A Proposal for a Code of Ethics for Collaborative Journalism in the Digital Age: The Open Park Code

by

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Submitted to the Program in Comparative Media Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

As American professional journalism with its established rules and values transitions to the little-regulated, ever-evolving world of digital news, few of its practitioners, contributors and consumers are giving thought to the moral and intellectual implications that this transition entails.

While technologists and innovators have embraced this passage into a hybrid model of skilled and citizen-generated news production, even spearheading its new practices at times, this transition is taking place in a moral and regulatory void: without a strong legislative foundation for cyberspace and revised ethical rules for the journalism profession online, media professionals and independent news producers lack guidance and tools to respond appropriately to new ethical issues not covered by current laws and ethical codes. Some of the key questions facing the profession are: should online journalism and all new forms of news media production be regulated, and if so, to what extent and by whom? What constitutes ethical collaboration? How does current regulation operate? Should or could it be extended to the digital domain?

In this thesis I argue that professional and amateur news publishing on the Internet and other digital formats have created new social issues, ethical dilemmas and unanticipated situations for journalists, which are specific to digital media and unaddressed by current laws, standards, and codes of ethics.
Following an analysis of these issues and the deficiencies of current ethics codes, using a real-life case study and comments from working journalists on their new professional needs, I then propose my vision for online news media production, arguing for an open-source, participatory model supported by a solid, individual ethical foundation and a revised relationship with sources.
The thesis culminates with my proposed code of ethics for collaborative journalism in the digital age, the Open Park Code of Ethics and the Global Media Ethics Forum. Initially conceived as a news-reporting and educational tool for the Open Park project of The MIT Center for Future Civic Media, the OP Code reflects the principles and guidelines of my open-source model and is readily usable and adaptable to the needs of varied news media communities and individual producers.

Thesis Supervisors: William Uricchio, Director of Comparative Media Studies
David L. Chandler, MIT News Office Science Writer

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I would like to thank all the people who accompanied me on this long and enlightening Master's degree and CMS journey.

First of all, I owe the greatest debt for this proposed Code of Ethics to my thesis committee, which has been a constant source of intellectual and moral support during both the research and writing processes, as well as the defense. David Chandler has shared with me his insights as a working professional journalist and given very pertinent suggestions to improve my research questions and the structure of the thesis. Likewise, I cannot thank enough Prof. William Uricchio, not only for his informed comments and methods for sharpening my argument in written notes and regular meetings, but also for educating me about the benefits of judicious selection and scalability, and the beauty of concision versus perfection.
To both of them I am most grateful.

This CMS path would not have been traced and thesis project initiated were it not for my initial and lasting fascination with Prof. Henry Jenkins's fresh and provocative approach to journalistic new media production and pioneering thoughts on all things civic and convergence. It is these bold ideas that inspired me to explore further how to design an ethical code for implementing such new models for media production. His useful feedback on my initial drafts, thesis proposal and presentation were foundational and provided the building blocks for the body of my argument and case study. Given his later, new commitments across the country, his time was also most appreciated.

The staff, students and affiliates of the Comparative Media Studies program, of the Media Lab where I took many classes, and of my research group, the MIT Center for Civic Media, have equally been great sources of support, help and resources for steering my research ship across the tumultuous waters of a fast-changing media landscape, and for guiding my steps whenever they became hesitant. The rich conversations and steadfast encouragements of my former research director, Ellen Hume, herself a staunch advocate for open journalism, Chris Csikszentmihalyi, Dharmishta Rood and Cati Boulanger, to name but a few among many CMS, C4CM and Media Lab directors, friends and affiliates, have all in one way or another added value to my thinking and thesis writing.

Andrew Whitacre's regular electronic dispatches of selected noteworthy developments and events in the CMS and C4CM departments and the field of new media at large have led to many valuable sources of information. Many experts-guest speakers discovered through these events, all hailing from varied and emerging media disciplines, have contributed pieces to the puzzle and fresh perspectives that helped me look at journalism ethics with new eyes and polish my proposal for an open, collaborative ethics system.

Similarly essential supporters of my research endeavors in CMS quarters were the program's administrative staff, most notably Becky Shepardson, whose organizational skills combined with her constant encouragements were instrumental to my reaching the finishing line. And Sarah Wolozin, whose belief in community journalism and my initial project helped fuel further work on my Open Park Code of Ethics, offered

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"The virtues that inspire our admiration are also the qualities which preserve society, whether from external threat or from internal decay: courage and resolution in the face of danger; loyalty and decency in private life; justice and charity in the public sphere.

The antique virtues of courage, prudence, wisdom, temperance and justice, amplified by Christian charity and pagan loyalty, still form the core idea of human excellence."

An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy
Roger Scruton

"In judging our progress as individuals we tend to concentrate on external factors such as ones' social position, influence and popularity, wealth and standard of education. (...) But internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one's development as a human being. Honesty, sincerity, simplicity, humility, pure generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve others - qualities which are within easy reach of every soul - are the foundation of one's spiritual life. Development in matters of this nature is inconceivable without serious introspection, without knowing yourself, your weaknesses and mistakes."

Conversations with Myself
Nelson Mandela
(From a letter to Winnie Mandela in Kroonstad Prison, dated 1 February 1975, pages 211-212)

Chapter 1: Why 'New Journalism' Needs a Revised Ethics Code

Introduction

The social, legal, political and economic changes inherent in Internet-based news publishing confront today's digital media producers with new issues regarding quality, credibility, sustainability and management ethos.

Ethical issues in journalism, the focus of this thesis, have acquired fresh urgency and complexity in a 'flattened' information ecology in which various levels of skills, styles and motives both compete and collaborate in a highly hybrid, technology-enamored and unpredictably evolving playing field. The proclaimed egalitarian nature of this new media landscape has blurred the lines of prescribed roles by emboldening professionals to enter into formerly unthought-of projects with independent writers and non-media-trained members of the public. For example, many of today's celebrities, politicians, and companies now 'report' on their own news and can distribute their creative content through self-made online venues, unencumbered by the rules and editorship of the traditional platforms of access to one's audience.

Central to the challenges now facing working professionals in the online news industry, which are examined in the following chapters, is the inability of the law and current ethical guidelines to help them make good editorial decisions on new issues or those arising from aspects of traditional journalism that have been exacerbated by the Internet's speed and expansive model of distribution and are now reappearing in Web-based publishing. Despite industry-wide recognition as the best-to-date and most reliable anchoring tools in this sea of journalistic changes, the ethics codes now in use in the nation's newsrooms, most notably the Society of Professional Journalists' (SPJ) Code of Ethics, adopted in 1926 and now one of the most comprehensive and widely used codes, remain, according to the industry insiders and media critics interviewed for this thesis, insufficient to meet the still evolving demands and situations that news-gathering and publishing in the world of cyberspace generate. .

Influence & Inspiration

A major influence on this study has been former *Washington Post* correspondent and journalism professor at the University of California at Berkeley Neil Henry, one of the most vocal denunciators of the Code's effectiveness in applied news-reporting. "The powerful document trumpets the highest beliefs of the largest and most influential organization of professional journalists in America today, one whose precepts have been adopted, at least in theory, by most news organizations around the country. It lists scores of directives and prohibitions covering everything from conflicts of interest and plagiarism issues to the importance of avoiding advocacy and inviting public dialogue about journalistic conduct," he writes in *American Carnival – Journalism Under Siege in an Age of New Media.* Yet, "despite the importance and clarity of these principles and the values they reflect, professional journalism in America today often seems troubled and confused," he concludes, citing examples of ethical failings in a long list of ills that ranges from failing standards in accuracy and

independence to the flagrant use of journalism for marketing and political purposes. Repeatedly, the 'professionals' are failing "to hold themselves publicly accountable (...) as ethical codes insist they must," he stresses.[1]

Admittedly, Henry may well occupy an extreme end of the media criticism spectrum with his one-sided, perhaps intransigent views on today's news media, and a more balanced approach would help us perceive many nuances and examples of praiseworthy reporting. *The Washington Post*, NPR, *The New York Times*, The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and the more recently founded ProPublica consistently deliver outstanding pieces of breaking news and investigative journalism, and especially in the case of the first three news organizations, have been skilful not only at adopting but also innovating interactive news-reading and -contributing tools on their websites for their audiences.

But it is this lack of reinforcement of professional standards, perceived by Henry and many others[2], and of adequately adapted guidelines for the 'new' market for news and profession that stimulates my efforts to grapple with revising the journalistic code..

The still limited but nonetheless urgent warnings of the media analysts and journalists who have been observing those changes and their impact on the quality of news reports and the new types of difficulties encountered when preparing them include the seminal work of new media ethics experts Robert I. Berkman and Christopher A. Shumway.

In their book *Digital Dilemmas - Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals*, they advance the theory that the Internet has created new, often unexpected news-reporting situations for online media professionals that might pose potential perils and offer possibilities for unethical activities.[3] They cite "the electronic invasion of people's privacy, trading accuracy for speed, and further blurring the line between editorial and advertising," as a particularly common pitfall. They view new media as a 'special need' area - one that may require revised ethical guidelines, and refute critics who fear that their proposed revision of media ethics for digital journalism might imply a lowering of standards - as the Internet has often meant for various professional and creative practices. Berkman and Shumway take a refreshingly rare approach to ethical issues in journalism simply - but importantly - by looking at the larger picture and taking into account the social, economic and even political pressures of our time, all of which have an even larger impact on the now seamless world of news producers and participatory media consumers in cyberspace.

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[1] Neil Henry, *American Carnival - Journalism Under Siege in an Age of New Media* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 207-210.

[2] Of the many authors, journalists and media observers studied for this thesis who mostly decry the negative impact of technological changes on the journalism profession, two come to mind as the most vocal critics: former *Washington Post* correspondent Neil Henry (see especially his book *American Carnival - Journalism Under Siege in an Age of New Media*) and Chris Hedges, American journalist and author of *Empire of Illusion*.

[3] Robert I. Berkman and Christopher A. Shumway, *Digital Dilemmas - Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals* (Ames, IA: Blackwell/Iowa State Press, 2003) xii-xiii.

They pose such pertinent questions as "In a time when anyone can disseminate news and opinions on the Web to a mass audience, who, exactly, should be called a journalist?"; "Why shouldn't the existing principles and agreed-upon standards of the current ethical codes be good enough to apply to those journalists working in any medium, including the Internet?"; as well as asking how can we figure out how to apply existing ethics to these tricky new areas, and should we seek to identify additional ethical standards if needed[4]

New codes or guidelines could help professional journalists and their freelance counterparts working online to recognize and even anticipate the kind of issues they might face so that they will be better prepared to respond appropriately and, more importantly, ethically. It is such goals and visions of more tempered and quality reporting of news online and in mobile applications that have formed the basis of this thesis, arguing for a code of ethics adapted for professional journalists working on the Net, their non-traditionally trained peers, and the various emerging types of new contributors to our ever-expanding news field.

Applications with Impact

At the most basic level, such a tool would perhaps help prevent the kind of outrageous inaccuracies that pepper our online 'instantly-delivered' 24/7 news digests, such as when NPR, with other news organizations following its lead, incorrectly reported in early January 2011 that Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords had succumbed to her gunshot wound to the brain and had passed away, following which it published a corrected report.[5]The ethical - and even moral - implications of such a reporting misstep in the service of "being first with the news" do not need elaboration. On a more intricate level, a proposed code of guidelines would suggest ways for journalists to check the veracity of statements and data taken from Twitter feeds for example, and whether they should seek permission from the authors to quote them in the first place, especially in cases of controversial subject matter or when the information could endanger the source. More generally, such a code would help journalists and all those interested in participating in online news-reporting in navigating with more ethical clarity all the "gray areas" of an Internet that Mashable.com editor and blogger Adam Ostrow has qualified as "tricky." He cites the new rules on Internet access and shifting views on business control, privacy and other areas of people's lives affected by 'hyper-targeted' online advertising as the key disruptive elements. In an opinion piece for CNN.com entitled "2010: The year the internet got tricky," he makes it clear that ethics is at the core of what confuses people most in this chaotic digital informational environment: "In a year full of gray," he tells us to "think of the debate over whether Facebook and Wikileaks are forces for good or evil."[6]

These examples offer a taste of the practical applications of a system of suggested

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[4] Berkman and Shumway, xii-xiii.

[5] Liz Halloran, "'Vitriol' Cited As Possible Factor In Arizona Tragedy," NPR, Jan 8, 2011, http://www.npr.org/2011/01/10/132764367/congresswoman-shot-in-arizona. Accesed Jan. 8, 2011.

[6] Adam Ostrow, "2010: The year the internet got tricky," CNN, Dec. 30, 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-12-30/opinion/ostrow.year.in.internet_1_wikileaks-web-sites-internet?_s=PM:OPINION. Accessed Dec. 30, 2010.

directions for digital reporters, which I will expand upon in Chapter 4. For now, suffice it to say that the premise for my suggested ethical guidance - that the upheavals in news-reporting practices now performed on the Net and through other disruptive technologies may lead to further erosion of already challenged media standards - reflects considerable consensus in the profession. Regardless of where they place themselves on the new media adoption spectrum, most people working in news or analyzing news trends agree that the industry-revolutionizing changes I mention here are causing major headaches as to how best incorporate the new social media activities into daily news-reporting without compromising independence, diversity of views and quality standards[7] We can note the views ranging from those of enthusiastic early adopters such as *New York Times* technology writer Nick Bilton and Center for Citizen Media founder Dan Gillmor to the high-tech skeptics and critics such as Neil Henry cited above, 40-year newspaper veteran Jack Fuller[8] and Shorenstein Center director and *Losing the News* author Alex S. Jones[9] as well as such 'revisionists' (for lack of a better term) as editor and social commentator Yevgeny Morozov who expands on "The Dark Side of Internet Freedom" in his recent book *The Net Delusion*[10], social technology MIT Professor Sherry Turkle, who in her latest book *Alone Together* makes a fashionable U-turn in her thinking about computers, downgrading them from the therapeutic partners of her earlier works to tools disrupting our more 'real' lives and relationships[11], and online research specialist

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[7] The evolutionary, self-reflexive processes of the ongoing changes in journalism that are mentioned here are best captured and explained in David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, "Introduction", *Rethinking Media Change - The Aesthetics of Transition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003) esp. 10-11.

[9] See especially Jack Fuller, *What is Happening to News - The Information Explosion and the Crisis in Journalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[9] For a glimpse of the informational and intellectual void we will be facing when the remaining newspapers have taken their last breath, as he predicts, see Alex S. Jones *Losing the News: The Future of the News That Feeds Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), in which he writes that without "the iron core of information," whatever editorial pages, columnists, bloggers, talk-show hosts and others have to say will have little weight, and a less-informed public will lose its ability to hold those in power accountable.

[10] Despite going against the prevailing technology-friendly trend and attracting some critics (see Lee Siegel, "Twitter Can't Save You" *The New York Times' Bookreview*, Feb. 6, 2011, 14 and 16), Yevgeny Morozov's *Net Delusion - The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011) has garnered a significant following among those new media critics who think it is time to reassess the Net from a soberer perspective.

[11] It in interesting to consider the journalistic implications of Turkle's musings on today's online connectivity or lack thereof. "We discovered the network - the world of connectivity - to be uniquely suited to the overworked and overscheduled life it makes possible," she writes, highlighting the new, expanded relationships that connectivity technologies enable. *Alone Together - Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011) 13. I would argue that paradoxically, this has not really worked for news-reporters, when it comes to practicing quality, well-sourced journalism: reporters today, and especially new media/online bloggers seem *less* connected to their sources than traditional journalists. Despite more connecting technologies, there is less contact with the

Richard Rogers who favors 'the natively digital' over 'the digitized'[12], or the ever cautious-critical visionary Jaron Lanier.[13] Oftentimes, advertising, ideological or other promotional purposes lurk behind the news-sharing practices encouraged by 'new journalism', in very single-dimensional ways, resulting in what Lanier calls "the digital flattening of expression into a global mush" which he says represents a direct moral threat to "Authorship - the very idea of the individual point of view."[14]

Save for technology's eternal enthusiasts, much of the reading, viewing and participatory audiences are similarly questioning in their responses to the dizzying array of digital news and their difficulties in identifying trustworthy items. Diminishing trust in the institution of the media, as I demonstrate in Chapter 2, is a huge issue among the American public. Mistakenly, most of this mistrust is directed against the mainstream media, leading many to blindly embrace any new, cool-looking online news project that comes along, subconsciously lowering their standards and expectations in the process and discarding demands for fact-checked and balanced original reporting. In fact, as I conclude in my study of 20 or so online news models in prior research, many of these new journalistic ventures' editorial boards and staff resemble their counterparts in the long-established mainstream media since they often hail from them. Many reporters and editors from financially challenged newspapers and networks left (or were made to leave) their jobs and went on to (re-)create their newsrooms on interactive Web sites, which while being technologically innovative, maintained the same ideologies as their migrant-founders.

Of course there are notable exceptions, such as the pioneering technology Web site Slashdot. As fellow CMS student Anita Chan describes in depth in her thesis on collaborative news networks, Slashdot is the original contribution to the development of online journalism of single student blogger Rob Malda, inspired by emerging

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original sources and witnesses of the events that get reported, aggregated and (re-) distributed online.

[12]For a comprehensive definition of the notions of 'the natively digital' and 'the digitized' as understood by Richards Rogers, a professor of new media and digital culture at the University of Amsterdam, see "The End of the Virtual - Digital Method" (Text prepared for the Inaugural Speech, Chair, New Media & Digital Culture, University of Amsterdam, 8 May 2009), in which he explains how "there is an ontological distinction between the natively digital and the digitized, that is, the objects, content, devices and environments that are 'born' in the new medium, as opposed to those that have 'migrated' to it."
(http://www.govcom.org/rogers_oratie.pdf Accessed Jan. 13, 2011)
[13]Jaron Lanier's latest book, *You Are Not a Gadget - A Manifesto* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010) makes a strong case for protecting the individual in a sea of digital crowds' knowledge and mass movements, questioning the power of the blogosphere and its "mobs of noisily opposed bloggers nullifying one another." (85) His call for technology to develop "individual intelligence" rather than "the pack mentality" (4-5) chimes with my emphasis on individual principles forming the foundation of ethical conduct.
[14]Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget - A Manifesto*, 45 and 47. Here too, the strong inspirational connection between Lanier's thinking on the importance of individual contribution and my own argument for nurturing personal ethical values in today's digital journalists is evident.

thinking on organized network collaboration[15]. Chan stresses the innovation and unique contribution the project made to the media scene at the time of its foundation in the late 1990's: "that users are able to act as analysts within and contribute to the organization of the forum discussions endows the practices of forum participation with a unique sense of significance for them." Interestingly (but not uniquely in the evolution of news media), the original ideas of Slashdot's founding team on the practices of news exchange and distribution went on to inspire and give rise to many news projects - an innovative process which is absent from the simple re-creation of traditional media online.

There is also strong consensus among media professionals regarding the ethical problems they have encountered in their online work and had to make tough decisions about. Most recognize that these 'new,' sensitive ethical situations are just more sophisticated reincarnations of perennial journalistic questions, such as how to ensure accuracy through critical evaluation of information found on the Web, and how to address the rights and responsibilities of sources and citizens who voluntarily or unwittingly are being featured in articles published on the Net, to cite two of the at-risk areas I explore in Chapter 4. While some old constraints have disappeared in cyberspace, such as that of limited publishing space, new ones have appeared, such as the unavoidable necessity to now incorporate the expanded and participatory audiences into news coverage, at least on some level.

99% Technology + 1% Ethics = Wrong Formula

Many journalists and news media analysts and shapers are actively engaged in creating their own versions of the ideal future of journalism, but sometimes seem to be oblivious to the ethical aspect of these issues.

