karlin Lillington, Justine McCarthy, Fintan O'Toole, Eric Umansky, John Waters and Jessamyn West. Their participation in my research was invaluable.

Thanks also to Kevin Roche for the numerous e-mails and pointers, to Valerie Vetter for being a willing sounding board for my ideas, and to the irishblogs mailing list for the helpful discussions throughout the year.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor David Quin for his constructive criticism, for believing in my thesis and for helping me keep my research goals in focus. This dissertation would not be what it is without his guidance.

Special thanks go to my mum, and especially to Benitha, for putting up with me.

Author's note

In the interests of consistency, any instances of American English spellings, especially of words contained within direct quotes (with the exception of titles and proper nouns) have been modified to the British English equivalents.

In addition to this, the capitalised spellings of 'internet' and 'world wide web' have also been changed to reflect current standards.

Abstract

This dissertation is an attempt to discuss and hopefully answer the question: ‘are weblogs enriching journalism in the new media environment?’

Chapter 1 gives a background to the weblog phenomenon, outlines my motivation for researching this thesis, and details the research methodology, literature, and research limits on the project.

Chapter 2 deals with the attack on New York on September 11, 2001, and the repercussions this event had for the media sphere in the succeeding weeks and months; how it proved pivotal for showing the potential for ordinary citizens to take the media into their own hands and contribute directly to the news process, and what implications arose as a result.

In Chapter 3 I explore the apparent redefinition of the media environment in the wake of 9/11 and its long-term effects; describing the new terms by which an increasingly connected society deals with the established mainstream media and relates to its journalism, and whether this new relationship is enriching the journalism produced by the mainstream in any way.

Placing weblogs within the broader trend of ‘citizen journalism’, Chapter 4 looks at the media response to both the London bombings on July 7, 2005 and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in late summer of 2005, in comparison with the events of 9/11 and subsequent event-driven media phenomena.

Evaluating what actual effects the shifting media paradigm is having on contemporary journalism and journalists is the basis of Chapter 5, where I analyse and discuss the conclusions of the Harvard conference on blogging and journalism, as well as feedback from journalists, bloggers and journalists who blog, whom were interviewed for this dissertation, to uncover the realities of the blogosphere’s relationship with the traditional media.