In an April 19, 2011 posting on Boston.com for several news-desk internship positions, *The Boston Globe* cheerfully announced that since "Technology is rapidly changing the news, *The Boston Globe* is building a media lab in its press building to understand how." How can potential applicants help *The Globe* "keep local news vibrant"? The paper cites its interests and needs:

"Right now (April) we're just starting to buy a range of hardware – from Nintendo 3DS through an 8-screen display system with an aggregate resolution of 10000x3200px. We want to get mind-bending news hacks and visualizations running it all. Come be a part of that. We're interested in AirPlay hacks, Processing, node.js, next-gen sports-watching, Twitter and Facebook (of course), augmented reality, HUGE maps, Kinect, NFC and in general turning things on their head. We're seeking candidates that have experience with a web scripting language (javascript, ruby, python, php, etc.) and a passion for the news, sports and/or open data. You will be working amidst the machinery of a major city newspaper – both the city room & our printing presses are just down the hall."[16]

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[15]Among the influential new media experts cited are Walter Powell and Pablo Boczkowski. For Anita Chan's full thesis, "Collaborative News Networks: Distributed Editing, Collective Action and the Construction of online News on Slashdot.org," see http://cms.mit.edu/research/theses/AnitaChan2002.pdf in the CMS's online theses archives. Accessed Dec. 3, 2010. The quoted passage can be found on p. 56.
[16]Chris Marstall, "Summer internships," beta.boston, Boston.com, April 19, 2011,

Another *Boston Globe* event on the "News sites of the future," a panel co-organized by Matthew S. Carroll in 2011, makes clear *The Globe*'s vision of journalism in years to come and how its management should prepare for it: "Wondering what news websites will look like in the future?" Carroll asks in an online announcement. "The panel will dive into how the mobile web, HTML 5, Flash, app stores and more impact and change what news organizations need from their content management systems," he writes, before introducing the participants and "the architects of tomorrow's news systems" who will "explain what they see as important to the future of news."[17]

This belief in technology being able not just to build the news but also 'save' it from whatever ails it today can be found also in the educational field. *The New York Times*' series of "Knowledge Network Spring 2011 Course Catalog" reflects a narrow technological focus that can be found in many journalism schools' and colleges' syllabi. The Catalog's offerings in its Writing and Journalism Series are telling: "How to start a Blog," "Community Journalism: How to run a hyperlocal news site," and "Creating video for the Web." Ball Sate University shows a similar lack of concern for the study of media ethics and the more abstract but nonetheless important concepts of news-reporting. Its course description for its "Emerging Media Journalism Certificate" promises to "help working journalists and other professionals learn to use new technologies and to deliver compelling stories across a variety of media platforms," thus zeroing on technical and practical skills rather than developing the moral character traits that make up a professional, responsible journalist.[18]

Finally, entire books and guides that purport to teach one 'how to become a journalist' also squarely focus on the challenges of mastering the technological tools needed for news-gathering and -writing on the Web and other digital spaces. Mark S. Luckie's 2010 book *The Digital Journalist's Handbook* covers blogging, linking, posting and sharing audio and video, social networking, flash interfaces and data visualization, among other technical practices of the trade.[19] An editorial note at the back of the book describes it as "your guide to the tools you need to thrive in today's digital newsroom." Luckie seems to place much faith in the "witnesses already at the scene" of a news event and the "well-equipped observer who reports what they see" being as able and qualified to report the news around them as any "credentialed reporter." Aside from the fact that we can hardly call "well-equipped" a citizen journalist relying on his cell phone camera compared to a Nikon D90 digital SLR camera-wielding photojournalist, Luckie also does not seem aware that it is precisely in "what they see" - or rather, "*how* they see" news events that these two different types of news producers starkly differ. The latter, if professionally trained, is able to see things, people and situations from a critical perspective and should consider the ethical issues

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http://beta.boston.com/2011/04/19/summer-internships/. accessed 06, 19, 2011.
[17]Matthew S. Carroll, "Start the Presses: News sites of the future, told by the people building them," Hacks Hackers Boston, Jan. 20, 2011, http://meetupbos.hackshackers.com/events/16117997/?eventId=16117997&action=detail. Accessed Feb. 22, 2011.
[18]*The New York Times* "Knowledge Network Spring 2011 Course Catalog". All courses cited can be found in the Catalog, as well as at Nytimes.com/knowledhespring11. Accessed Dec. 22, 2011. The print version of the Catalog does not have page numbers.
[19]Mark S. Luckie, *The Digital Journalist's Handbook* (Create Space, 2010) 11, 12, 192.

before filming, quoting, recording or broadcasting. He/she will look for that special angle that is informative but also respectful of his/her sources' privacy. The casual observer on the scene for the large part just blogs, text messages or captures on his/her phone whatever he/she sees from his/her vantage point, without thinking of the moral consequences of distributing to the world potentially sensitive information.

In a passage of the 'Social Networking' chapter explaining the possible uses for journalists of the Flickr photo-archiving and -sharing system, Luckie describes the ways newsrooms can make use of Flickr to enhance online photojournalism, despite their fears about the service and about their photos being downloaded and used without their permission. Copyright and other legal matters are discussed. But again, ethics and the moral and journalistic-principles-based questions about whether to widely distribute photographs on the Internet are left out of the picture.

In a pointed comment on CNN.com in response to the breaking news of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi losing a son in a NATO airstrike,[20] a poster made a tempting suggestion for any interested and intrepid citizen journalist who might happen to be on the scene: "I would like to personally thank President Obama and the rest of NATO for the war in Libya. I get a warm fuzzy feeling every time I hear of someone dying. *What would even be better is if someone would take a picture of this corpse, preferably after autopsy, and give it to our media*," wrote 'omega5081' on April 30. (My italics).
Although most likely expressed only half-seriously in an anger-fueled moment, such a proposal garnered quite a few enthusiastic supporters among fellow commentators on the Web page. I will leave it to my readers to imagine such a post-autopsy photo. More importantly, one can assume that CNN's readers and the general public - as well as any citizen or freelance journalist who would hypothetically be ready to take such a picture - may not instinctively question the ethics of capturing and distributing such visual content. Unless trained in ethics for photojournalists, who would consider the ethical implications of the worldwide distribution of such a personal and sensitive (let alone graphically disturbing) photograph? From an ethical, professional journalistic perspective, Gadhafi and his family, regardless of their deeds and ideologies, have to be covered in a fair, humane way.
As evidenced by the responses on the site, there was no instinctual ethical consideration of the poster's proposition. Yet, in his book teaching basic journalistic skills, *News Reporting and Writing*, Melvin Mencher devotes an entire chapter to issues of taste and defining what is viewership/readership-appropriate, keeping in mind possible reactions, changing standards and cultural sensitivities.[21]

Luckie concludes that "Digital journalism requires creativity, as well as technical skills that don't often come naturally to writers or journalists," once again, without mentioning the need for learning about media ethics and applying its basic tenets perhaps in new ways to the demands of digital news-reporting.
In fact, he puts his finger on how the profession and its analysts have been identifying

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[20]Frederik Pleitgen, "One of Gadhafi's sons killed in NATO airstrike, Libyan official says," CNN, April 30, 2011, http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/04/30/libya.gadhafi.son.killed/index.html?hpt=T1&iref=BN1. Accessed April 30, 2011.
[21]Melvin Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing,* Part Six: Laws, Taste and Taboos, Codes and Ethics (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1997) 580.

and responding to the impact of digital changes on journalism: "The Web doesn't spell an end to journalism - it has only changed the way news is delivered," he writes.[22] He is indeed correct in identifying *the distribution* of news (how fast, to how many audiences, to how many interconnected platforms, etc.) as the big area of interest and focus of most current efforts to harness the wave of changes and innovations in the profession. But distribution of news (by any means, whether broadcast, print or electronic publishing) does not amount to the *reporting* of news, that is, to journalism - the hard, personally and intellectually demanding work required by news-gathering, -writing and -editing. And probably as a result, this area has been inadequately examined in discussions of the issues that can arise when using new technologies.

In their inquiry into what new aptitudes professional journalists and the participatory public need to learn in order to function in the "we media" environment and perform their duties in what they see as "a new and more active form of American citizenship," Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel list a series of skills that remain equally focused on the practical. Of the millions who read and write blogs, they ask: "Do these citizens have the time, the motivation, and the skills this requires? If not, then, do those who try to cover the news professionally have the skills and the will to help citizens gain these tools?" (...) "The journalism of the twenty-first century must recognize this and help arm the public with the tools it needs to perform this more active form of citizenship," they conclude.[23]

Although they do not seem concerned with ethics and how the blogging, participatory public can learn to be more aware of this dimension of news, and how professionals could help them in becoming so, they do offer glimpses of solutions for a higher form of digital journalism than purely technologically enhanced.

For example they cite former Xerox PARC director John Seeley Brown as saying that "journalists need the ability to look at things from multiple points of view and the ability to get to the core of matter," and Futurist Paul Saffo as describing this task as "applying journalistic inquiry and judgment to come to conclusions in uncertain environments."
Furthermore, Kovach and Rosenstiel recognize that as "people go from passive consumers to proactive assemblers of their own journalism and views of the world" and have now "the ability to interact with the news itself as well as the professionals delivering it," a mutually useful and enriching symbiosis between professional journalists and their audience is established. "The dialogue with the audience is thus an integral part of the story as it evolves. This kind of high-tech interaction is a journalism that resembles a conversation again, much like the original journalism that occurred in the publick houses and coffeehouses four hundred years ago," they conclude.[24] Would it not make sense then, to establish on the Net an open venue for news producers of all levels of abilities and experience to carry on that very conversation and even expand it to include matters of ethics in news-reporting and other sensitive issues they may want to discuss or solve together? It is precisely such a conversation about ethical news media coverage that I propose to foster through **the Global Media Ethics Forum** that I introduce later in this thesis as a complementary

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[22]Luckie, 11-12.

[23] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism - What News People and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007) 19- 20.

[24]Kovach and Rosenstiel, 19-21.

tool to **the Open Park Code of Ethics** described in the last part of the thesis.

Location, Location, Location

According to Kovach and Rosenstiel, the new journalism they envision is going through "an epochal transformation, at least as momentous as the invention of the telegraph or the television,"[25] which conjures up the processes of transformational continuity, "conceptual uncertainty and technological transition," described in the Introduction to *Rethinking Media Change*.[26]

As part of this transition one will find the breakdown of institutional structures and editorial-gatekeeping practices of traditional journalism, whose context within the social and countercultural order of the emerging public Internet was best first identified by cyberlibertarian and Electronic Frontier Foundation founding member John Perry Barlow.[27] In his "Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace," Barlow presented his vision of a reversed world order in which a digitally empowered and equalized society rises against the ruling "Governments of the Industrial World" and engages in creative production on its own terms. We see here the germination of the idea that 'anyone with a computer is a publisher,' in a world "where anyone, anywhere may express his or her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity."[28]

Interestingly, unlike many others writing about online media,, Barlow places ethics at the center of this informational revolution. Speaking to the governments whose bureaucratic ways he denounces, he argues: "Your legal concept of property, expression, identity, movement, and context do not apply to us. They are all based on matter, and there is no matter here. Our identities have no bodies, so, unlike you, we cannot obtain order by physical coercion. We believe that from ethics, enlightened self-interest, and the commonwealth, our governance will emerge."[29]

A key and one of the most problematic regulatory questions for the news profession--who is a journalist?--took root in these early days of the Internet and the World Wide Web as they swung into public view and proceeded to "flatten organizations, globalize society, decentralize control, and help harmonize people," to use the words of MIT Media Lab founder Nicholas Negroponte.[30]

Perhaps ironically, it is also this early period of positive goals and its "image of an

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[25]Kovach and Rosenstiel, 20.

[26]Thorburn and Jenkins, 2.

[27] John Perry Barlow cited in Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture - Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006) 13, 142.

[28] John Perry Barlow cited in Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture - Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006) 13.

[29] John Perry Barlow cited in Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture - Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006) 13.

[30] Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York: Vintage, 1995) (A Book (P)review, p. 182, as cited in Fred Turner's *From Counterculture to Cyberculture - Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006) 1.

ideal society: decentralized, egalitarian, harmonious, and free," to quote Turner[31], that provoked the destabilization of the traditional roles of information producers/distributors and consumers, and the confusion that ensued - although many (myself included) will argue that this also produced numerous innovative opportunities.

Keeping in mind this moment of transition of the news media, this breakdown of professional journalism, traditional practices and editorial decision-making hierarchy, and the resulting various news models and the different schools of thought on new media opportunities and challenges presented above, I suggest that an adapted code of ethics should deal with the intersection of these overlapping types of news producers and news-reporting/storytelling practices.

I should stress, however, that this is by no means a 'fixed' place, not only in view of the surrounding state of flux in present-day news generation, but also in view of the proposed code's open-source nature.
The "aesthetics of transition" as defined by *Rethinking Media Change* editors David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, demand that we "resist notions of media purity, recognizing that each medium is touched by and in turn touches its neighbors and rivals." They also require us to "reject static definitions of media, resisting the idea that a communications system may adhere to a definitive form once the initial process of experimentation and innovation yields to institutionalization and standardization."[32] This is a crucial point to keep in mind when considering my proposed ethical guidelines for digital journalism, as the proposed code seeks to remain a 'living,' adaptable open-source document, even after introducing a modicum of ethical regulation and proposed universal standards to the agitated waters of today's multi-layered journalism.

A New Positive Approach

While in tune with the majority of media critics and industry insiders across the new media spectrum when it comes to recognizing ethical issues arising from our challenged profession, my middle-ground position, which both relies on principles of traditional journalism and embraces digital reform, substantially differentiate itself from analysts who have come to define these ethical issues as essentially problematic. Rather, my own vision seeks to redefine the current discourse and its tendency towards negative thinking by framing it in more positive terms and proposing to see these ethical dilemmas as situations potentially rich for exploration and new ideas. My goal with this 'lighter,' less daunting terminology and conceptualization of the problems is to encourage engagement in bolder, more playful and creative brainstorming and collaboration among journalists and participatory audience members to solve these unprecedented and challenging editorial problems.

Of the very limited number of media observers who have pondered these issues and the diminishing presence of ethics in our new forms of journalism,[33] fewer still (and

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[31] Turner, 1.

[32] Thorburn and Jenkins, 11.

[33] Among those media studies scholars who have put forward the argument of new threats to media ethics emerging from online journalistic and social practices and have been actively researching them, one can cite Robert I. Berkman and Christopher

none to my personal knowledge) are seeing them from a different, more hopeful prism than the limiting notion of "issue" or "dilemma," that sometimes goes as far as branding some of them as 'insurmountable' or beyond foreseeable solutions.

Goals and Sub-Goals Recap

In this thesis, I thus identify the new kinds of situations and ethical dilemmas that arise from working in the online media, both from a purely journalistic, as well as from a broader social perspective, and I argue that in the absence of appropriately revised codes of ethics or newly-drafted editorial rules in the nation's newsrooms, journalists need a new code of ethics for their constantly evolving profession. I then seek to provide some guidance through the elaboration of basic ethical principles adapted for news production on the Internet. One key sub-goal of my thesis then is to define the desired principles and standards for a **Code of Ethics for Collaborative Journalism,** which are mostly elaborated in Chapter 2. These principles form the basis for my proposed **Code of Ethics** and **Global Media Ethics Forum**, tools that can provide direct support to online media professionals.

My ultimate goals in writing this thesis are to raise awareness about the challenges facing online journalists, start a debate about them across professional news organizations and independent publishing platforms, and offer journalists two practical ethics tools to help them think through editorial difficulties and reach ethically optimal decisions.

Research Questions

Selecting Key Areas of Enquiry

My central research question is whether the dilemmas presented by digital media call for a new form of regulation (or self-regulation) for journalists, and if so, how and by whom should it be drafted.

A preliminary research question that has been foundational for my argument is 'what has changed in today's news media?' And by extension, 'what new ethical uncertainties and difficulties have possibly arisen in online and technology-supported journalism today?' As one will see from my quoted sources in Chapters 3, 4 and 6, opinions diverge on the most significant (and even paradigm-shifting) of these changes, as the widely different types of news participants and positions in the business understandably are all affected in different ways.

There is more consistency in opinions regarding my main research question about whether some new or revised form of regulation would be desirable for news production and distribution.

But much harder to agree on, let alone find practical answers to, are the corollary questions to my key concern: even if we were to all agree on the need for some

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A. Shumway, Ron F. Smith, Thomas Bivins, and Gene Foreman, among others. For a more complete list, see the Bibliography.

professional standards in new media, how do we delineate the audience[s][34] for these proposed standards? Knowing what we know about the vast self-generating, self-motivated independent communities of citizen journalists, concerned activists, freelance writers and technology-empowered youth, how do we reach out to these specialized, sometimes highly-contained islands of news content creators? Should we promote our proposed ethics code to all of them indiscriminately or to some of them only? Should we adopt different methods for implementation depending on the group we are addressing? - And even before we reach that stage of enquiry we face the question of implementation: how do we enforce the code, first of all with professional organizations and individuals, but especially with those 'harder-to-reach' communities of yet ill-defined media creators?

And then, there is the eternal, near-existential question: *who* gets to make those decisions? (Under the current circumstances and constraints of producing my thesis I happily take on this hypothetical function for the duration of the thesis work, but future real-world implementation and sustainability will require a more substantial framework to design and promote a 'leadership'[35] model for drafting professional media codes and introducing possible future amendments.)

Essentially, the ultimate question - and goal - for any proposed system of regulation is how to make it functional at all levels - that is, how to ensure ethical and cultural compatibility with as many practitioners as possible; drafting; adapting to individual groups' needs, circumstances and working conditions; implementing and enforcing; and developing and updating it for future needs and growth. An even more nagging question is how could *one* single set or principles, one monitoring system, or simply one code of ethics as I propose fit all needs and meet everyone's expectations? Even my proposed 'solution' of making and keeping the OP Code open-source still leaves many areas of self-regulation in specific contexts of new journalism production unanswered, such as how do we deal with unprecedented, first-time situations, who will have the final say in the final resolution, how do code users (who may not be well-versed in cyberlegislation) resolve cases in which the online privacy and free speech rights of news-writers on the Internet and their sources (also found on the Net) conflict?

To take this question of functionality and smooth operation one step further, one may want to ask the even more essential question of *who* gets to draft the code? According to which code-drafting guidelines and procedures? Should one specific group construct it, following the traditions of 'old' media, where institutions and established groups of experts put pen to paper together and have the first and last word on regulation-making? Or should we adopt a more participatory and representative process for developing and encoding ethical values and monitoring systems for the

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[34] 'audience[s]: My hesitation over adopting the singular or plural form speaks volumes about the still poorly defined territories we are dealing with.

[35] 'leadership' is in inverted commas to reflect the still unanswered question of whether a select group of expert individuals should take on the code-building task, or whether we should opt for a more democratic, representative form of management in this design phase, one that involves a deliberative, participatory process that welcomes input from as wide a range of sources as possible. Although I know which model I would personally promote, I still want to present the question to my readers and challenge them with finding their own ideal model.

news media - one in the spirit of the efforts towards democratic digital deliberation expounded in *Democracy Online*'s collection of essays?[36] This would essentially re-direct the traditionally closed code-drafting task towards the public sphere, where other forms of online civic engagement, such as interactive political and public affairs discussions, take place.

My own preferred model is a more collaborative one, but here too the question then emerges: what collaborative procedures do we follow? To my knowledge, there doesn't exist a bottom-up or peer-to-peer[37] virtual architecture in place to accommodate collaborative work on designing - or even revising - journalistic codes of ethics (even though collaborative platforms have now been successfully implemented in other spheres and for other purposes, such as for political campaigning and social- and civic media activism ends, for example).

What becomes evident from this daunting set of sub-questions is that by posing them, I have only scratched the surface of all the still unresolved issues, loopholes and uncertainties surrounding the new order of computerized journalism into which I am proposing some level of normative standards.
Inspired by the traditional approach to news-writing based on the 5 'Ws' questions, I offer the following research questions:

. "Why? What is it about the new media environment, and/or about the concept of collaborative journalism, that calls for revised thinking, ideas, or rules about ethics? Exactly what is it about the changed environment that specifically raises new ethical problems or concerns, and why does this require something more than just suggesting that people follow the old rules in a new setting?
. How do those changes affect the ethical issues in journalism? Are there entirely new issues that arise as a result of the changes in media, or are they the same issues that arise in new ways?
. What? What kinds of suggestions have been made for ethical standards in this new setting, and how do they compare to each other, and to the "old" rules that media have followed in the past?
. Who? What group, organization, or structure could be put in place to develop such standards?
. How? How should a code of ethics be developed, and how would it be enforced or monitored?
. Where? Does the political and cultural context that a particular medium or publication (in the broad sense of 'publication' that applies

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[36] For detailed descriptions of various innovative electronic democracy models that seek to engage the public in policy decision-making and drafting, I recommend *Democracy Online - The Prospects for Political Renewal Through the Internet*, Edited by Peter M. Shane (London: Routledge, 2004).
[37] 'peer-to-peer' here is to be taken in its original meaning: "Peer-to-peer is a communications model in which each party has the same capabilities and either party can initiate a communication session."
(http://searchnetworking.techtarget.com/definition/peer-to-peer) Accessed March 12, 2012.

today) operates in make any difference, or is there or should there be some kind of 'universal'[38] set of principles that transcends such localization?"

The Thorniest Question: Who Is a Journalist?

Although not one of my primary research questions, the question of who can be considered a journalist today is one that looms large in the background of my central enquiry and argument, and which I therefore address at various points in my thesis, not systematically but through personal observations and those of others. The question causes many headaches among the profession and its analysts, as the overlapping categories of news content producers in our journalism landscape have thrown even more confusion into once clear roles and identities.
Indeed, now, traditionally trained journalists and their well-established institutions; those same institutions' efforts to digitize themselves[39]; online journalism's 'digital natives' and their innovative collaborative online news projects; and the independent creative minds in the wider online and offline worlds engaged in their own concoctions of shared and multimedia news - all compete for space, funding, audiences' eyes and ears, and essentially a place in the sun on the Net, while seeking to assert (or re-assert) their credibility in the untested waters of the new media system.

As we will see in subsequent chapters, these four categories of news producers and their wildly varying degrees of institutionalization and oversight (the latter being non-existent in the fourth group) have responded very differently to the idea of new or revised ethical standards and regulation; and each one, for that matter, is following its own heart and monitoring methods, which also range from the institution-established to the practically non-existent. This is without counting the smaller sub-categories that have sprouted up from these major groups, as well as those news producers who are engaged in more than one group simultaneously, or are in the process of transitioning from one group to another.[40]

As I suggested earlier, I do not address systematically nor do I provide precise answers to *all* of the research questions that can or should be asked in relation to these new categories of journalists or other hybrid aspects of our collaborative and fast-evolving media landscape. Rather, I address the most pressing and relevant ones in Chapters 3 and 4.

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[38] For a thought-provoking examination of the main two sides of this question, I recommend Michael Bromley's essay "The Manufacture of news - fast-moving consumer goods production, or public service?" in which he dissects the ethical implications of each model in a section entitled "A Shared Ideology and Shared Ethics?"; *Ethics and Media Culture - Practices and Representations*, Edited by David Berry (Waltham, MA: Focal Press, 2000) 118.

[39] For more on the traditional press' birthing pains as it strives to appropriate the technologies and nascent practices of electronic publishing, see Pablo J. Boczkowski's *Digitizing the News - Innovation in Online Newspapers* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), especially chapter 4, "Mimetic Originality: *The New York Times* on the Web's Technology Section,"73-104.

[40] For a similarly instructive 'map' of the hierarchical system of the news media and how it has changed in recent years, see Deanna Zandt, *Share This! - How You Will Change the World with Social Networking* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc., 2010) 9.

As the boundaries between the various types of digital news publishers, as illustrated in my tentative four-group map, are still so nebulous and the interpretations and understanding of their rights and duties are still evolving and a matter of contention, I choose to focus on the more useful research question of how to at least partially solve the ethical dilemmas that journalists encounter in their virtual workspace. I ask these professionals (via first-person interviews) whether they deem some form of order and monitoring (or 'gatekeeping') desirable in the new news environment, and if so, how best to implement such a plan.

Questions for My Readers and OP Code of Ethics Users

In *Digital Dilemmas - Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals* Robert I. Berkman' and Christopher A. Shumway list a series of questions that directly represent my areas of concern and which I have used as a guide to steer my own more focused enquiries. Since these are precisely the questions I pose in Chapters 3 and 4 and in my case study - albeit in a more specific context - it is worth quoting them here

1. What is at stake here? What is the dilemma being presented?
2. What do current laws say? What are current ethical guidelines, if any?
3. What are the slippery new issues not addressed by the law or current ethical guidelines?
4. What are the implications of how some actual online news organizations handled these dilemmas?
5. What should the ethical guidelines be in this circumstance, and why? [41]

Answers (or at least some steps towards an answer) appear in concrete form in my interviewees' comments in Chapters 3 and 4, and more implicitly through my own observations and conclusions throughout the thesis, and especially those based on the case study in Chapter 5.

As will become apparent to readers, the case study has allowed me to ask narrower questions regarding ethical conduct, which in turn have elicited more focused responses from my interviewees. Finally, they themselves ask interesting questions (such as how to provide quality, ethical, edited-equivalent news material without reverting to 'gatekeeping' tactics), that act like extensions of my own - further evidence of the open-ended nature of these new challenges and of the possible collaborative solutions we may develop.

Whenever I raise the question of whether a particular ethical principle or professional standard of American journalism might be compromised today, it is always within the context of collaborative news production, which is the focus of my thesis topic. By definition then, I am calling for answers and solutions that take into account and fit in this hybrid context.
I can only hope that these research questions will inspire others to think beyond them, formulate their own unsolved dilemmas, and see for themselves what concerns them, what their needs are, and what remedies and ideal models they envision. Essentially, my key, basic questions should be seen as 'expandable' and provide inspiration for others to adapt them to their own specific context and circumstances whether personal, local, national or beyond.

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[41]Berkman and Shumway, xix.

And finally, we should never forget that, as Jay Rosen told his interviewer in "Where Have All the Journalists Gone?" "We have to assume that there are going to be a lot of different answers. This world where the journalists are the professionals and we know where to find them is gone."[42]

Assumptions

My Main Argument

The assumptions that lie at the basis of my proposed Code of Ethics, and which echo a handful of similar calls among critics in the industry[43], draw attention to the fact that in the highly hybridized, fast-changing and poorly regulated world of online journalism, ethical dilemmas and challenges have appeared which professionals and the new categories of news content publishers on the Net are poorly equipped to solve. Existing codes of ethics have also proved deficient in meeting these new editorial quandaries, according to industry insiders, and newsrooms across the nation have sometimes been applying them in a random, band-aid-style fashion, when emergencies strike and decisions have to me made fast. No matter how Utopian this may sound, I should also point out that there is currently no system in place that seeks to anticipate the ethical challenges and problematic practices that are likely to arise in the years ahead.

Eager to provoke a debate on these issues - which is in fact one of my main goals - I challenge my readers with yet unsolved questions: are current codes efficient for the new realities? Do we need more or new or better regulation? Who for? And who will draft it? Is the mainstream model of top-down management and ownership a good guide for drafting this code and standards (assuming they are deemed desirable), and if not, what would a new, more participatory and representative model would look like? How would the latter model fare in trying to address the ethical dilemmas I present in my case study?

I conclude that some format of regulation and professional standards are not only desirable but crucial for sustaining an informed society and citizens. I take this assumption a step further in the latter part of my thesis (Chapters 6 and 7) with the idea that a revised version of current ethical codes, one based on a collaboratively decided and drafted- and voluntarily applied set of standards would be the best step one could take towards meeting those new ethical challenges. The second section on this - and other - proposed ethics tools describes these processes further.

Ultimately, one of my strongest assumptions - and motives for my thesis and proposed Open Park Code - is that collaboration and an open source model are the key solutions to these new dilemmas of digital journalism. Many innovative news networks are experimenting with participatory models and other crowdsourcing initiatives. But *ethical collaboration* is what I am advocating and hoping to

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[42]"Where Have All the Journalists Gone?," An Interview with Jay Rosen, *blog! - How the newest media revolution is changing politics, business, and culture* Edited by David Kline and Dan Burstein (New York: CDS Books, 2005) 320.
[43] See Berkman and Shumway, among others in my Bibliography.

demonstrate. Instilling a more systematic sense of ethics and standards into today's new publishing enterprises and those to come is my ultimate objective.

To support these assumptions, I argue in the chapters that follow that teams of cooperative, willingly non-competitive, and fully technologically-equipped reporters will do little to produce quality news, that is accurate, objective and devoid of political or commercial messages. Today's journalists, I argue, need a code of ethics whose principles are grounded in the history and philosophy of their craft. Its most inspiring thinkers, those who have defined the role of a free press in a democratic society, are described in Chapter 2. Today's digital reporters, alone or working in teams, need this code for dealing with moral integrity with the common ethical dilemmas of the profession: avoiding deceptive data, plagiarism, issues with pictures and graphics, the invasion of privacy; and ensuring accuracy, fairness, diversity, and a healthy journalist-source relationship, among others – all of which are made more complex by the collective, non-competitive approach to news-gathering and the treacherous waters of cyberspace and other digital technologies. As these dilemmas spring up, reporters need to have this code within hand's reach so that they can respond fast and make the right decisions on deadline.

Ethical collaboration is therefore the ideal formula for success that I envision for online professional journalism. But as noted here and in earlier research, current electronic news publishing initiatives (both traditional and digital) are keen to pour out their content online, but without a new media-customized code of journalistic conduct and clear guidelines on how to deal ethically with fast-changing developments such as the use of Twitter. The resulting disarray among editors produces poor-quality journalism, as Manuel Castells notes in *The Internet Galaxy – Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*:

"In spite of the pervasiveness of the Internet, its logic, its language, and its constraints are not well understood beyond the realm of strictly technological matters. […] Taking advantage of this relative void of reliable investigation, ideology and gossip have permeated the understanding of this fundamental dimension of our lives, as is often the case in periods of rapid social change. […] The media, keen to inform an anxious public, but lacking the autonomous capacity to assess social trends with rigor, oscillate between reporting the amazing future on offer and following the basic principle of journalism: only bad news is worthy news."[44]

Proposed Solutions

My tentative proposals go one step further, into a territory of change and experimentation, one I believe is worth exploring since the alternative leaves journalists and media leaders forced to continue with patchwork, solve-as-we-go-along policies.

Following my case-study-supported analysis of unprecedented ethical mishaps and more consequential difficulties due to new technologies and practices in journalism, I then propose in the concluding section of Chapter 7 a set of tools as most practical and optimal solutions to these dilemmas. The central one of these tools is **the Open**

[44] Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy – Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 3.

Park Code of Ethics for collaborative journalism, mentioned in the introductory section of this chapter. Inspired by my research project for the MIT Center for Future Civic Media [C4FCM] (now called MIT Center for Civic Media),[45] in the form of a supporting collaborative Web site for news-reporting, called 'Open Park[46], I describe my proposed reformed Code as an innovative replacement for the current codes of ethics and mainstream media standards that, as I show in Chapters 3 and 4, no longer adequately answer the new ethical challenges of digital news.
The OP Code comes with a supportive online platform for discussing and (hopefully) solving collaboratively ethical cases, called **the Global Media Ethics Forum,** which at present is in its early developmental phase on the Open Park Web site.

These two practical tools for today's organizations-based and independent journalists would have no chance of successful concrete applications were it not for the strong foundation of open-source and moral values-based principles they rest on. The Code, the OP platform for collaborative news production, and the online Forum all rely on the participatory, multiperspectival model of open news publishing, which I describe in greater detail in my Proposals section in Chapter 7.

Where the current changes in journalism and their impact on ethical and professional standards are almost universally seen by the profession and its observers as 'challenges' at best, and 'difficulties' at worst, I propose to challenge this pessimistic terminology and 'worldview' of the situation of contemporary news publishing by offering a more positive approach that sees these ethical questions as opportunities for collaborative reflection and editorial problem-solving, across newsrooms, news organizations and skills levels. I describe how these processes can work in the concluding part of Chapter 4.

 Although the Open Park Code of Ethics and OP concept for collaborative news are aimed at qualified journalists and media professionals, I have designed them in such an open-source way so that they are capable of accommodating the participation of non-professional users such as citizens' journalists. Therefore, both the OP ethics code and the forum are meant to become open to outside contributions at a later stage, and eventually be used by other non-professionals who wish to practice ethical news reporting in their communities. My assumption here is that education and training through practical use is one of the best ways to improve digital journalism.

Thus, the overall framework for developing the OP Code is open, collaborative, and initially drafted by me, but gradually opening its gates to non-professionals to eventually become a fully democratic, bottom-up initiative. Such an approach makes another assumption: one that sees the journalistic code of ethics as a ongoing, open-ended project, open to contributions, changes and improvements, rather than a set of fixed and rigid rules directly borrowed from traditional codes.[47]

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[45] http://civic.mit.edu/. Accessed April 7, 2012.
[46] The Open Park collaborative news platform can be found at http://openpark.media.mit.edu/. Accessed April 7, 2012.
[47] For this, I am sure that I can learn from the experiences of the Center for Social Media at American University, which creates codes of best practices for media producers that are informed by their own experiences.

With these proposed re-definitions of the media code of ethics as an open document, and the act of generating it as a participatory, democratic practice, I assume that these will eventually become natural processes among the media and the public, if enough awareness of ethical values is raised through informed debate including among individual journalists not supported by a news organization or other centralized institutions.

In any case, I believe these terms, concepts and strategies for initiating ethical standards and conduct among digital journalists encapsulate the targeted intervention that my code and its accompanying collaborative tools aim at making in this period of transition for the news media.

Methods and Data

Overview

This thesis is the fruit of over two years of research, readings and discussions as part of my graduate program in Comparative Media Studies, but is also heavily influenced and inspired by my own eight years of professional journalistic work as a foreign correspondent in both print and broadcast media. Whenever I deem it useful, I do not hesitate to elaborate on this acquired academic knowledge and professional experience to illustrate one part of a case study or draw comparisons between my own experiences as a reporter, editor and TV producer, and those of the ethically challenged news events I describe. The research done specifically within the CMS program involved the study and consideration of various methodologies, studying the viewpoints of the pioneers of democratic thought, the libertarians, social and political thinkers and the 'technologists,' among others.

Finally, no small part of this thesis is based on the valuable comments I received in personal interactions with my thesis advisors, departmental fellow students and researchers, industry insiders, media analysts and working journalists, many of whom I quote directly in the thesis. Among the sources for these quotes are over 23 interviews with working professional journalists, students, academics, MIT guest speakers, and independent bloggers, in person, by email, and by telephone.[48]

The thesis is also based on earlier papers and assignments for my CMS program, including a study of over 20 new and more established journalistic models, with a close analysis of their advantages and disadvantages, and a detailed history of the evolution of codes of ethics throughout American journalism.[49]

The Closer View

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[48] The date and method of the interviews, as well as the full name, title and work affiliation of the sources are provided whenever available (and there is no request for anonymity). Like all other cited (paraphrased) and quoted (verbatim) sources in my thesis, my interviewees are referred to by their full name on first reference, and their surname only on second- and all subsequent references, following the AP style guide rules (*The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*, The Associated Press, 1996).

[49] The study can be found at http://openpark.media.mit.edu/node/22. Accessed April 7, 2012.

In addition to my selected works for reading and citing in the thesis itself, I consulted many books on ethics, media ethics, and professional codes of ethics and their evolution and drafting practices[50] on a purely informational basis. Reading selected extracts from this material provided me with great insights and ideas as well as invaluable background knowledge for my own chosen area of study.

In keeping with my commitment to open-source and democratic values my research reflects varied views and opinions on my main subject, on what has changed in the news media, anticipated future developments in journalism, tips for dealing with editorial roadblocks, and personal accounts of ethically thorny cases from various sources, both directly contacted and cited from published material, with their permission whenever possible.

The selection of these sources proved one of the most important and intricate tasks because I wished to be as representative of as many views on the subject at hand as possible, while being careful not to obscure my own argument.
Since I did not plan to systematically cover all major types of news media but rather cover new ethical issues whenever they appear and in whatever medium, taking a broader, more uniform view of the news landscape in that respect, I made a special effort to still get a slice of various segments of the journalism profession including both the online and offline (traditional) news worlds, journalists both from mainstream institutions and 'digital natives', some of them from peripheral innovative projects. I also strove for diversity in terms of age, race and gender.

In terms of my practical work and concrete applications, my experiments with collaborative news coverage of specific case studies from my Open Park project played no small part in giving me a sense of the ethical problems that collaborating online reporters might encounter. The very building of these collaborating tools on the site jointly with my UROP student in fact already involved some serious thinking about these issues.

Open Park is an open-source, collaborative-reporting, online platform for journalists to work together on news and investigative stories, which I have founded on a revised ethical and cultural practice for professional journalism. At its core is the OP Code of Ethics. Save for a sustainable business model, it has everything that long-distance journalists may need to report and write stories together.
Although suspended by the need for more focused work on the present thesis, my initial experiments with a journalism student from Boston University gave me a good idea of what a Web site like the one I propose would be like in full operative mode and how it could help journalists work and solve together ethical questions they may face, even as they work on different stories. In Chapter 4 I examine more closely how the specific ethical issues of biases and stereotypes in multicultural news- reporting can be solved, and ideally anticipated, through training in ethics and collaborative digital tools.

Also instrumental among my methods and the data I have selected for citation are recommended students' theses on related themes, most notably MIT Media Lab

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[50] My thanks to Marlene Manoff, Associate Head of MIT Humanities Library, who helped me select and compile an excellent list of publications on professional ethics codes and ethics in journalism, which can be found at the end of my Bibliography.

student Marko Sakari Turpeinen's Master's thesis on connecting community publishers, supervised by former Boston Globe Editor Jack Driscoll[51]; and CMS student Anita J. Chan's Master's thesis for CMS, entitled "Collaborative News Networks: Distributed Editing, Collective Action, and the Construction of Online News on Slashdot.org."[52]

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 introduces readers to my goals and sub-goals, some fulfilled, some only hoped-for, but all leading to the ultimate one of the formulation of a revised code of ethics. The chapter also presents an overview of my research, its sources and inspiration, as well as the news media context in which it took place. Over the rather extensive period of time I have been working on this project, my interests, areas of enquiry and personal stances on them have slightly changed. By describing in more depth some of these areas and shifts, I have tried to reflect this evolving process throughout the sections of my Introduction.

This **Introduction** chapter describes the breakdown of professional journalism during this period of media transition and using illustrative evidence of factual errors, biases and other lapses in the US media's news coverage, establishes the premise for the argument of a revised form of practical regulation of journalists' work in the digital age - and by extension, for my proposed Open Park Code of Ethics.
In addition, the chapter introduces my audience to my proposed solutions to this breakdown in standards - **the OP Code of Ethics** and **the Global Media Ethics Forum.**

Chapter 2 is the most 'history-focused' and theoretical chapter in my thesis. Entitled '**Media Ethics and Codes**,' it invites readers to take a step back and study not only the evolution of codes of ethics (specifically journalistic ones), but also the basics of media ethics, including a look at the roots of ethics in the traditions of Western democratic thought.
This chapter is instrumental not only in bringing everyone, non-media insiders in particular, up to speed with what kind of standards we should be aiming for but also in making clear what these professional standards consist of. Understanding their foundation and evolution goes a long way in fulfilling this task.

Chapter 3 is about changes, namely what has changed in the news media profession in the last decade or so, and especially over the past couple of years. My main goal for this chapter is to make readers understand that something fundamental has changed in the way we report the news, not just technologically speaking, but also on a much deeper, ethical level, and to instill in them a sense of urgency. I do this not only by emphasizing that these changes are taking place very fast, but also by bringing in

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[51] The thesis, entitled "Enabling, Modeling and Interconnecting Active Community Publishers" can be found at
http://pubs.media.mit.edu/pubs/papers/mtu_msc_thesis.pdf. Accessed Oct. 10, 2010.
[52] Anita Chan's thesis can be found at
http://cms.mit.edu/research/theses/AnitaChan2002.pdf in the CMS's online theses archives. Accessed Oct. 10, 2010.

some of my own personal sources into the debate, with their comments and personal accounts of their real-life experiences in the field as working journalists or journalism teachers and scholars recorded[53] during interviews.

Chapter 4 is the most 'practically-oriented' part of the thesis as it delves headfirst into the difficulties facing journalists working with new digital technologies first introduced in Chapter 3. With 'Chapter 4: **New Ethical Dilemmas**' we are getting more specific, by locating these digital editorial dilemmas in the larger context of news-reporting today, and in particular in the context of current regulations.

After introducing my readers to the basics of cyberlegislation for the news media, I then proceed to define collaboration in the digital age, by analyzing what a collaborative system of news production and code drafting might look like when operating amid the differently skilled hierarchies of the Internet ecology.
In Online Collaborative News Production: Specific Challenges I define collaborative news as applied to the Internet.

For clarity and educational[54] purposes, I have divided the New Dilemmas for Online Media Professionals into two categories: Society-Based and Journalism-Based.

The New Dilemmas for Online Media Professionals: Society-Based section deals with issues brought about by social changes, but those that one might also call 'constant in any society or societal situations.' The New Dilemmas for Online Media Professionals: Journalism-Based section, distinctively, focuses on ethical issues and difficult decisions specific to journalism. These include such sensitive areas as accuracy and speed, the pitfalls of online research methods, how to deal with sources - especially the risks that the online journalist-source relationship may carry, and the redefined parameters for respect and credibility.
In addition to those of published experts and my interviewees, I also offer my own perspectives on both types of ethical dilemmas.

In most of these situations, many questions remain, and the conundrums I chose to focus on continue to exhibit lingering traces of unresolved problems well after the peak of their controversies has subsided. This is a point I explain in my introduction to the case study.

Chapter 5 presents the case study, WikiLeaks: Electronic Privacy vs. Free Speech, looking at the new, unprecedented (and possibly questionable) types of collaborations that have been initiated by the anti-secrecy group Wikileaks under Julian Assange' s leadership. In it, I analyze Wikileaks' partnership with five major news publications in

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[53] 'Recorded' here means simply taken down literally and saved in one format or another (i.e. in an email, or phone conversation for example), not necessarily 'recorded on tape.'

[54] The 'educational purpose I refer to here is the journalism classroom setting in which the teacher and his/her students would want to study or role-play and solve their own ethical dilemmas situations, in which case differentiating between the types of ethical problems will be instrumental in helping them find solutions. My proposed Open Park Code of Ethics can be put to good use in media ethics teachers' hands, and the concrete examples I give of ethical missteps can serve as excellent case studies in the classroom too.

November 2010, which has led to considerable explaining and hand-wringing on the part of all participants.

Chapter 6 appropriately consists of my <u>Case Study Findings and Conclusions</u>, which are also my initial conclusions for the thesis - a crucial section, since in it I present the background for my four pragmatic solutions, which I envision as possibly remedying some of the journalistic deficiencies highlighted in the case study: 1] a model for open, collaborative news publishing; 2] a similarly open-source type of Code of Ethics, adapted to the demands of digital news production; 3] an online media ethics discussion forum, which by definition is participatory and all-inclusive; and 4] a revised way of thinking and speaking about editorial difficulties and moral dilemmas. This chapter also contains the opinions and conclusions of experts in the field, many of which have influenced my own.

Chapter 7 elaborates on my proposed solutions and draws conclusions on these potential remedies and recommendations, as well as on their larger impact in the field of journalism. They are presented as follows:

In <u>a Proposal for Open, Participatory, Multiperspectival News</u>, I present and develop my argument for an open-source system of news production, all the while cautioning about the possible pitfalls. I define the major ethical concerns that may arise, stressing the importance of respecting sources and of fostering a strong, individual ethical foundation based on personal values in order to ensure optimal results for these collaborative efforts.

<u>A Proposal for Open-Source OP Code of Ethics</u> adopts the same structure, focusing on my argument for specific rules and an 'official' document for collaborative online news production in the digital age. It is here that I present and describe the document in question - the Open Park Code of Ethics. And I complement my proposal with possible scenarios for applications to selected media forms, from photojournalism to online news-writing, editing and blogging, among others.

<u>A Proposal for the Global Media Ethics Forum</u> follows in the steps of my argument for a collaboratively-drafted code of ethics for digital media - a logical development since, armed with coded guidelines, participants can now discuss and hopefully resolve the difficulties that are keeping them from producing quality news.
My description of the envisioned forum includes recommendations for its uses and applications in various contexts and for variously skilled users. I am careful to keep them just that - recommendations, so as to keep the forum open for suggestions and improvement.

<u>A Proposal for a New Approach and Terminology</u> seeks to introduce a more positive attitude into the debate on the new necessities and difficulties of today's journalism - both in academic and professional circles. Here I explain how we can rephrase the defeatist words we use to describe the challenges of working on the Net, and gradually move towards a mindset focused on opportunities for innovative news-reporting practices, rather than one paralyzed by what experts have defined as 'digital dilemmas' and obstacles to 'good journalism' in our present age. In this proposal, I give evidence that the best elements of traditional journalism can still thrive in today's news environment, and I show how to make the best of these initially bewildering new technologies. To achieve this, I offer a few 'replacement' words and actions for

the current negative terms and behaviors.

In the '**Conclusions and Future Work**' final section, I identify key areas in digital news production that are still evolving, and might have been left unaddressed by my proposed Code. With these steps, I hope that others will be inspired to think about and debate with their peers, colleagues and fellow media participants the missing parts of my Code and how we can continuously bring more sense of ethics into our news.

The **Appendix** contains **The Open Park Code of Ethics**, with an editorial note on its open-source, open-ended nature and an invitation to present and future journalists and journalism students and academics to contribute to it and expand it to cover future issues of digital journalism.
This section also includes the full versions of some of the most influential, **Key Codes of Ethics** currently in use in newsrooms, as well as some more alternative guidelines for new media that have been proposed by fellow researchers and journalists.

The **Bibliography**, a work in progress, has been compiled from earlier lists of references and finalized into its present form in February 2012.

Chapter 2: Media Ethics and Codes

At a Glance

This chapter is concerned primarily with setting the scene for the main argument I develop in subsequent chapters, namely that current media codes of ethics and newsrooms editorial policies, even in the best professional conditions and in well-established media, are sorely failing in their primary monitoring role, particularly with regard to new publishing technologies.

My critical study of these codes of ethics and the basic ethical transgressions and dilemmas they seek to provide guidance for thus serves to stress how ill-equipped they are for effective application even in the most essential areas of editorial decision-making.[1] This then becomes the basis of my subsequent argument for the need to update them into more effective tools for today's use.

The main function of this chapter is to explain why ethics matter in news-reporting and to define media ethics and the codes of conduct that have evolved around them by examining the questions and conflicts that journalists have encountered since the early days of the profession.
The last part of the chapter looks at the process of generating such codes - in itself an interesting and revealing exercise, worthy of its own thesis - the various models for drafting them, and their strengths and weaknesses. This 'insider' approach that gives us a closer look at these internal processes will be useful later, as I build the case for my own proposed Code, but also eye-opening and instructional for anyone who seeks to make an intervention in his/her own news environment, be it an organization or an individual setting.

Finally, I urge readers who might be more deeply interested in the historical and philosophical roots of journalistic values and the development of ethics codes to consult an essay I wrote as part of my background research for this thesis: "The Evolution of Codes - A study of the origins and impact of morality and codes of ethics in American journalism."[2]
While at times I cite fragments from this study, I have made a conscious effort to refrain from using the same examples, illustrative materials and authors in an effort to explore fresh perspectives in this thesis.

But whether supported by this study of the evolution of ethics codes or not, Chapter 2 has one clear message: a solid grasp of the reasoning behind the moral and intellectual principles of American journalism and their origins is crucial for dealing with the changes and difficulties now experienced in digital news.

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[1] My study of ethics codes and of the constants in ethical transgressions in Chapter 2 does not involve (yet) examining exactly what is now shaking the foundations and effectiveness of traditional regulation and how the latter is responding to specific digital challenges (these are subjects for Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 respectively).
[2] The essay can be found at http://openpark.media.mit.edu/node/21. Accessed April 8, 2012.

According to Northwestern University Communication Studies Professor Pablo J. Boczkowski the press' digitization efforts and the appearance of electronic news cannot be disconnected from the long societal and technological processes that preceded these developments.[3] The same can be said about moral values and media ethics themselves. These foundations of professional journalism and how they have been viewed, treated, and at times defended by the practitioners and their audiences throughout the ages are living and constantly evolving phenomena emerging from informative earlier forms.

Writing about "the appropriation of nonprint publishing options by American dailies and the emergence of online newspapers as a new medium through this lens of the mutual shaping of technological and social change," he points out that "cultural and material changes do not proceed in a historical vacuum, but are influenced by the legacy of the processes that preceded them."[4]

Principles of Ethical Journalism

American journalist and *New York Times* columnist Michael Winerip, who in one of his columns complains about the additional duties and working hours new technology has brought to news professionals, may well be right about one thing: Now, he says, when he performs research work for a story, he is "expected to use all the wonderful online tools at [his] fingertips." He goes on into a lengthy description of all the devices and technological novelties, such as constantly wired laptops and cells, that are part of his daily belongings wherever he is, at any time, including vacations, and that he is expected to keep using to, essentially, keep working. But, he argues, all this technology has not facilitated his job, nor lightened it, nor - and this is the point that interests us - has it changed his basic duties and responsibilities as a journalist. "And yet, the core of my job - going out and talking in person to strangers about their stories - has not changed at all, is no easier."[5]

Winerip may well be very correct in assessing the job of journalists today, and by extension the state of American journalism: despite the plethora of new media tools and services and the very different landscape of online news, the basic civic and social functions of reporters and editors have not changed. I would add to this point that the moral dimension of the journalist's work has not changed either, although, as I argue in the introductory chapter of my thesis, it may be less visible today, overshadowed as it is by the need for fast-produced, profit-making and easily digestible news bits, blogs and tweets that make up today's daily news diet. Although I will not fail to recognize the benefits of new media practices in the later chapters of my thesis, Winerip is right in that the practice of professional journalism today still revolves around the personal interview, ideally face-to-face, and that this involves "talking to strangers about their stories."

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[3] Pablo J. Boczkowski, *Digitizing the News - Innovation in Online Newspapers* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004) 10-11.

[4] Boczkowski, 10-11.

[5] Michael Winerip, "On Vacation and Looking for Wi-Fi," *The New York Times*, Jan. 17, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/fashion/17genb.html. Accessed 04/06/2012.

This seemingly simple activity succinctly encapsulates many of the constant ethical dilemmas that journalists may encounter while news-gathering. Indeed, talking to "strangers," or simply people, from the unknown and under-represented to the famous and powerful, raises a whole series of ethical questions on issues such as privacy, conflicts of interests, the source/reporter relationship, fairness and accuracy in quoting and attributing. As the Society of Professional Journalists' *Doing Ethics in Journalism - A Handbook with Case Studies* points out in its Introduction, "Journalism sometimes involves intruding upon people's solitude, or pulling news from reluctant sources, or sharing distressing news with a community that would rather not learn it."[6] Talking and dealing with sources, a core key part of a journalist's job, requires at times making tough ethical decisions.

Ethics are still a crucial component of high-quality professional journalism, both in their traditional forms and new digital ones in the shared environments of the Web. It is important to establish this at this outset: professional journalism is ethical journalism, and ethical journalism demands critical, principled, value-based reporting. Making decisions based on those values, understanding the social, political and economic contexts of a story, and being able to identify conflicting loyalties are essential skills I make a case for in this thesis.

Once this has been clearly established among all the journalists in a news organization and their contributing partners on the periphery, a key question then is how can we introduce those skills in today's still poorly regulated and unprofessional new virtual platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, newspapers' online comments sections and the dozens of news websites that offer little more than one-sided opinions and aggregated news from at times dubious sources. Many of these venues are now in direct contact and in cooperative interaction with the professional journalists in mainstream organizations. I examine more closely some of these new partnerships in Chapter 3 and 4. But for now, we may want to ask ourselves if an adapted collaborative news-reporting system, complete with its own ethics code adapted to these new digital practices may not solve at least some of the dilemmas intrinsic to journalism ethics.

1] Ethics, the law and journalism

Defining ethics & media ethics

In order to promote media ethics in newsrooms and among independent new media producers, one must have a solid understanding of ethics and of its relation to socially approved and individual morality, the law, and the standards of behavior established by a given group, community or association. The best way to understand the deep connection between ethics, the law and journalism, and the ethical issues that lie at their intersection, is to start by defining what is usually understood by 'ethics' as applied to the media.

Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to document in depth the classical roots of ethics (this was done in prior CMS research, in a paper entitled "The Evolution of Codes"), it is worth remembering that such sacred journalistic values as

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[6] Jay Black, Bob Steele, Ralph Barney, *Doing Ethics in Journalism – A Handbook with Case Studies* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995) 1.

truth and objectivity originate in the theories of the Greek philosophers of the classical era, such as those elaborating on the nature of truth and reality in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" from *The Republic*, which media analysts have said illustrate the relationship between opinion and truth in a way that can be applied to news coverage.[7]

Thus, although the concept of ethics may conjure up many different meanings in people's minds, its origins in philosophy are clear.

Here we may find it useful to study the differentiation between ethics and morality that Jay Black and Jennings Bryant make in their *Introduction to Mass Communication*. According to Black and Bryant, 'ethics,' which originates from the word 'ethos' in Greek and means 'character' or 'moral nature,' refers to the personal choices an individual makes when confronted with 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' or 'wrong' options. 'Morality' on the other hand, they say, refers to the way people behave and the socially accepted practices that determine behavior. In other words, morality is "the practice or application of ethics," they conclude. Ethics, they add, requires thinking about morality, moral problems and judgments. "It deals with 'owes' and 'oughts,' what obligations we owe or to responsibilities we have towards our fellow humans, what we 'should do' to make the world a better place. It is unlike law, which tells us what we can do or what we can get away with. When we describe the practicing of ethics, of putting these ideas to work, we are talking about 'doing ethics.'"[8]

What transpires from these definitions is that practicing ethical reasoning in news-gathering and reporting is a habit that should emanate from a journalist's personal sense of morality and appropriate conduct in a problematic situation, such as when competing values clash in a reporting assignment.

Given that, unlike other professionals, journalists are not licensed, legitimized and controlled or regulated by government or other professional institutions, as doctors and lawyers are, and that the First Amendment gives them unparalleled freedom to inform the public without government interference, Black and Bryant say, it behooves to them to develop, nurture and apply a solid sense of moral conduct based on the values, democratic principles and duties of their profession: seeking the truth, informing the public as fully as possible while minimizing harm, maintaining independence, and giving a voice to the voiceless.[9]

As I will explain later when examining ethical journalism and the law, ethical conduct in journalism is unenforceable by law, which places professional standards and compliance with them through codes of ethics *outside* of media legislation. Adherence to such codes and to ethical conduct is thus not mandatory as it is for other professions grounded in a statutory framework, but advisory and voluntary. Therefore what constitutes morally defensible decisions and practices in news-reporting rests

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[7] *The Journalist' Moral Compass – Basic Principles* edited by Steven R. Knowlton and Patrick R. Parsons (Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, 1994) 91.

[8] Jay Black and Jennings Bryant, *Introduction to Mass Communication* (McGraw-Hill,1992), 580.

[9] Black and Bryant, 580.

mostly on the shoulders of the individual reporter/editor.[10] This line of thought is important to keep in mind when applying ethics in a particular media endeavor, especially the new ones that are seeking to introduce a modicum of editorial monitoring and guidelines into their users' contributions.

When it comes to 'reasoned' and 'principled' behavior, "journalists must decide for themselves, rather than having others decide for them, what information they will distribute, and what form that information will take," Jay Black, Bob Steel and Ralph Barney write in *Doing Ethics in Journalism.* "Individual journalists and the profession as a whole must work out their own role definitions according to (1) their perceptions of what society needs, and (2) an ethical recognition that Constitutional protection must not knowingly be socially destructive. Because it would be silly for a society to protect a class of people who are hastening its destruction, it must be assumed that journalists bear a strong moral obligation to avoid conscious social damage."[11]

Thus, it is critical for those involved in the news profession to learn the skills of ethical reasoning and to develop the habit of applying them to their daily duties, they conclude. Not only do I fully concur with these authors, but I also wish to reiterate here my question (first enounced in my Research Questions section) of whether we should extend those standards and expectations of application to all the news content producers outside of the profession. If so, should we have different levels of enforcement, depending on the skills, experience, and perhaps age range of the content contributors? These, and other related questions are addressed in later sections, starting in Chapter 3.

One can already easily see how in the context of today's mixed media culture where 'everyone' can be a news content producer, exacerbated by economic conditions that require newsroom cuts and an ever faster cycle of news stories production, there seems to be waning interest in- and time and financial resources for maintaining professional standards. Yet, this lack of concern for media ethics may create fresh ethical challenges, as often happens in a moral vacuum.

The list of reasons cited here for this 'moral depletion' in the news profession is, unfortunately, only a partial one, and Chapter 3 will look at a more extensive and detailed list.

The idea that journalists should possess a heightened sense of personal moral conduct in order to perform their duties is not new. In fact, it can be traced to the Enlightenment and the early nineteenth century, and the major thinkers of the Liberal tradition, such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and John Stuart Mill, whose views of individual rights and personal freedom of expression have formed the foundation of the guiding principles of American journalism. Mill's *On Liberty* is a perfect example of this early influence on the ethics of contemporary journalism, as the editors of *The Journalist's Moral Compass* explain: "Mill argued that while the point of government was general happiness, the individual's mental well-being, which he held to be a precursor to happiness, depended upon the freedom of opinion and, of great importance to journalists, the freedom to express that opinion."[12]

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[10] Knowlton Parsons, 30-31; Yehiel (Hilik) Limor and Ines Gabel, "Five Versions of One Code of Ethics: The Case Study of the Israel Broadcasting Authority" *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, Volume 17, Number 2, 2002, 138-139.
[11] Black, Steele, and Barney, 30-31.
[12] Knowlton and Parsons, 70.

They also make an interesting comparison between John Stuart Mill and John Milton: "There are echoes of Milton in the selection that follows, but note that while both argued for strengthening truth through vigorous battle with falsehood, Mill's argument is almost entirely secular and civic, whereas Milton's is overwhelmingly religious."[13]
This comparative observation highlights various perspectives on a moral concept and how each thinker has developed his own individual sense of it and, one may assume, of other ethical concepts too.

Here, I would like to make the additional suggestion that a personal understanding of morality and what constitutes appropriate steps in ethically complex news-reporting situations should also be the basis and a pre-requisite for venturing into the still poorly defined new media territories of interactive news, collaborative blogging and other forms of hybrid, community-based models of news-reporting.

But whether working in 'old,' traditional or new media, it is the practice of this personal sense of morality, "doing ethics," Black and Bryant say, that journalists in all spheres of media should adopt in order to produce ethically sound news-gathering strategies and reports.
From their recommendation, one can extract a useful definition of what media ethics means for the working journalist: it is about applying those long-evolved principles and one's own integrity and sense of rightful conduct in the daily practice of his/her job. One can see how important it is to have such a theoretical foundation to draw on in the heat of the action, as is often the case with news, when deadlines and time-sensitive ethical challenges leave little time for consideration and demand fast decisions. And as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, one of the main changes the news media has experienced over the past decade or so is a significantly quickened pace in all phases of news-gathering and -publishing. This, together with speedier distribution through the Net, calls for even more alert and skilful ethical reasoning about news coverage.

This does not mean that the job of covering the news will become any easier, but at least such preparation would allow often busy and overworked journalists to react responsibly and professionally to the sensitive or controversial issues that may arise while covering a story. Such a response, I argue in other parts of my thesis, seems increasingly rare in the world of online news, in a cyberspace where consequences also seem 'virtual' and the sense of alternate reality and the anonymity the Net affords have emboldened malpractice and lowered standards for news-coverage.

But of course, as Black and Bryant note, not all ethical dilemmas have a clear-cut solution or answer.

"A mass media practitioner attempting to behave ethically would ask, 'What am I, as a believer in the precepts of public relations or advertising or journalism, supposed to do in my professional life?' The answers that arise are indeed complex..."[14]

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[13] Knowlton and Parsons, 70.
[14] Black and Bryant, 580.

The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics

Defining ethical dilemmas:

The answers to these dilemmas are complex, and yet, the ethical principles themselves are so simple, as former *Washington Post* correspondent and journalism professor at the University of California at Berkeley Neil Henry writes in *American Carnival – Journalism Under Siege in an Age of New Media.*

"'Seek Truth and Report it' is the eloquently simple and overarching exhortation written into one of the most important documents expressing the profession's ideals, the Code of Ethics espoused by the Society of Professional Journalists," he says of the code first adopted by the SPJ in 1926, many of whose precepts were borrowed from a similar code used by the American Society of Newspapers Editors. Despite having been revised several times, "its prime directives remain essentially the same, divided into four simple categories," Henry writes: "Seek Truth and Report It; Minimize Harm; Act Independently; Be Accountable."[15]

Judging from the intense debates on the nature of truth and its significance for the press and democracy that have occupied the great names of Greek philosophy and their descendants and by how subjective and elusive the concept of 'truth' itself is, one can safely assume that behind each of the principles in a journalism code of ethics lie ideas and values that are anything but 'simple'. They are often open to diverging interpretations, subject to a specific context, considered for a possible exception... Henry confirms this difficulty: "Despite the importance and clarity of these principles and the values they reflect, professional journalism in America today often seems troubled and confused."[16]

He then cites a long list of ills that he sees as hampering the application of ethical journalism in today's news media in America. Henry's book is a highly critical and vocal denunciation of everything he sees as the culprits for the crisis in professional journalism.

According to Henry, we increasingly see local television news programs broadcasting fake news meant to sell products or push political agendas; PR firms being given easy access to these TV programs for that purpose; these local TV stations outsourcing their news 'reporting' to government and advertisers because of strapped finances and newsroom staff cuts; news evaluation and editorial decisions being influenced by market research firms rather than the public's right to know; newspapers and magazines teaming up with advertisers and producing special sections aimed at selling products; a freedom of the press that is truly free only when it comes to popular views, not unpopular ones; constantly falling standards of accuracy, fair reporting and asking the tough questions; complicity in a fraudulent system, such as when reporting misleading information on the Iraq War; little diversity in newsrooms, which leads to ethnic, racial and religious biases and stereotypes in reporting; business concerns taking precedence over journalistic integrity and critical assessment of the news; increased pressure from the government to influence editorial viewpoints

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[15] Neil Henry, *American Carnival – Journalism Under Siege in an Age of New Media* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 207.
[16] Henry, 208.

in news coverage on public television and public radio programming; a deteriorating relationship with the public which involves less access and openness towards the audience; the resulting erosion of trust and disconnection between the public and the media; copy-editing and fact-checking practices being bypassed in order to meet increasingly fast-paced pressures and deadlines; under- or non-reporting of important issues or people because they do not fall within the category of socially 'accepted norms of certain news organizations; ... and the list goes on.[17]

One may not agree with all these charges. For instance, it is possible to argue that the news media, including traditional, mainstream outlets such as newspapers, today are far more connected with their various audiences than in the past, thanks to the Web and the comments, interactive forums, links to social networks and other user multimedia contributions their websites make possible.

But on the whole, it is hard not to see evidence supporting these accusations in present-day coverage of local, national and international news events by the American media. And I suspect that we can find the roots of these problems in failures in ethical reasoning among the people involved.

While answers to these issues of an ethical order will not be found easily - if at all - and surmising about possible answers would be unproductive, we can profitably engage in asking the right and controversial questions that would help us define ethical dilemmas.

In addition to the basic questions of daily ethics-based reporting of the trained and conscientious journalist, a useful list of which can be found in *Doing Ethics in Journalism - A Handbook with Case Studies*[18], and which include "What is my journalistic purpose?," "What are the possible consequences of my actions? Short term? Long term?," "What are my alternatives to maximize my truthtelling responsibility and minimize harm?," "Can I clearly and fully justify my thinking and my decision? To my colleagues? To the stakeholders? To the public.?"[19]

But as Steele, Black and Barney point out, it is the questions that force us to see shades of gray that will help "prompt conversation and collaboration, and force [...] a higher level of justification beyond mere rationalizing,"[20] - a point echoed in Henry's *American Carnival*, where he denounces a focus on "strident extremes" that hampers a willingness to search for meaning in the gray areas [...]"[21].

Thomas Bivins in *Mixed Media - Moral Distinctions in Advertising, Public Relations, and Journalism* asks questions that go beyond mere rationalizing and point us to little-explored areas.

"Can personal ethics become professional ethics?" he asks. "There are other principles not usually questioned by the media that also potentially compromise personal

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[17] Henry, 208-210.
[18] Black, Steele, and Barney, 18, 48-49.
[19] Black, Steele, and Barney, 18, 48-49..
[20] Black, Steele, andBarney, 47.
[21] Henry, 240.

values."[22] He cites the importance of privacy as an example of an area where personal and professional values can clash. In other places, they will mesh. But ultimately, it "must be the efficacy of the resulting actions based on those principles - not just for the person acting (the moral agent), but for all those involved or affected by the action," that will be the final test for any principle, be it personal or professional," he concludes.[23]

In addition to the simple enquiries of "what do the media hope to accomplish?," "What would you imagine to be the primary goals of the news media?," and "Why can't we all be right" in relation to the dilemma of relativism, he asks the trickier "Can the media be ethical?" - or, as he re-phrases it, "The real question is: Do the media want to be ethical?" Often, he says, the media professions have their own "way of doing things" that clashes dramatically with societal norms."[24]

We need to stop and ponder these questions because they directly point to the major ethical issues I am trying to define in order to inform a better approach to solving them through my own proposed code of ethics.

Bivins first highlights what he calls "two larger meta-issues" that are specific to the practice of journalism in the United States: objectivity and the directly related phenomenon of media bias, which he says are causing much concern among journalists, their audiences and their critics.[25] Drawing from the philosophical theories of various media critics such as John Dewey and *Ethical Journalism* author Philip Meyer, he then presents a very fine-tuned conclusion to the dilemma of deciding on the nature of- and need for objectivity in journalism: "The case both for and against objectivity rests not only on the debate over whether or not reality can be accurately described, but also on the ability of journalists to represent any given reality as free as possible from bias, but not necessarily from subjectivity."[26]

His study of the structural biases in news journalism, inspired by the theories of journalism professor Andrew Cline, is also thorough. Among them he cites: commercial bias, temporal bias, expediency bias, visual bias, bad news bias, narrative bias, fairness bias, and glory bias.[27] These various biases, which he calls "structural" because he sees them as inherent to the structure of modern American journalism, are by no means necessarily false or unfair, he stresses, which is a fresh take on this sensitive topic.

Finally, Bivins draws our attention to two "special issues" in journalistic ethics, some of the most troublesome for media professionals and the people they cover: deception and privacy. These two areas contain many sub-categories of ethical problems, such as sensationalism, photograph-manipulation, investigative reporting methods, and privacy invasion, and should be considered from various viewpoints, for example, whether the deception was intentional or serves the ultimate goal of the news coverage - much of which falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that a

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[22] Thomas Bivins, *Mixed Media - Moral Distinctions in Advertising, Public Relations, and Journalism* (London: Routledge, 2004). 8.
[23] Bivins, 8.
[24] Bivins, 19.
[25] Bivins, 226.
[26] Bivins, 231.
[27] Bivins, 232-238.

safe and ethical approach is often to consider them as 'gray areas' as Bivins does[28], and as presenting not one but several possible positive outcomes. Just as he explains the case for and against the use of deceptive techniques in news-reporting[29], most problematic behaviors and practices present such a non-black-and-white picture and need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. It is thus my conclusion that when confronted with a seemingly 'wrong' situation or practice, media professionals should not immediately dismiss it, but rather consider it from all angles, and as it applies to their particular news story. Are they fulfilling their overall duty of informing the public while minimizing harm? If so, perhaps the use of a deceptive strategy, such as a hidden camera, if it helps uncover wrongdoing for example, may well be justified.

As for the issue of privacy, Bivins encourages us to approach it as both an ethical and a legal concept. But since he concludes that "Privacy has a muddied history in journalistic ethics"[30], one can safely assume that there might be other useful approaches too, such as from a democratic or human-rights-based perspective. And it is tempting too to surmise that this "muddy" state of affairs regarding a specific ethical area of journalistic reporting applies also to many other ethical issues in the profession.

<u>Defining the law and its limits in regulating the news media</u>

The relationship between ethics, the law and journalism is ethically complex, to say the least.

Media critics, social and cultural analysts, the public, and journalists themselves throughout American journalism's history have sought ways of improving the profession, sometimes through strident criticism or revolutionary calls for reform. As mentioned earlier, the tools and measures used to appeal to journalists' highest moral and professional principles and encourage adherence to the professional standards and ethics of their news organization have been decreed to be voluntary, and thus outside of media legislation. As Yehiel (Hilik) Limor and Ines Gabell explain in a special issue on codes of ethics of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*[31]: "Media accountability systems of secondary legislation are not anchored directly in legislation." (138) Nevertheless, they add, "the law authorizes (and sometimes even compels) certain bodies to institute codes of ethics that are granted statutory validity."[32] However, none of the examples they cite pertain to US cases, but rather to codes of ethics for the British and other European media systems.

As John C. Watson writes in *Journalism Ethics by Court Decree - The Supreme Court on the Proper Practice of Journalism*, the risk of having the law impose ethics or other systems of moral control over journalists if they do not practice news-reporting more ethically and with more social responsibility has hovered over the American news media for nearly a century.[33] However, one can see from specific cases that this has not been implemented, as he confirms: "Clearly, the law has not been used to

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[28] Bivins, 249.

[29] Bivins, 250.

[30] Bivins, 256-257.

[31] Limor and Gabell, 138.

[32] Limor and Gabell, 138..

[33] John C. Watson, *Journalism Ethics by Court Decree - The Supreme Court on the Proper Practice of Journalism* (New York: LBB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2008) 1.

impose ethical standards on the news media on a wholesale basis. The United States does not have a code of journalistic responsibility enshrined in law or an agency to oversee the practice of journalism, nor are journalists required to be licensed or otherwise accredited."[34] Such regulation, he surmises, would likely be condemned by journalists as inimical to the First Amendment. He does, however, offer support to Limor and Gabel's statement on legal interference - and in the US: "But there have been instances in which the law has been used to require or encourage ethical conduct by journalists or to permit punishment of unethical behavior." He cites a 1997 US Supreme Court decision that allowed a newspaper to impose sanctions on one of its reporters for violating the paper's code of ethics with regard to provisions that supported objectivity in the face of conflicting interests.

The issue of monitoring the media, ensuring that it maintains ethical and professional standards, is highly controversial, as the boundaries between ethics, the law and journalistic practice are very porous and open for debate. In fact, Watson cites court rulings that have punished, mandated, and protected journalistic practices that are matters of ethical principles.[35]

Watson contends that "any examination of the law's effect on journalism ethics necessarily enters the realm of legal theory and requires grounding in natural law doctrine and legal positivism as well as related and often derivative theories that address the relationship between law and morality or law and ethics" - a close study of which is well beyond the scope of this paper. But we may find useful his citation of ethicists such as Jay Black and Sandra Davidson, who stress the importance of making a distinction between "practices that are legally permissible and those that are ethical. Law and ethics are normative systems that affect how journalism is practiced, but law delineates minimums of behavior while ethics establish behavioral ideals that journalists should strive toward," they say. Black expands on these concepts in *Doing Ethics*.[36] There, Black warns that it is common to "equate ethical standards with legal standards, and for victims of unethical behavior to seek legal remedies for perceived ethical lapses," which he says is an incorrect equation and represents a misconception of the relationship between law and ethics. For example, "invasion-of-privacy laws widely permit the publication of information that, for reasons of ethics, taste, compassion, or professionalism, some news media would not publish or broadcast."[37]

Bivins summarizes these points succinctly: Even though legality certainly plays a part in ethicality, he says, "everyone knows that being legal doesn't necessarily mean being ethical."[38]

What we can conclude from these observations is that the legal boundaries of news-gathering and the publication of news are perhaps too mutable and complex for my purposes in this thesis and for the design of a code of ethics, and it is likely more useful to focus on the ethical questions around journalists' behavior, decisions and actions. From the study of such questions answers or solutions may emerge that might

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[34] Watson, 2.

[35] Watson, 3.

[36] Watson, 4.

[37] Black, Steele, and Barney, 14.

[38] Bivins, 18.

become permanent applications in my - or future - code[s] of ethics for the media. Bivins seems to support the idea of starting with codes:

"For now, suffice it to say that codes are the logical next step in the progression from identifying values, to developing principles, to setting standards, to creating policies. After codes would come the law, and as we have seen, the law doesn't usually deal with moral values."[39]

Journalism Codes of Ethics: a Brief History

Defining codes of ethics

Ever since American journalists produced their first news reports in the earliest days of the American republic, they have engaged in rigorous self-evaluation and been subjected to similar scrutiny and pressures to improve from both within and outside the industry, that is, from their colleagues and superiors, as well as from non-journalists, such as media critics, academics and other professionals, and of course from their audience - the public. Codes of ethics, among other regulating tools, have proved to be the most widely used means for such evaluation, and for establishing and maintaining professional standards for the press. They have accompanied reforms, when they were called for at certain points in history. Here it is important to mention that I do not intend to provide a historical account of how media codes of ethics have evolved, as I wrote such an evolutionary account in a paper for a prior related research project, entitled "The Evolution of Codes." Rather, I would like to offer a brief overview of their reception, effects on the medium, impact on larger normative trends in the news media, and the changes that resulted in the debate on media ethics.

2] Early codes

Codes of ethics have been the most widely trusted and enduring method of monitoring conduct among working journalists, establishing journalism as a professional practice, and improving the quality and integrity of American news coverage.[40] And this began early on. "American journalists have engaged in self-evaluation and other campaigns to improve themselves since they were colonists in the eighteenth century," writes Watson. In the middle of the nineteenth century the first calls for ethics codes started resounding, culminating in such landmarks in media ethics normative history as the adoption of the Canons of Journalism by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) in 1923, later adopted as its own by the SPJ.[41] Following the excesses of the 'Penny Press' and its penchant for sensationalism at the end of the nineteenth century, the first decade of the twentieth century saw a rising interest in professionalism, ethics, and better ethical standards in the press, which sparked peer and public outcry and pressures to reform, which eventually led the profession to constantly self-assess and revise its ways. The creation of codes of ethics by news organizations and academic media associations proved an important element in the reforms.[42]

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[39] Bivins, 19.
[40] Watson,. 24.
[41] Watson, 24.
[42] Watson, 24.

Thus, from the start, codes were designed to be tools for self-regulation and, it was hoped, a solution to the profession's ills and difficulties [or as some critics would argue, unwillingness] in dealing with ethical dilemmas. In their essay for the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, Limor and Gabel confirm the practical value of codes: "Codes of ethics are just one mechanism among media accountability systems[43]. Nigel G. E. Harris in his essay *Codes of Conduct for Journalists[44]* goes a step further in establishing the codes' monitoring limits: "Codes of conduct are only a part, and perhaps a quite minor part, of the regulatory framework within which journalists operate." There are many different ways in which reporters and editors might be constrained from acting unethically, he says, the most important of which is the law. He cites among the material that might carry the risk of legal action certain types of invasion of privacy, through the use of telephone-tapping for instance, or the revelation of state secrets, which might be in the public's interest to know but would be illegal to reveal.[45] Many editors prefer to refrain from touching such material, which from an ethical perspective might hurt investigative forms of journalism.

It is worth keeping in mind that as senior lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Dundee and as the author of *Professional Codes of Conduct in the United Kingdom: A Directory*, Harris is writing mostly about media ethics in Britain, but this only reinforces the fact that these ethical dilemmas of regulation and freedom of the press are 'universal' issues, at least for the countries with democratic media systems.

It is also noteworthy that despite the social "moral horror" and criticism that sociologist and journalism historian Michael Schudson says marks the advent of each new, norm-defying type of newspaper during the American press's transitional periods, from the nineteenth century to this day[46], what we would consider 'unethical' today may not have had the same connotation for the earlier societies of the era of industrialization of the press and subsequent periods. "Ethical considerations that currently engage journalists and have for more than a century did not seem essential to the press of the American colonial period," notes Watson, assuming that the socially accepted political control over newspapers at the time could be a reason for this difference.[47] In the 1978 study *The Self-Conscious Image and the Image of an Ethical Press*, Robert S. Fortner surmises that there are several levels of ethical priorities, and that service to the general public was perhaps a low one for these early publications[48]. In their essay *Ethics*, John D. Keeler, William Brown, and Douglas Tarpley give a perfect example of a moral stance at odds with our contemporary understanding of 'correct' journalistic practices but which passed unnoticed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century:

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[43] Limor and Gabell, 138.

[44] Nigel G. E. Harris, "Codes of Conduct for Journalists," in *Ethical Issues in Journalism and the Media*, edited by Andrew Belsey and Ruth Chadwick (London: Routledge, 1992), 65.

[45]Harris, 65.

[46] Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News - A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books Inc, 1978) 88.

[47] Watson, 24.

[48] Robert S. Fortner, "The Self-Conscious Image and the Image of an Ethical Press," 1978, 5 in Stephen L. Vaughn, *Encyclopedia of American Journalism*, (London: Routledge, 2007) 162.

"[...] Many practices that might be ethically questionable today were not addressed. For example, in 1875 Ansel Kellog introduced the 'boiler plate,' pre-etched printing plates that contained news, features, and columns and enabled newspapers editors to raft this material into their newspapers without attributing it to distant reporters and editors. By 1886, Kellogg's Chicago Newspaper Union, the Western Newspaper Union, and the New York Newspaper Union were providing approximately one third of all weekly newspapers material by this means without its supplier being revealed."[49]

With such diverging views on media ethics throughout American journalism's history, fast-changing interpretations of its tenets, and the unexpected practices that developed around them, it is no surprise that responses to the various tools to monitor the press, such as ethics codes, have also been confusingly varied. Black, Steele and Barney in *Doing Ethics* quote Meyer as saying that despite genuine efforts at ethical self-introspection throughout the years, today "journalists are still ethically confused."[50] They note extreme responses to the codes that have been proposed or drafted and implemented, such as invoking them as the panacea, or condemning them for removing journalists' ability to take decisions independently. In this, they echo Bivins who in *Mixed Media* quotes ethicist Richard Johannensen as saying, "For some people, formal codes are a necessary mark of a true profession. For others, codes are worthless exercises in vagueness, irrelevance, and slick public relations."[51] They also acknowledge their powers: "At best, the codes have [...] kept the profession alert to its responsibilities to gather and report news thoroughly and accurately and to remain vigilant toward governmental and other forces that would usurp the media's independence."[52]

But as we shall see in the following section, it is harsh criticism and skeptical scrutiny of their effectiveness that have marked the most nerve-wrecking but also most defining moments in the evolution of journalistic codes of ethics.

But of course, these assessments of ethics codes for the news media (as of similar regulation in other spheres, and of ethics in general) are by no means subjecting them to intransigent standards. Historically, there usually has been room for moderation and a 'humane' approach to rules and their enforcement, especially in the field of journalism and the creative industries.
As Susan Huntley wrote in her article on 'Ethics Standards' for the 2006 National Conference of State Legislatures, quoting regulation from the State of Alaska, "Alaska's introduction to its Standards of Conduct section goes on to state 'no code of conduct, however, comprehensive, can anticipate all situations in which violations may occur nor can it prescribe behaviors that are appropriate to every situation; in addition, laws and regulations regarding ethical responsibilities cannot legislate morality, eradicate corruption, or eliminate bad judgment.'

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[49] John D. Keeler, William Brown, and Douglas Tarpley, "Ethics," in *American Journalism - History, Principles, Practices* Edited by W. David Sloan and Lisa Mulkin Parcell, (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company, 2002) 48.
[50] Black, Steele, and Barney, 13.
[51] Bivins, 47.
[52] Bivins, 13.

Alaska couldn't have said it better. Laws have their place, but ethics cannot be legislated."[53]
This could not be truer for the application of ethics to the practice of journalism.

An important note: if I do not state here my deep respect for professional standards and the best professional codes in current use, such as the SPJ's, and do not explicitly argue that these have brought countless benefits to the quality of journalism and the profession as a whole, it is because my concern is primarily with the deficiencies of the regulatory system. Even though I am aware of the value of an objective study and the inclusion of the positive effects of current codes, the guiding purpose of this section is to serve as a steppingstone for building my argument in the following chapters, which rests on the need for revised and hopefully improved ethics tools.
I therefore hope that this perceived 'bias' towards the 'dilemmas and deficiencies' of existing codes of ethics in the section below is not interpreted as an omission on my part, but as purposefully designed.

Current Codes: Dilemmas and Deficiencies

3] Modern codes

The modern codes of ethics share with earlier ones the particularity that they too were created in a climate of intense self-evaluation and frenzied reforms by the journalism profession that followed public concerns over falling standards and poor regulation at the start of the twentieth century[54]. Just like their colleagues in the early 1900s who were compelled to improve their performance in response to the backlash against sensationalism, dubiously-sourced news and unethical business practices, with a series of internal regulations that became the first codes, journalists in the twentieth century saw a revival of public interest in media ethics and regulatory monitoring of their work. Press reforms peaked in the 1940s, with the Hutchins Commission Report in 1947, the best and most enduring effort of the press to self-analyze and professionalize itself, and again in the early and mid-1970s, with the update and creation of an abundant series of codes, as Watson documents in *Journalism Ethics by Court Decree*[55]. Here one should cite the new SPJ standards, the fruit of the Society's re-drafting in 1973 of the Canons of Journalism.

Less palatable for media professionals at the time was the suggestion that media reform would be facilitated by legal intervention, and general calls for government involvement in press conduct, as they feared for their First Amendment-protected rights of free speech and press independence.[56] The use of law to enforce ethical norms in journalism has in fact been a recurring theme in debates on media ethics and

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[53] Susan Huntley, "Tools for navigating ethical dilemmas: being ethical requires more than just following laws," (Article adapted from the Institute for Global Ethics seminar in Ethical Fitness and its Nine Checkpoints for Ethical Decision Making; Publication: State Legislatures, Dec. 1, 2006,
http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Tools+for+navigating+ethical+dilemmas%3A+being+ethical+requires+more...-a0155869494). Accessed April 8, 2012.
[54] Watson, 26.
[55] Watson, 26-29.
[56] Watson, 28.

regulation since the 1930s, when public disenchantment with the state of the press and 'success stories' of government intervention in other social spheres made it look like a viable option.[57]

Among the most exposed to the wrath of readers and media observers were the codes of ethics themselves, be they revised versions of early, original codes, or newly drafted provisions. "Can codes be useful? Is there a way to codify professional values and principles that will result in useful guidelines for real-life practitioners?" asks Bivins in *Mixed Media*[58] - questions that resonate in debates on the ethical practice of journalism to this day.

Both outside and internal media-watchers on the negatively critical side of the debate do not mince their words when it comes to defining the role and effectiveness of these codes. Limor and Gabel cite statements made about codes such as "Codes are largely an exercise in public relations[59], "Very few journalists rely on codes when they confront ethical dilemmas[60], and according to Meyer, ethics codes are "lacking in muscle" and "full of glittering generalities."[61]
But there are code-believers too, and among them one may cite Johannensen who says that many of the objections to their efficacy can be lessened or removed with thoughtful reasoning.

Most of the division and friction in the debate on the use and efficacy of codes evolve around the issue of enforcement, both at the internal level through codes and in-house policies, and externally through, in its most extreme form, proposals for government intervention.
What seems to be a consensus among many media workers, researchers and leaders is that enforcement of ethics codes is either defective or close to non-existent. According to Limor and Gabel, the main criticism is the lack of enforcement.[62] Harris in his essay "Codes of Conduct for Journalists" identifies what might be the biggest obstacle in the path to compliance with a code: their voluntary nature. Given the non-statutory level of media accountability of most codes, the limited powers that most professional bodies have to enforce their codes throws into question the public benefits of having codes of conduct, he says.[63] "If breaches go unpunished, if complaints produce no more than verbal criticisms from the body that deals with them and these are then ignored by those against whom they are made, then what protection will the public gain from the existence of the code?" he asks.

It is interesting to note how media critics' responses to issues of enforcement of an ethical code of conduct seem to be a matter of personal ethics and philosophy on life and human nature: the question of whether we could expect natural compliance with a code seems to boil down to whether one expects the worst or the best from one's fellow workers and human beings in general.

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[57] Watson, 29.
[58] Bivins, 47.
[59] Limor and Gabell, 140.
[60] Limor and Gabell, 140.
[61] Bivins, 47.
[62] Limor and Gabell, 140.
[63] Harris, 67.

To return to Harris, it is important to note his focus on the benefits of code adherence *for the public* - versus for the professional status of the news organization or the journalists' own professional satisfaction. Indeed, as he explains earlier[64], it is a sign of a more liberal regime when "codes place greater emphasis on protecting members of the public rather than journalists themselves."[65]

As I mentioned earlier, the thorniest issue related to code enforcement, and a most threatening one for journalists, is the idea of having recourse to judicial measures or other forms of governmental intervention. However, a nuanced distinction should be made. As Watson points out:

"Clearly, the law has not been used to impose ethical standards on the news media on a wholesale basis. The United States does not have a code of journalistic responsibility enshrined in law or an agency to oversee the practice of journalism, nor are journalists required to be licensed or otherwise accredited." [...]

"But there have been instances in which the law has been used to require or encourage ethical conduct by journalists or to permit punishment of unethical behavior." [66]

It is thus precisely the effect of the law on journalism ethics that his book seeks to determine, through the analysis of Supreme Court rulings that address journalism ethics issues and the extent to which they "have imposed, affirmed or undercut fundamental ethical principles of journalism," specifically those established in the codes of ethics created by news organizations.[67] By studying such rulings since the Hutchins Report through 2007, Watson's work helps determine which fundamental journalism ethical principles have been converted into legal imperative or have been affected in other ways by a Court edict.

What Watson's efforts tell us is that there might be instances when journalism ethics have been established by Supreme Court justices instead of by journalists. His study seeks to determine to what extent this might be the case. "Such government intrusion would raise legitimate concerns about whether the free press guarantee of the First Amendment is being circumvented," he concludes.[68]

At a less consequential level when it comes to the optimal ways of ensuring code adherence in newsrooms, ways that do not involve judicial means and threaten press freedoms, we find some strong proponents of democratic debate and open-minded persuasion - not surprisingly among journalists themselves. In *Doing Ethics*, Bruce W. Sanford, counsel to the SPJ, is quoted as writing "History teaches that the most effective way to promote ethical behavior is through discussion and information, not enforcement."[69] And in a 1987 article in the Associated Press Managing Editors publication *Ethics Codes: Sunrise or Sunset?*, Sanford quotes Geoffrey Hazard, who stresses his support for a deliberative process rather than for a list of rules and dos and don'ts:

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[64] Harris, 62.
[65] Harris, 62.
[66] Watson, 1-2.
[67] Watson, 3.
[68] Watson, 22.
[69] Bruce W. Sanford, quoted by Black, Steele, and Barney, 14.

"Ethical principles can be established only as a result of deliberation and argumentation. These principles are not the kind of thing that can be settled by fiat, agreement or by authority. To assume that they can is to confuse ethics with lawmaking, rule-making, policy-making and other kinds of decision-making."[70]

The authors of *Doing Ethics in Journalism* in stating their goal for the book in their Introduction, which is "to help individuals and groups make ethical decisions that are morally defensible, and to base those decisions on justification processes that hold true from situation to situation, person to person, time to time," actually summarize what seems to be the consensus on ethics codes for the media: establishing such an ethical practice in journalism requires more than a code.[71]

It should be said, as Limor and Gabel judiciously note, that criticizing codes of ethics and their efficicacy is not specific to journalism, and is common in many other professions such as engineering.[72]

Moreover, as Watson and others point out[73], the mixed and often impassioned responses to discussions on journalism ethics and codes specifically are likely due to the fact that unlike data in the 'precise' sciences, the effectiveness of codes of ethics has never been established through tests, surveys or other means. In other words, there is no measurable evidence of their efficacy and impact. To my knowledge, there aren't any means designed to do so.

One can surmise that the controversial nature of media ethics codes can be attributed, in part, to that factor. Among all the groups who have sought to improve the quality of American journalism - journalists, media critics, academics, professionals in related spheres and the engaged members of the public - it is journalists themselves who have expressed the most resistance to the enforcement of codes because of fears that it might jeopardize some of the press' rights and freedoms—another source of controversy.

In *Groping for Ethics in Journalism*, Ron F. Smith offers a useful list of objections to current media codes, six "weaknesses" compiled, he says, by "many people who are strongly committed to improving journalism [but] are not sure that codes of ethics will cure the media's problems." Unfortunately, however, he omits any indication as to who these people are or how they were selected. Their list includes: Codes fix only easy ethical problems; can't be specific enough; can be used against reporter; one size doesn't fit all, and don't apply to corporations. The last "weakness" comes in the form of questions: do codes really do any good? Do newspapers with strong codes of ethics behave any differently from those that don't have codes?[74]

It is clear from the observations I have made so far in this chapter that there are more questions than answers, that the answers are multi-faceted and ever-changing, and the news-reporting cases involving ethical dilemmas unique, which makes establishing standards all the more difficult. But, as Watson acknowledges, the journalism profession has chosen free will over blind obedience by deciding to retain its freedom

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[70] Sanford, 14.
[71] Sanford, 14.
[72] Limor and Gabell, 140.
[73] Watson, 39.
[74] Ron F. Smith, *Groping for Ethics in Journalism* (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003) 25.

not to abide by the codes systematically, but rather consider how they apply to each particular situation.[75]

There is much to be said in support of such a self-regulatory model, some of which is even in tune with the code-drafting processes I describe below. But to conclude this overview of the many challenges that face the ethical practice of journalism, one could say that what matters most is that the debate never abates.

Introducing Ethical Transgressions

If it wasn't for Boczkowski's theory of "mutual shaping" as a natural part of media transition[76], which I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, one could be forgiven for asking, in reference to perceived ethical transgressions in our news media, the perennial question of what came first: the moral lapses in the journalism profession or in our everyday, real world environment?

It does not take much scrutiny to find scores of factual inaccuracies and ethical failings in our daily news coverage, even by our best practitioners and journalistic institutions. University of Central Florida Journalism Professor Ron F. Smith is one among several fellow scholars who does not shy away from pointing an accusatory finger at the profession, even at 'the cream' of its representatives.
Warning his students and aspiring journalists-readers of the realities of the trade in the Preface to *Ethics in Journalism*[77], he plainly recognizes that "Some of the behavior of journalists stems from a basic lack of morality," adding "We can at least understand the motives of a reporter who, hot in the chase of a story, bends the rules. But there is no defense for reporters at major papers who make up stories wholesale or manufacture quotes from nonexistent sources. Yet, unfortunately, reporters have done that at some of our best newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. You are at a time when you have to regain the moral high ground," he finally exhorted.

Whether *USA Today can* count for one of the "best newspapers" aside, Smith's comments throw into the debate a little-too-flexible-for-my-taste-and-standards but still interesting interpretation of journalistic ethical norms, one which considers "bending the rules" acceptable in certain circumstances and more likely to occur among those who are implied to be a less skilled, qualified, or somehow 'lower' class of non-affiliated journalists. I find the latter assumption ethically questionable.
While I fully grasp the urgency of the issues and pressures in the industry that Smith cites as gnawing at the quality of news projects[78], leaving loopholes and room for "bending the rules" is not an ideal model for today's journalism. We should avoid any rules that might be too open to 'flexible interpretations,' attenuating circumstances and selective applications.

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[75]Watson, xii.

[76] Of course Pablo J. Boczkowski is not the only media analyst who writes and warns about this phenomenon. For further illustrations of the subject, I recommend the essays of *Rethinking Media Change - The Aesthetics of Transition* edited by David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004).

[77] Smith, vii.

[78] Problems in ownership, among others, are one of the main challenges to journalism ethics, he writes. Smith, vii.

Smith's apparent leniency towards smaller newspapers, however, raises an interesting question that straddles ethics and standards: do a news operation's size, audience reach, and overall success determine its expected level of ethical correctness and professionalism? Does lack of support from an institution or establishment of a certain standing make a news operation less accountable for editorial failings?

Ron Smith seems to imply so.. I, however, see the well-meaning content creators on the periphery as creative and well-intentioned in their endeavors, and while, less formally qualified and professionally trained, by no means lacking in personal moral values or in potential to understand media ethics and adhere to their tenets.

The instinctive response then that emerges from my endeavors to build a participatory model of ethical guidance is: what would be the point of revising or creating new rules if one then 'bends them' later on upon application?

Rather, why not make perhaps less rigid rules or a more adaptable monitoring system right at the outset, at the design phase, so that they invite voluntary compliance rather than behind-the-scene 'adjustments.'

On the plus side, Smith's stance helps us keep in mind the various layers of skills and institutionalizations at play in our present news ecosystem (which I 'mapped' earlier into four more or less distinct groups), when we think about how to minimize and best respond to the various threats to ethics-based journalism.

In any case, it is clear that Smith puts the blame for the flagging moral standards and ethical transgressions in the journalism of recent decades squarely on the shoulders of the profession itself, even devoting an entire chapter to the 'Errors' most commonly found in the nation's publications and broadcast networks. In it, he elaborately cites possible causes for these errors: "Not knowing the community; Carelessness; Ignorant reporters?; The fear of math; The 'infallibility syndrome'; Getting caught up in the story; Maintaining the narrative; Understaffed newsrooms; (and) Lack of diversity in newsrooms."[79]

How common are these types of "mistakes"? Smith simply admits: "Newspaper and TV news stories are filled with errors," citing a study by Professor Scott Maier which puts the percentage of news stories over several years of review at "about 40 to 60 percent."[80]

More serious news-reporting and editorial crimes, such as plagiarism and intentionally manufactured incorrect news, are covered in a separate chapter[81] - and rightly so, in my opinion. I do likewise, by examining these severe ethical failings more closely in Chapter 4.

But when it comes to these occurrences of 'mis-reporting'[82] that are more common in our daily news coverage - sometimes insidiously so to the point that we have stopped noticing them - spelling, punctuation, grammar mistakes and other factual errors about basic information that may appear at first minor and without ethical

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[79] Smith, *Ethics in Journalism* (Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 61-70.

[80] Smith, 60; Scott Maier, "Accuracy matters: A cross-market assessment of newspaper error and credibility," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly,* Autumn 2005.

[81] See "Faking the News," in Smith, 95-117.

[82] 'Mis-reporting': a word of my own coinage for this particular context, not a term cited from Ron Smith's analysis.

consequences (a point I refute in Chapter 4), one may want to ponder the 'causes' for ethical transgressions that Smith cites. Among the questions we may want to ask are: what is a valid reason for some 'flexibility' or tolerance on the ethical conduct enforcement scale, and what is merely an excuse? What could still be reasonably, humanely explained, to take into account Smith's views, and what is simply inexcusable and irredeemable?

Here again, one may also want to look at the disparate groups of today's news producers and decide what may be permissible for one group and not another after first deciding whether we want to make such an apparently discriminatory distinction in the first place. Essentially, can we expect the same ethical rigors from a teenage video-blogger publishing online personal narratives of his local community as from a staff reporter on the news desk of a major network? These are important questions on media ethics and their applications at their most basic level, which should be asked in the process of designing new guidelines, and on which I express myself more precisely in Chapters 3 and 4.

For now, it is important to understand that these transgressions of professionalism by our news media may originate from other sources too. At least, this is where another school of thought stands on the issue.

Among those who point at other factors are British communications professors and researchers David E. Morrison, Matthew Kieran, Michael Svennevig and Sarah Ventress, who in their recent book *Media & Values* attribute the changes in ethical conduct in journalism to changes in the social, political and cultural environments in which they are talking place.[83]

In this collaborative work, they argue that the moral voice of the news media (and more specifically that of television) has gradually succumbed to competing, and eventually more powerful sources of moral authority in the new fabric of today's Western society. While television has lost much of its past power due to the growing influence of the values and norms of new social groups, audiences' own abilities to identify professional and moral breaches have also suffered and declined in the process, which in turn they say, contributes to the emergence of an 'ethically-

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[83] David E. Morrison, Matthew Kieran, Michael Svennevig and Sarah Ventress, *Media & Values - Intimate Transgressions in a Changing Moral and Cultural Landscape* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007 in the UK, 2008 in the US).
With regards to the above book, I must add here that despite focusing on American journalism and writing the Open Park Code primarily for American journalists (as explained in Chapter 1), I do find enough similarities in the press and online publishing practices of other Anglo-Saxon (and even by extension Western democratic) cultures to refer to- and cite some of their media thinkers and practitioners.
Although their analyses in *Media & Values* focus on the developments and moral decline in television specifically, I have found enough points of commonality with other media to consider applying their observations and findings to ethical transgressions in print and online news in all their manifestations (audio, video, multimedia, interactive, citizen-produced, etc.).

challenged' social environment that is hardly conductive to appropriate conduct for the journalists who cover it.[84]

To prove their point, they draw direct connections between ethical misdeeds in our news media and the increasing moral void and disintegration palpable in the declining authority of our social, civic and religious institutions.[85] Deploring the increasing moral vacuum and the lack of a moral language to regulate the news media, they argue for a renewed sense of common goals and a shared understanding of the principles that matter.[86] Their insistence on "a consensus over values" and "an agreed set of norms" offers invaluable insights for the design of my proposed participatory form of ethical regulation.

In addition, while I locate my own stance in a more middle-of-the-road response to the hypotheses on the roots and reasons for ethical and professional infractions in today's journalism, I must admit susceptibility to these authors' love of values, which they place at the center of the debate - exactly where I see them serving as a crucial base for my proposed ethics code. In order to produce and enact regulatory structures, "there has to be an underlying values-based structure and an associated set of beliefs about media content's potential impact and, equally important, media audiences' potential to be influenced in one or other ways," they write.[87] I could not agree more.

An even more refined and ideal position on moral principles and the debatable desirability of making them universal in a proposed system of ethical monitoring can be found in Mary C. Gentile's *Giving Voice to Values*. It is hard not to concur with the advice she gives in a section where she defines 'Values - What they are and what they are not': "Values: Know and appeal to a short list of widely shared values, such as honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion. In other words, don't assume too little - or too much - commonality with the viewpoints of others."[88]
The sections and chapters that follow show my efforts to achieve this delicate balance.

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[84] For more on the sources of their arguments, but in a condensed version, see Morrison et al, the back cover, 1-7, 9-23.

[85] Morrison et al. are supported in their views on this interdependence between journalism and the moral context in which it takes place by neuroscientist Sam Harris, who investigates the physiological bases for human morality. In *The Moral Landscape*, he says he has established through his experiments that "cultural norms influence our behavior by altering the structure and function of our brains," and that "our emotions, social interactions, and moral intuitions mutually influence one another. We grow attuned to our fellow human beings through these systems, creating culture in the process. Culture becomes a mechanism for further social, emotional, and moral development." Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape - How Science Can Determine Human Values*, (New York: Free Press, 2010) 9. While I do not wish to delve too deeply into an unfamiliar field, Harris' research gives added value to *Media & Value*'s argument for an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the roots of ethical transgressions by our news media professionals adds an informative perspective to apply to the drafting of my participatory model of regulation.

[86] Morrison et al., 61.

[87] Morrison et al., 26.

[88] Mary C. Gentile, *Giving Voice to Values - How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What's Right* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 24.

Understanding and Transcending Ethical Transgressions

Both these major theories on the origins of ethical irresponsibility by our best journalists and institutions, and on whether they emerged from a pernicious process of their own making or as a result of external, contextual causes, present some valid arguments. Still, it is hard to ignore the increasingly complex moral world in which we are navigating, and the increasingly strident alarm bells warning society and its governing forces to reform. In my (admittedly brief) periods in the United States (in 1997-98; and in 2008 to the present), I do not recall a time when the calls by political leaders for a return to moral values and proper conduct have been louder.

If Morality[89] has deserted the ranks of professional journalists as they now work with Web and mobile technologies, it has, however, taken up a prominent position at the center of the global stage and debate. One only has to go back to President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address in 2009 to feel the pulse of his priorities at the time. In it, he called for "an era of responsibility" to fend off what he declared as the culprits behind the nation's economic woes: "greed and irresponsibility on the parts of some," and "the collective failure to make hard choices" by the rest of us.[90]

Signs of irresponsibility and collapsing principles abound, as we have witnessed misdeeds at the highest levels and the resulting credit market meltdown and larger collapse of the global financial system. Moral beliefs and conduct seem to have become the new barometer for assessing the leadership's - and especially the president's--performance. Amid ever more urgent calls for moral redress, a series of authors, including prominent journalists, have published detailed accounts of the possible causes for the ethical debacle they say lies behind what is largely perceived as the failure of the capitalist system.[91] Arianna Huffington stands out for denouncing "capitalism without a conscience" and not beating about the bush about its roots in our flagging sense of ethical behavior: "The missing tenet in this new free-market fundamentalism was the recognition, central to capitalism, that businessmen have responsibilities above and beyond the bottom line," she writes in *Third World America*. Of Adam Smith's free-market gospel, *The Wealth of Nations*, about which she pointedly remarks that it is preceded by his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, she says that it shows that "he knew that economic freedom could not flourish without a firm moral foundation." She adds, "But the moral foundation is by no means inevitable. The 'approval of their conscience' and 'the esteem of others' have gotten a lot cheaper in recent years."[92]

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[89] Morality: with a capital 'm' for emphasis (an editorial liberty on my part).

[90] Quoted from an analysis in Gentile, ix.

[91] Of these journalists' accounts, I especially recommend Arianna Huffington, *Third World America - How Our Politicians are Abandoning the Middle Class and Betraying the American Dream* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010); Amy Goodman and David Goodman, *Standing Up to the Madness - Ordinary Heroes in Extraordinary Times* (New York: Hyperion, 2008); Amy Goodman *Breaking the Sound Barrier*, Edited by Denis Moynihan (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009); and Matt Taibbi's Griftopia - *Bubble Machine, Vampire Squids, and the Long Con That is Breaking America* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010).

[92] All quotes in this passage are from Arianna Huffington,50.

Huffington's *Third World America* is also useful because it shows us exactly where she believes the moral failure lies: "The problem isn't a shortage of regulators. It's the way we've allowed the regulated to game the system," she writes in reference to the mining and financial industries, citing a Byzantine web of overseeing agencies and numerous loopholes in the system as responsible for practically courting tampering and non-compliance. As a result, "Regulations are 'very difficult to comply with,' and 'so many of the laws' are 'nonsensical'; and 'the complexity is awesome, and regulators are 'reaching far beyond [their] capacities','" she cites Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship and former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan respectively as saying.

This, however, is the whole point, she concludes: "That is of course, exactly the way Wall Street designed it. To the financial world, 'awesome complexity' is a feature, not a bug." By the time new, corrective regulations pass through Congress, she writes, "the lobbyists will make sure that loopholes are part of the deal."[93]

Applied to the field of journalism and our purpose of introducing what we hope will be redemptive regulation into the practice and building a code of ethics, these insights bring us back to the question of whether to allow for a certain degree of 'ethical tolerance.' Or put more simply, where does Smith's argument for leaving some room for 'bending the rules' fit in this complex, responsibility-starved, treacherous regulatory framework? And where does concern for ethics come in all this?

The line between ethical tolerance and transgression seems to be becoming thinner, and especially in the digital workspace, where the lines separating the real and lawful from the fictitious and illegal are also increasingly blurred.

While all these questions and considerations can offer informative guidance for my own research goals, I can only hope that the discouraging comments cited by Huffington on rules and their problematic enforcement will not dampen my readers' interest and receptiveness to the benefits of drafting new norms and standard practices and introducing them into online journalism.

I believe that well-informed preliminary thinking and skilful open-source design can create 'room' for problematic cases and a special place for broader applications of ethics to journalism. Perhaps this is what Obama meant in his speech early this year[94] when he urged us to "expand our moral imaginations."[95]

While there is little doubt that righteous conduct is once again center-stage in the national psyche[96], there is far more confusion and disagreement as to what counts for

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[93] All quotes in this passage are from Huffington, 137, 138, 140.

[94] January 12, 2011.

[95] For context, the full quote is: "expand our moral imaginations, to listen to each other more carefully, to sharpen our instincts for empathy, and remind ourselves of all the ways our hopes and dreams are bound together," quoted by Paul Krugman in "A Tale of Two Moralities," *The New York Times*, Jan. 14, 2011, A23.

[96] In their news analysis "A Capital Abuzz With Ethics," NYT writers Eric Lipton and Eric Lichtblau document the latest spate of public ethics trials and corrective legislation aimed at addressing ethical lapses by the nation's political and business elite. Pertinently, they write, "Washington has suddenly become fixated on ethical issues," and conclude that "Personal causes raise questions of public integrity." "A Capital Abuzz With Ethics," *The New York Times*, Aug. 3, 2010, A1.

righteous behavior and what 'morality' generally means in the present context. Even my best efforts at defining ethics and moral codes through a study of their historical and philosophical roots in this thesis and in prior research would not be complete without a glimpse of the uncertainty surrounding these concepts today.

Writing on the course of actions and decisions Obama has taken so far in his years in power, from health care reform to domestic policy on social welfare and the economy, *New York Times* commentator Paul Krugman identifies vast differences in the public's responses and "moral outrage" at some of the President's proposals. Describing a similar clash of values among the decision-making circles in Washington, he writes, "This deep divide in American political morality - for that's what it amounts to - is a relatively recent development." We have "a nation divided over right and wrong," he concludes.[97]

An even deeper moral malaise is palpable in the assessments of the United States' actions in the Middle East and other warfare efforts. Covering the ethical minefield of American armed forces' killings of state enemies and other actions against al-Qaeda, an *Economist* writer calls such killings and the use of "all necessary and appropriate force" against the perpetrators of the 09/11 terrorist attack (even though authorized by an act of Congress), a "messy business."[98]

Evaluating the media coverage of a related much prized and publicized kill, the death of Osama bin Laden, AlterNet's Joshua Holland's opinion piece exudes sarcasm as he describes how the Obama Administration's "narrative" of the event offered the world "a picture-perfect, morally unambiguous" account of the special forces' operation.[99]

In parallel to these corrective measures, the country has experienced in recent years a flurry of activity on the ethical regulation law-making front, starting with the most prominent of all reforms, the FCC's review of media ownership rules, and ranging from a overhaul of medical malpractice rules (see Mark Arsenault, "Democrats cool to Obama's offer to overhaul rules on malpractice," *The Boston Globe*, Feb 3, 2011, A8), to a major financial regulation bill that calls for the closure of the Office of Thrift Supervision (see Binyamin Appelbaum, "Onetime Cop, Out of Business," *The New York Times*, July 14, 2010, B1), and new computer networking and technologies standards (see John Markoff, "Industry Coalition Hopes to Set Computer Networking Standards," *The New York Times*, March 22, 2011, Business Day section, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D01EED91131F931A15750C0A96 79D8B63 accessed March 22, 2011), and even new food safety rules for cheesemakers (see William Neuman, "Of Age and Cheese," *The New York Times*, Feb. 4, 2011, B1, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/05/business/05cheese.html?pagewanted=all. Accessed Feb. 4, 2011). No sphere seems to have been spared by federal regulators in the standards and practices regulatory review frenzy of the past few years. This activity, however, is a hopeful sign that there is at least recognition in the governing echelons that ethical and professional conduct are key to socio-economic recovery.

[97] Krugman, A23.

[98] "Assassination, A Messy Business - When a state kills its enemies remotely, the law gets tangled," *The Economist* (May 5, 2011; http://www.economist.com/node/18651636). Accessed May 5, 2011.

[99] Joshua Holland, "7 Deceptions About Bin Laden's Killing Pushed by the Obama Administration" (AlterNet, posted on May 5, 2011, printed on May 7, 2011;

AlterNet's own biases aside, even an objective observer would concede that the numerous revisions of the official account would suggest that it is not only the initial clean account of events that got obscured by, in the Administration's own words, "the fog of war," but perhaps also our sense of what is morally acceptable.

If one needs rapid proof that our understanding of morality and of media ethics principles such as a respect for truth and one's sources is fast shifting in an age of easily shared and digitally-altered news and narratives - and if I may be permitted a moment of dark humor - one only has to look at some of the irate responses that the publication of a pre-autopsy photograph of the naked corpse of the King of Pop on gossipy entertainment site TMZ.com prompted. Outraged about what most people perceived as an invasion of privacy of the late singer and disregard for his family's feelings, and amid numerous calls for a take-down, a commentator under the name of smoothcriminal12 wrote on a music fan site about the Oct. 11 posting: "Who thought that it was appropriate to put those (pictures) up is stupid. Why is it that Osama bin Laden gets the privacy of not having his picture posted everywhere but not Michael Jackson? Absolutely disgusting. (...) Osama bin Laden? A TERRORIST. That's sickening..." To which Timmy84 responded: "Believe me, it's a double-standard world."[100]

While it may seem at first sight that it is the 'darker, unpredictable forces' of the Internet that cause such shifts in the collective understanding of core values such as privacy and decency, and no matter how tempting it may be for some to blame the Net and technology for such changes, it would appear that it is our views of these very values and morality that have shifted - and perhaps even have been tampered with.
This admittedly gruesome case powerfully illustrates how both the American people and the news media are uncertain about what used to be clear and rock-solid principles, and are grappling with how to deal with such now malleable ethical notions in a public sphere. (Notably, to my knowledge, as of Oct. 12, 2011 no other major news media outlet has picked up the photograph and decided to publish it alongside its news story on its Web site - an unusual occurrence in today's online journalism.)

But to refer to the qualifier used by the angered MJ case commentator, it is most likely not just double standards that are being applied to the core values that are traditionally used to regulate democratic societies and their information channels, but *multiple* standards, it seems.
This adds a layer of complexity for anyone who undertakes the drafting and enforcement of new rules and practices for the information industry since this additional dilemma has to be overcome.

With this goal in mind, this second chapter is useful in exposing the contextual moral quagmire in which digital journalists have to operate and in identifying its roots, that

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http://www.alternet.org/news/150857/7_deceptions_about_bin_laden's_killing_pushed_by_the_obama_administration/). Accessed May 5, 2011.
[100] The original photograph was published at
http://www.tmz.com/2011/10/11/michael-jackson-autopsy-photo-dead-naked-dr-conrad-murray-trial-manslaughter/#.TpVci81v4QR; accessed Oct. 11, 2011.
Comments were posted at the following link:
http://prince.org/msg/8/367466?pg=20#msg_8290552. Accessed Oct. 11, 2011.

is, in showing how the increasingly challenged and fast-changing notions of ethics in our present-day journalism can be traced back to the rhetoric and moral language used by our very leaders to define what is ethically acceptable. Put simply, a key ethics-related dilemma facing news professionals today is how can we expect them to understand and practice ethical journalism when the very notion of ethics has been changing in the most confusing ways all around them?

It can safely be assumed that the multi-standard, sometimes conflicting statements on the 'righteous' path of action issuing from our superiors may cause much head-scratching. Obama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech offers a perfect example. With a clear reference to the United States' peace- keeping and democratic (and yet violent) efforts in the Middle East, he said:

"We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth that we will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations - acting individually or in concert - will find the use of force not only necessary but *morally justified*."[101]

Similarly disorienting is MSNBC Morning Joe host and former Republican Congressman Joe Scarborough's opinion piece in *Politico* earlier this year, which although predictably steeped in partisan politics, casts away all notions of moral perspective when, to make a point about "the morally murky afterglow of the Obama years," he throws in comparisons with Hitler and Stalin.[102] While knowledge of history and familiarity with US politics will go a long way towards reinstalling a sense of balance in interpreting these periods, one has to admit that such rhetoric is very confusing for the younger generation of journalists and their 'digital native' peers producing multimedia content on the Net.

When facing such wild variations in ethical judgment, journalists and news industry leaders may want to ask themselves whether a participatory model of ethical regulation could help compensate for such divergences in interpretations of basic moral principles. They could start by defining and agreeing on where personal opinion and analysis end, and where a sense of commonly shared values and more or less 'balanced,' healthy views of ethics and morality begin.

Recent news events offer plenty of evidence that the creative and controversial interpretations of ethically tense and emotionally charged dilemmas show no signs of abating. Despite the government's recent zealous efforts to tighten the regulatory belt, the moral landscape in which such news events occur is as murky as ever. Such interpretations are most audibly voiced by the mainstream media taking their cues

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[101] Italics added. The whole quote can be found in the full text of Obama's Peace Prize speech on msnbc.com at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34360743/ns/politics-white%20house/. Accessed Dec. 10, 2009.

[102] Joe Scarborough, "The Hypocrisy of the American Left," *Politico*, March 29, 2011, http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0311/52062.html. accessed March 29, 2011; An interesting analysis of the piece can be found at http://www.mediaite.com/online/msnbcs-joe-scarborough-claims-the-left-is-hypocritical-regarding-libya/ under the title "MSNBC's Joe Scarborough Claims The Left Is 'Hypocritical' Regarding Libya," Alex Alvarez (Mediaite, March 29, 2011). Accessed March 29, 2011.

from decision-makers in Washington, and are then infused with even more varied[103] views and agendas from interests groups and the population at large.

One such case in point is what appears to be the God-decreed, human-fate-defining move by the White House to target and kill in September 2011 the U.S.-born militant preacher Anwar al-Awlaki, a terrorist with links to al Qaeda, albeit an *alleged* one - which even at the most basic moral level changes a lot of things, as the public's vociferous denouncements of the Administration's powers to 'decide who lives and who dies' among its citizens attested.
The secrecy surrounding the Obama Administration's decision (since there was no public record of the operation) added a layer of ethical complexity for the journalists covering the case: how could they properly inform the public while relying on secondary or tertiary sources, or worse but very common in this digital age, aggregated reports from unknown origins making the rounds on the Net?[104] How could they verify the accuracy of this information? To my knowledge, even the vocal commentators who wrote online analyses of this event have not addressed this issue of accuracy and verification.

Another very recent and highly sensitive case that challenged the moral compass of everyone involved is that of Troy Anthony Davis, the American citizen who was convicted of- and executed on Sept. 21 for the murder of a Burger King security guard in 1989. Keeping in mind the convict's denial of the charges until the end, Law professor Mark Osler wrote in an Op-ed piece for CNN that "The meaningful cases in law almost always involve a clash of virtues." Arguing that the two basic moral values of "deliberation" and "mercy" were sorely lacking during the whole case's proceedings, he then concludes: "The Troy Davis case shows us a truth: We have wandered too far from our own best virtues."[105]
Osler then argues for more deliberation, "a predominant central virtue promoted by the Constitution," and a feature we may want to test in a new participatory system of online discussion for editors and journalists facing ethical dilemmas in their work.

In addition to the obvious battle over values and virtues that went on online and off- about the case, another question directly related to journalists', and especially editors' professional ethics raised its head: one has to wonder why this particular case, out of all the death penalty cases the country has seen, made the national *and* international headlines. Buried in the editing of my thesis, I was actually informed of this news by my 83-year-old mother in Belgium. Aside from the very visible moral dilemma on a societal and judicial level for Americans, what kind of editorial decisions led to so much media coverage on a global scale?

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[103] 'Varied': here, not to be taken necessarily in a pejorative way.

[104] For more on the Anwar al-Awlaki case, see Scott Shane, "U.S. Approves Targeted Killing of American Cleric," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/07/world/middleeast/07yemen.html. Accessed April 6, 2010; and Mark Hosenball, "Secret panel can put Americans on "kill list," *Reuters*, Oct. 5, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/05/us-cia-killlist-idUSTRE79475C20111005. Accessed Oct. 5, 2011.

[105] Mark Osler, "Troy Davis and constitutional virtues," Special to CNN, Sept. 21, 2011, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-09-21/opinion/opinion_troy-davis-legal-issues_1_final-appeals-habeas-corpus-constitution?_s=PM:OPINION. Accessed Sept. 21, 2011.

This leads us to the perennial and crucial media ethics question of *who* makes the decisions? - a gnawing question that I first introduced in Chapter 1 and will do my best at answering in Chapters 3 and 4, with the help of my interviewed sources.

The same question could very well be asked in the context of the early stages of the recent Wall Street protests in New York City. Writing in an online discussion forum, a poster (nicknamed nd33) observed: "I don't know a whole lot about this, but I'm surprised it hasn't started a discussion here, as it seems to be pretty big. 50,000 protesters so far they reckon and is happening every day since Saturday and they are saying it will continue for days to come.
There appears to have been a deliberate media blackout imposed, because it's not making any major news so far."[106]

The poster's original source, current affairs blogger Alexander Higgins, confirmed the non-coverage by the mainstream media: "I just received a call telling me a stand-off between the police and 50,000 protestors who have gathered in New York City is poised to occur. The caller has informed NYC police have ordered the protestors to disperse by 10:00 PM and the protestors are stating they will refuse to follow the order.
As with the ongoing anti-banker protests in Greece, Spain and in fact throughout Europe, the protests here in the U.S. will be largely or entirely ignored by the corporate / M$M media[107]. We now have the masses gathering against the Wall Street Bankers. In fact, the word around the rumor mill, is protestors are planning to divert rallies planned this fall in Washington D.C, and other major cities, to join forces against the bankers on their home turf."

This, coupled with reports in the blogosphere and online forums that Yahoo.com was also blocking emails that contained exchanges on the protests,[108] represents a sad day for journalistic ethics in the digital age.
One might be comforted by the thought that new technologies and sharable media have now at least helped spread the word about such news events and thus partially solved the problem. But only partially - as Marshall McLuhan reminds us that "technology has no *per se* moral bent. It is only a tool that profoundly shapes an individual's and, by extension, a society's self-conception and realization."[109]
Such a theory would support the idea of installing a strong foundation of values and standards in any new digital news-reporting systems, mine included.

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[106] The original full thread of the discussion can be found at http://prince.org/msg/105/367383. Accessed Sept. 19, 2011; The poster's original source, Alexander Higgins Blog, can be found at http://blog.alexanderhiggins.com/2011/09/17/watch-live-50000-gathered-in-nyc-poised-to-clash-with-police-in-the-occupy-wall-street-protests-68661. Accessed Sept. 17, 2011.

[107] 'M$M media': I have quoted literally from my source (the whole text can be found at http://blog.alexanderhiggins.com/2011/09/17/watch-live-50000-gathered-in-nyc-poised-to-clash-with-police-in-the-occupy-wall-street-protests-68661/ accessed Sept. 17, 2011), but it not clear what is meant by this acronym, or if this is a typing error. I take it to mean 'the mainstream media.'

[108] http://prince.org/msg/105/367383. Accessed Sept. 19, 2011.

[109] Quoted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_McLuhan. Accessed March 29, 2012..

Also unaddressed by media analysts and news professionals so far, and thus still unanswered, is the question of whether new technologies and social media have empowered independent journalists and citizens in the editorial decision-making process within mainstream news - which judging by my illustrations above and the kind of one-sided, very specialized triage that still permeates our mainstay news to this day doesn't seem to be the case.

Indeed, much has been said about the empowering publishing technologies now in the hands of the creative, critical and active segments of the public. Much of that public, when experienced or interested in writing and multimedia publishing, has been officially engaged by 'citizen journalism' projects run by the major electronic publications and networks[110]. However, despite this now official (even if still unpaid) presence of citizen- and independent contributors in the mainstream media, they still have very little voice in content selection and other decisions. Key editorial and ethical decisions continue to be made exclusively by the hosting party, the traditional 'gatekeepers.' This is certainly not what the public was thought it was being offered, when courted by the mainstream media for its (I repeat - *free*) writing services.

In his address to Boston University's College of communication on Sept. 20, 1997, Pulitzer-Prize-winning investigative journalist Carl Bernstein quite matter-of-factly told his audience "Don't be fooled by the old myth that reporting is about objectivity," and admitted that "Deciding what is news is the most subjective of acts and we need new leadership in determining the agenda, courageous leadership that moves away from Murdochism,"[111] ... without elaborating what that leadership might look like.

His lack of details on what a future model might involve left most in the audience with a feeling that he was referring to the traditional 'gatekeeping' model of journalism.

While I recognize that the editorial voices of a few are still the loudest in the mainstream media, despite their embrace of social online media and citizens-produced news, and that much of this news has succumbed to unethical 'Murdochism,' one may want to challenge Bernstein's model and consider what a more equal and representative model might look like.

But to succeed in such an endeavor, and even before we look more closely at what has changed for journalists today and what new challenges they are facing (Chapter 3), it would serve us well to be clear about the ethical values and standard principles we need to safeguard in these digital spaces.

This is exactly what ProPublica Editor-in-Chief Paul Steiger recommended to his audience of news professionals in his speech for the McGill lecture series at the University of Georgia in October 2010[112]:

"I want to talk today about some of the new ethical questions I think the vast changes in our business are posing for journalists. But before doing that, I think it's critical to say that while some of the questions may be new, the compass we should be using to

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[110] CNN's iReport is just one example out of many.

[111] Quoted from a Boston University brochure commemorating the event.

[112] The entire text of his speech can be found in the article by Mike Webb, "ProPublica Editor Paul Steiger Discusses Emerging Ethical Questions for Journalists," *ProPublica*, Oct. 21, 2010, http://www.propublica.org/atpropublica/item/propublica-editor-paul-steiger-discusses-emerging-ethical-questions-for-jou. Accessed Oct. 21, 2010.

chart our course should be unchanged. That is, the values that guide us - a commitment to fairness, to accuracy, to public service in our best work and to the idea that our work is best seen as a public service, to using the influence that our publishing platforms give us to especially serve those who have less influence in our society - those values are constant. They are values visibly paramount in the journalism of Ralph McGill."

Steiger added that he sees four distinct ethical issues that journalists need to address today: "the blurred line between presentation of fact and opinion; the quest for building a larger audience versus the need for journalism of substance and civic importance; the new business challenges facing the industry; and the need for greater transparency from news organizations."

These are precisely some of the core ethical values and principles in journalism that the following sections of this chapter explore, while identifying the ways they have been violated because of faulty regulations and poor code enforcement, among other factors.

Steiger's comments are useful at this particular point in the thesis, where we are establishing the what, why and how of ethical transgressions in present-day journalism because, unlike Huffington who attributes virtually all blame for American journalism's 'downfall' to reality TV[113], ProPublica's Editor-in-Chief is far more nuanced and help us understand how the repeated violations of professional editorial codes in the practice of news-reporting on the Internet (subjects that I investigate in Chapters 3 and 4) have their roots in long-held values and the best traditions of the American system of journalism.
As editors Steven R. Knowlton and Patrick R. Parsons explain in their Introduction to *The Journalist's Moral Compass*[114], this is a system with "profound intellectual and moral principles at its heart," the creative preservation of which is at the basis of my formula for an improved system for digital news.

4] The process of generating codes: from concept to draft, and from institutionalization to enforcement

Perhaps the key to solving the failings, inefficacies and enforcement issues of journalism ethics codes and to applying this solution to their use in newsrooms, is to change *the process* by which codes are generated.
This is why it is worth asking here, in anticipation of the closer scrutiny of this process under the technological challenges of digital news in Chapter 3, whether each step, from concept to first draft, and from revised draft to final document, would benefit from an open-source, participatory model in which all those who would be

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[113] Arianna Huffington's reductionist approach to what ails the American news media today can be found in her analysis of the reach of reality TV into journalism, popular culture and other spheres of social communications in a section entitled "Working-Class Meets Reality TV." In it, she says that the news that matters, "the stories of working-class Americans, have been all but invisible on network TV." In 2010, it is (theoretically) through reality TV that we get much of our daily news, she says but even in this medium, "most of what we are served up under that rubric is actually the farthest thing from reality." Huffington, 16-17.
[114] Knowlton and Parsons, 1.

using the code are actively engaged in the creative process, their opinions are sought, and used if considered beneficial to the code. If so, could this process also be implemented to make revisions or updates as needed, so as to make code-drafting a truly collaborative, open-source process?

If this is desirable, then all the procedural steps would have to be carefully planned - and preferably 'institutionalized' or formalized within the group of users the code was designated for. Special attention should also be given to making the activity as democratic and representative as possible.

On the other hand, could the current traditional system of generating media guidelines be simply adapted to the new conditions and new types of non-professional participants?

All possibilities are explored in the next two chapters, and there are strong arguments on both sides of the spectrum.

However, it is hard not to see that opening up the process makes the final code not only more likely to be adhered to, given that the users will be more knowledgeable about its tenets and motivated to follow their own instructions. Such a process also fosters transparency in the newsroom and in management. It also brings the news organization [or publication, TV channel, etc.] up to date with the latest trends in self-regulation and newsroom policy management, and the now powerful production practice of media content being generated and shared by all users. A last, but not least important argument: a deliberative, all-inclusive process is "healthy," as Johannensen is cited as explaining in *Mixed Media*: "The very process of developing the formal code can be a healthy one that forces participants to reflect on their goal, on means allowable to achieve those, and on their obligations to all claimants."[115]

Most of the multitude of codes that are in use in print, broadcast and electronic newsrooms today have been generated internally and often drawn or inspired by the original version of early codes. Most major news organizations and smaller companies now have their own, custom-made code of ethics, which they have produced themselves. However, if journalists are now more involved in developing the industry's codes and standards, this hasn't always been the case. In fact, the first codes were drawn by non-journalists - the leaders, media experts and academics from professional news associations and other academic policy-drawing bodies, such as the Hutchins Commission and the SPJ, who were not working reporters and editors. The perceived detachment of these professionals from the daily difficulties of the news-reporting job has been a key criticism of the codes they have produced.

This does not mean that outside opinions should not be actively sought. C. A. J. Coady in an essay entitled "On Regulating Ethics" gives evidence of the active involvement of outside contributors in the generation and enforcement of codes: "These processes of internal regulation, however, have usually involved the participation of outsiders in one way or another, and the operation of supervisory or regulative mechanisms within the organizations, be they professional, business, or academic. So increasingly, we find lay people, philosophers and other academics, lawyers and even 'ethicists' serving on ethics committees or advising on codes of

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[115] Bivins, 48.

ethics or moral problems." Such a development is especially visible in the United States, although other countries are following suit, Coady adds.[116]

Traditionally, professional codes of ethics, in journalism as in other professions, have been generated in a top-to-bottom model, which I argue in the initial parts of my thesis is increasingly becoming inflexible and anachronistic in our times of user participation and collective intelligence. Having said this, many news companies say they encourage their staff to participate in the process of code-drafting and debates on other newsroom policies, although there is no way of verifying if this is happening systematically and to what extent employees' contributions are being taken into account by the management and incorporated into solutions.
This method, however, is much promoted by some news media experts, such as Chris MacDonald, a philosophy professor at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who in recommendations for writing a code of ethics published in Bivins' book, includes the following advice: "Get employees involved. The people who will be guided by the code should be actively involved in writing it. [...] The document is bound to be more meaningful, and find higher levels of acceptance, if employees are part of the process."[117]

Harris in "Codes of Conduct for Journalists" makes the simple yet pertinent statement that "The sorts of contents a code has will depend on the kind of body that drew it up."[118] This is an important consideration since, as he explains, interests may clash: "The interests of members of a journalism trade union will not always be identical with those of the publishers of a newspaper that employs them."[119]
As the developer of an adapted code of ethics, I am especially receptive to two of his recommendations: First, the importance of linking the code's standards to "what people actually do" and the need to start from "the basis of actual practice." And secondly, avoiding phrasing rules as negative statements, but rather using positive terms to clearly state "what constitutes good practice and how to achieve it."
The reformed, 'ideal' method for ethics code-generation seems then to be one based on the bottom-up model and is certainly the one I am applying to my own system.

This thesis would not be complete if I failed to recognize the many current efforts by new media companies and news websites to reform and produce content and new infrastructures to access it in interactive, engaging ways. (I have expanded on this subject in an earlier paper for CMS). However, as I argue in the first chapter, most of these new initiatives have omitted rethinking their codes of ethics to reflect the new ethical challenges facing online journalists. Chapters 3 and 4 offer detailed descriptions of what these might be.

Attitudes Towards Ethics:
From the Idiosyncratic & Dysfunctional to the Righteous

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[116] C. A. J. Coady, "On Regulating Ethics" in *Codes of Ethics and the Professions*, edited by Margaret Coady and Sidney Bloch (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996) 269.
[117] Bivins, 53.
[118] Bivins, 62.
[119] Bivins, 63.

While we are now a little clearer about where to look for the origins of ethical errors and morally wrong news-reporting decisions by our journalists, and how to address them in the guidelines-drafting process, it also helps to define what we *do not* want in an ideal news production model and monitoring system.

Here I can cite a couple of approaches to journalism ethics in the digital information age that, although common, we want to avoid.

One such approach that is alas all too frequent, is that of brushing the whole issue of ethics under the carpet, and excising it from all discussions on solving the problems in the industry. *The Harvard International Review*'s Fall 2010 issue, which is devoted to "Journalism in Focus" and promisingly entitled "Pressing Change" is a laudable effort. Its cover story in particular, "An Emergent Neo-journalism," covers everything the news market and practice are struggling with at present, from falling advertising revenue to the declining quality of news, and the perils of working with 'citizen journalists,' for whom, as "independent journalists, the risks increase; they have no institutional support and limited experience in dealing with intimidation, harassment, or imprisonment."[120] Various remedies are suggested throughout the issue, usually involving new business models for sustainability. However, at no point do personal ethics and a basic respect for journalistic professional principles enter into the equation - which one may surmise may well be at the root of the problem of poor-quality news and a superficially informed public, and which I demonstrate with more certainty in Chapter 3.

Sadly, such disregard for what really matters outside of commercial interests is quite rampant in journalism today, both in the mainstream and alternative media. One of my primary goals for this thesis is to raise awareness about the need to place ethics at the center of any potential new model and to see that the ethical failings of the news media and the social and governmental structures around it do not get forgotten in the scramble to re-invent the profession.

The negative notions and attitudes towards media ethics from both industry professionals and amateur news content producers, from condescending to forgetful, are in fact too many to count, and are in the end, as I argue in subsequent chapters, self-defeating.

But it is worth cautioning against the 'words of media wisdom' of Oscar Wilde, who in 1891 recommended a questionable solution to remedy the ills of American journalism – which according Wilde "has carried its authority to the grossest and most brutal extreme."[121] Having become "the industrious and well-paid servant" of the masses to which he delivers entertainment and "the private lives of men and women," the journalist should adopt the independent mode of the artist, Wilde argued - that is, not submit to any moral code imposed on him by society, "not accept their standard, but realize[d] his own." While following one's own heart is certainly key to creative endeavors, this modus operandi is little desirable or even practical if we are to implement a system of shared and sharable professional principles for online journalists - mostly American but also global, and inclusive of all media professionals interested in testing it.

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[120] Robert H. Giles, "An Emergent Neo-Journalism - The Decline and Renewal of News Media," *Harvard International Review*, Fall 2010, Vol. xxxii, No. 3, 36-40, quote at 36.
[121] Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (London: Penguin Books, 1954) 40-43.

This issue of the desirability and feasibility of a universal code of values is a perennial one in the profession, and such an arrangement for all mediums of news production may appear a little Utopian. But as I argue in my Proposals section in Chapter 7, it remains a goal towards which one should strive. While the later sections of this chapter identify the historical and philosophical roots of media ethics in the individualism of the Enlightenment[122], it goes without saying that the new needs of participatory journalism require more than ever respect for a common code of professional conduct.

Another dysfunctional relationship to ethics - albeit quite an amusing one in retrospect - is that of famed Russian mathematician Grigori Yakovlevich Perelman[123], who after revolutionizing the field of geometry with his findings and being awarded several international prizes, decided to leave his area of research entirely because of what he called "his disappointment with the ethical standards of the field of mathematics."[124]

Although his sphere of specialization is obviously quite remote from journalism, Perelman's very personal and convoluted sense of ethics and professional standards is worth examining for a moment, as it can be useful in alerting us to the risks of designing overly personal or overly vague journalistic standards, which in turn would increase the risk of violations.

Outraged at what he perceived as his colleagues' ethical breaches, Perelman once explained to the media his decision to quit mathematics by saying that "almost all of them are conformists. They are more or less honest, but they tolerate those who are not honest." He added that "It is not people who break ethical standards who are regarded as aliens. It is people who like me are isolated,"[125]

Russian journalist Masha Gessen's biography of Perelman gives an even clearer insight into 'the workings of his ethical mind.' and his take on 'the universality' of certain values.[126]

Explaining his initial attraction to geometry, she writes that "he felt quite exasperated with his fellow humans and their ways, and his chosen field seemed to attract the few people whose internal codes of conduct were as strict as his own."[127]
But even long before becoming a professional mathematician, Perelman had developed a very personal attachment to righteous, ethical conduct, according to Gessen:

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[122] See especially the writings of John Stuart Mill among others, in Knowlton and Parsons, 71.

[123] For general biographical information, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Perelman. Accessed April 7, 2012; for a comprehensive account of his life and achievements, see Masha Gessen's biography, *Perfect Rigor - A Genius and the Mathematical Breakthrough of the Century* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2009) 86, 87, 88, 183.

[124] Quoted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Perelman. Accessed April 7, 2012.

[125] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Perelman. Accessed April 7, 2012.

[126] Gessen.

[127] Gessen, 88.

"'Somewhere in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, Perelman seemed to have found a way to relieve the tension between prevailing social mores, which he perceived as illogical, internally inconsistent, and perpetually shifting - and they certainly were all these things[128] - and his idea of how the world should work. He derived a set of his own rules based on the few values he knew to be absolute and proceeded to follow them. As new situations presented themselves, he figured out the rules that applied to them - this too may have seemed inconsistent and shifting to an observer, but only because the observer did not know the algorithm. Naturally, Perelman expected the rest of the world to follow his rules; it would not have occurred to him that other people did not know them. After all, the rules were based on universal values, honesty being primary among them. Honesty meant always telling the whole truth, which is to say, all the available accurate information - much as Perelman did when he supplied his proofs with information extraneous to the actual solution."[129]

Perelman's observations that long-established social values may in fact be changing and transient - and thus inconsistent, and perhaps - I will surmise, even unreliable, or inapplicable in certain contexts - are not only very interesting because of their relative uniqueness, but also very important to keep in mind when designing a new ethics code for journalism professionals. These characteristics of volatile inconsistency and chameleon-like variability might indeed quickly become weaknesses when our new rules are being implemented. So, for all their idiosyncrasies, the mathematician's remarks and feelings towards moral codes can usefully point out to us what to watch for as new guidelines are introduced, adopted, enforced, and start taking a life of their own.

Paradoxically, Perelman's case also shows us how even the most enduring, well-established and notable of moral values can be personalized and internalized in some unhealthy or otherwise twisted ways detrimental to the larger community and society at large, and eventually to ethics itself. From all the evidence transgressions in ethics can take multifarious forms.

Still, despite the need for skilful negotiation and compromise between one's personal morals and other social-universal ones - as Perelman (indirectly) made us understand, acquiring and maintaining a strong internal foundation of ethical principles is crucial for anyone involved in news, from the professionals to those who aspire to join them as well for those who by their own self-proclaimed skills and interests publish 'news' and other narratives on the Net without much preliminary- or afterthought.

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[128] This is Gessen's own opinion. While I recognize some changes and natural evolution in social norms, I rather tend to see, on the contrary, recurring patterns of thinking and behavior, which seem more persistent and influential than the changes themselves. This is all of course very broadly speaking; nuances must be made depending on the contexts of the time and place.

[129] Gessen, 86. Gessen mentions another of Perelman's idiosyncratic takes on rules and standards, which can find no better place to be related than here: "Clearly, Perelman's rules on handling money had grown as exacting and as convoluted as his rules on footnoting. And as with footnotes, while the standards were known only to Perelman himself, he believed they were universal - and if he caught anyone violating them, he was merciless." (183).

Ethics in collaborative news-reporting teams starts with the individuals, as I argue in Chapter 4, and thus the weight of one's personal values and conduct must not be underestimated. One's values play a vital role in warding off the risks and temptations associated with possible transgressions, as the late law partner and Deputy White House Counsel Vince Foster made clear in his commencement address at the University of Kansas Law School in May 1993: "The reputation you develop for intellectual and ethical integrity will be your greatest asset or your worst enemy. You will be judged by your judgment. ... There is no victory, no advantage, no fee, no favor, which is worth even a blemish on your reputation for intellect and integrity. ... Dents to [your] reputation are irreparable."[130]

Conclusion

As said, this second chapter offers only limited observations given its scope and defined topic of media ethics and their transgressions, but it enables me to draw more informed conclusions in the latter part of Chapters 6 and 7. For now, we can note a clear decline not only in the practice of ethics in the newsroom as well as in the interest in ethics as a subject of intellectual inquiry - who has time for thoughtful, critical considerations in our overworked and understaffed times? - but also as a matter of scrutiny by the public and by journalists themselves. In the current economic conditions, everyone is too busy trying to save his/her job, seeking and accepting writing assignments anywhere, without verifying that the publication's ethical standards match our own, which seems to rank very low in most people's list of priorities when seeking a new job or assignment. Thus, it is my - perhaps misinformed - assumption at this point that news bloggers, Twitterers and other news media content producers fall into this category of behavior when it comes to the ethics of their job. Put simply, it does not seem that they have given much thought to the issue, nor do the media organizations and independent editors who employ them. Fast turnout, 'digestible' news bits and shock value, seem to have replaced the traditional, admittedly longer and more rigid linear storytelling we are accustomed to seeing in our newspapers.

These developments have occurred in an ethical vacuum and contributed to a sharp decline in the kind of practice-changing criticism of the press by the public and by journalists themselves that was familiar in the last century and which has in fact shaped the profession. Such stunted inclination towards critical enquiry in today's news media consumers and producers can be found in online communities of news readers and writers in social networks such as Facebook. In a post dated Jan 27, 2010 CNN Foreign Correspondent Christinane Amanpour recounted her interviews and meetings with Haiti's elite as part of her Blog-style coverage for her Facebook Page.[131] The post in question stated "Haiti's Prime Minister just told me he has reports confirming child & organ trafficking happening here in Haiti now." The 66 comments

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[130] Remarks quoted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vince_Foster (accessed April 8, 2012) which sources them in Ronald W. Maris, Alan L. Berman, Morton M. Silverman *Comprehensive Textbook of Suicidology* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000) 280–281.

[131] http://www.facebook.com/amanpourabc - Note: Her Facebook page does not allow for quick and easy access to the particular post I quoted, but for anyone who has the time and patience to trace it back in her 'Wall"s archives, it is certainly possible. Accessed April 8, 2012.

from readers posted in response stand out for the emotional outpouring of feelings of disgust and condemnations at the 'revelation' of this practice being rife in Haiti's current conditions. No one seemed to question the source of the reports, if there was evidence for them, whether the reporter, Amanpour, had seen them, had she asked to see them? If not, why not? What was the Prime Minister's response? What was his motive in telling Amanpour about these reports? Although very noble on a humane level, the responses were striking in that they show a surprising readiness on the part of the public to take a piece of news, perhaps *any* news about Haiti [or other event] at face value. Compared to the scrutiny performed by earlier audiences, which attacked what they considered poor journalism and reformed it, there was barely any questioning.

Of course this is only one case study and we should be careful not to generalize. But perhaps we could learn a little from these more ethically- and professionally-aware and critical past audiences and news media practitioners.

We now have all the new media tools we need and the opportunity to shape and improve journalism. My only remaining question is, why don't we?

Chapter 3: The 'New' News Media: What Has Changed

Introduction to Change

Enter Change and Transition

The semi-rhetorical question that I pose in closing my second chapter, of why, now that we have so many publishing technologies at our disposition and our experienced index finger on the pulsating cycle of 24/7 news, do we not do more to improve the moral quality of news, is both pertinent and urgent.

The time for asking it is ripe, and as many on the news production as well as the consumption side now recognize, giving renewed priority to the quality of news and moral responsibility of journalists is long overdue, as my interviewed sources attest later on in this chapter.

A related question is what has been holding us (journalists) back and hampered the industry from designing some large-scale plan of attack to address its prevailing quality and credibility issues in a more consistent and uniform manner, applicable perhaps to all media. Instead, it has been trying to solve editorial setbacks and quandaries as they arise within the claustrophobic confines of its own newsrooms, or worse, leaving the self-publisher alone to make sense of the hybrid contemporary information frenzy and make makeshift editorial decisions, unaided in his/her living-room working quarters.

In fact, even on a purely abstract level, there has been scant industry-wide *discussion* of broad action-taking to save the soul and purpose [rather than just the economic health] of news and journalism.

The main obstacle to this discussion and concerted action on standards and regulation are the changes alluded to in Chapter 2 and explored more critically here in Chapter 3.

Indeed, contrary to what my purely stylistic title to this introduction may suggest, we all know that this pair (Change and Transition) has never really left, but rather has been part of the media's evolutionary landscape from time immemorial[1], and thus, we can plausibly hypothesize that the ongoing assault of unprecedented and unpredictable changes in the news media is in great part responsible for paralyzing its practitioners like the proverbial deer caught in the headlights, and consequently derailing their best intentions and perfectly laid-out plans for improving their practice.

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[1] See references to the transitory and interconnected nature of media evolution by Pablo J. Boczkowski and others in the preceding chapter. Irving Fang, *A History of Mass Communications - Six Information Revolutions*(Waltham MA, Focal Press, 1997) and *Rethinking Media Change - The Aesthetics of Transition*, Edited by David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004) are also good texts on the subject.

Thus, a volatile news environment is nothing new, and the inevitable changes and hiccups that accompany this fast-paced, competitive profession are familiar to both media observers and the public. My general media overview in the initial chapters provides ample evidence of how concrete news stories play out in this treacherous environment.

However, now there seems to be a breakdown of sorts, especially when it comes to the adherence to a personal and professional code of moral conduct. Past 'gatekeeping' patterns and previously reliable journalistic techniques have floundered in the face of the added difficulty of conducting one's work in the digital domain, alongside a mind-boggling array of technologically savvy and creative competitors from around the world, acting and publishing on their own, or aided by a seemingly unlimited amount of 'knowledge' from the 'crowds' populating cyberspace. Many of these competing freelance, self-appointed 'journalists' contributing to the vast amounts of 'news' on the Net have not finished high school yet, leaving some traditionally educated or otherwise qualified journalists wondering whether to hang their journalism degree and internships records in a decorative frame above their bed or to donate them to the prehistoric archival collection of The MET.

Moreover, this particular transition in the history of journalism appears unique in its disruptiveness because while there seemed to have been a certain pattern and rhythmic cycle in previous transitions from one period of mass communications to the next[2], this one that is embracing all forms and manners of electronic production has effectively destroyed previously functional and profitable models, and has, somewhat contradictorily, left us with the perception that the most qualified and experienced of its practitioners are scrambling for guidance on all levels.
Harvard University's Nieman Journalism Lab editors are not exaggerating when they write on the project's Web site that not only has The Internet "brought forth an unprecedented flowering of news and information. But it has also destabilized the old business models that have supported quality journalism for decades." As a result, they say, "Good journalists across the country are losing their jobs or adjusting to a radically new news environment online."[3]

More ominously, in describing how the Lab seeks to help reporters and editors "adjust to their online labors" and traditional news organizations find ways to survive, they also indirectly predict that "the new crop of startups (...) will complement - or *supplant* - them." (italics added). Such a radically disruptive scenario, envisioning a complete takeover by the new creative journalistic endeavors, is not, however, a certainty, or even desirable, according to some media critics. New York University Journalism Professor Jay Rosen in emailed comments for this thesis spelled out the trouble ahead for all those who would think along those lines: "They start by asking if citizen journalism is, could be, or is on the way to becoming a *replacement* (italics in original) for lost capacity in the traditional press to cover the news and do public service investigations. But what if that isn't the right starting point? I think it's deeply wrong, and gets the entire inquiry going in the wrong direction."[4] Rosen pointed to a

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[2] For more on this, see "What Are Information Revolutions" in Fang.
[3] Nieman Journalism Lab Web site: http://www.niemanlab.org/about/. Accessed April 9, 2012.
[4] Rosen emailed his comments Aug. 20, 2010. In his email, he also gave the links to two of his own Blog posts, which he said covered my questions on changes in

like-minded colleague's Blog post documenting the ongoing 'war' of sorts between 'old' and 'new' media for ultimate prevalence in the future of news, and seeking to dispel the notion that 'the new' will replace 'the old.'[5]

While there certainly is some validity to Rosen's predictions on how the current paradigm-shifting processes in the news media will evolve in future, one cannot help but wonder if the age-old 'fear of change' is not raising its ugly head from beneath his argument.

Other media analysts have assessed the disruptions brought about by the Internet and its indigenous practices in much more cataclysmic terms. In his "The Media Equation" piece in 2011, *New York Times* columnist David Carr doesn't mince his words when chronicling the whirlwind of new developments in the news industry, from "the end of verticals," to "televised social media," and "the nonlinear grid," concluding that "the sky is falling and will continue to do so," and that "the way forward is paved with chaos."[6]
On the plus side, he qualifies these industry-shaking changes as a "creative destruction." Otherwise, the world of news today looks to him nothing less than reality turned on its head:

"Two-year-old Web sites are worth more than 50-year-old magazines, storied newspapers are now owned by their lenders, cable news has been upended by partisan shouters, social media now preoccupies attention that used to be owned by mainstream producers, and that television screen in the family den is just one of the numerous screens people are staring at," he writes.

But most notably, Carr notices a modification in the evolutionary speed and impact of the transformational shifts we are witnessing in our mass communications landscape: "For years, those of us who toiled in the backwater of media reporting — covering people who cover other people — were left to trace the slow-motion decline of mainstream media and the inconsequential pratfalls of nascent digital efforts. Click through a few years and suddenly the media landscape looks profoundly altered and punished, like a place where a serious earthquake was followed by a tsunami. News about the news business, once a rare commodity, now comes out of a fire hose,

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contemporary journalism and the future of news -
http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2008/09/18/because_we_have.html; Accessed April 18, 2012 and
http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2008/07/14/a_most_useful_d.html in which he gives his own definition of citizen journalism. Accessed April 18, 2012.
[5] The full Blog post by Steve Buttry, Director of Community Engagement & Social Media at Journal Register Co. can be found at
http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2010/07/15/academics-measure-new-media-again-by-old-media-yardstick/. Accessed April 18, 2012. Buttry's vision for an ideal model, presumably a mix retaining the best of 'old' media and what 'the new' has to offer, is never explicitly stated.
[6] David Carr, "The Great Mashup of 2011,""The Media Equation," *The New York Times*, Jan. 3, 2011,
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/03/business/media/03carr.html?pagewanted=all.
AccessedJan. 2, 2011.

with many days bringing yet another shift in old paradigms."[7]

The depth and significance of these changes have intensified to such - in Carr's words - 'punishing' levels that he himself shies away from offering any kind of guidance on how best to maintain a sense of professionalism and personal ethics throughout the digital storm, contenting himself with merely citing the potentially problematic new forms of media production. Quite naturally, he dwells on the burning issue for the printed and electronic press of producing revenue, citing *The New York Times*' own initiative in this regard, its new Web-based metered payment model. And he laments the bewildering array of screens and media consumption- and production technologies that he seems to suggest distract us from the substance of news. But the importance of maintaining ethical values and transferring them to our online interactions is never mentioned. Media ethics remain conspicuously absent from Carr's analysis.

And he is not alone in leaving ethics outside of the debate. As my comments in my initial chapters show, the lack of concern within and outside journalism for the professional slippages and gradual moral degradation that have accompanied the progressive adoption of online news-reporting and distribution practices - which forms the basis of my main argument - is pervasive. Save for a few select authors, many of those who have written about their own recipe for 'how to save journalism' have chosen to leave media ethics outside of their study.[8]

Given this persistent lack of discussion on the place of ethics in the new journalism, it is no surprise then, that we find the greatest disarray surrounding the moral boundaries of professional journalists, which, if we observe their day-to-day online professional activities (which I do in my case studies) may appear to have disappeared - at least from the cynics' perspective. The more moderate critics, such as the authors of *Media & Values* speak of a growing moral void that they identify as having its roots in the microcosmic manifestations of society - namely, the family, the disintegrating sources of authority and traditions in the home, and "the wider reconfiguration in the organization of living."[9] This moral decline, we may deduce, together with an infectious fragmentation of these principles in what they call the broader "moral communities,"[10] may well have taken advantage of the ideological vacuum created by the digital revolution to seep, incognito, into professional journalism's news-reporting and editing practices.

In yet another report on the now highly porous boundaries between the public and the private and our shaken notions of taste and moral decency in an age of 'Facebook revelations,' Jeremy W. Peters and Brian Stelter locate the changes we are experiencing in the way we (as a society and as private and professional individuals) document ourselves and the world around us into a broader context: "We're in kind of

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[7] Carr.

[8] Mark S. Luckie's *The Digital Journalist's Handbook* (CreateSpace, 2010) is one such guide that seeks to help journalists make the leap into the digital sphere, but focuses strictly on the technical aspects of news-gathering and -reporting. It is one of the books showing this particularity that I cite in this thesis (see bibliography).

[9] David E. Morrison, Matthew Kieran, Michael Svennevig and Sarah Ventress, *Media & Values - Intimate Transgressions in a Changing Moral and Cultural Landscape* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007 in the UK, 2008 in the US) 5.

[10] Morrison et al., 62.

a cultural transformation right now," they quote San Jose State University Emeritus Professor James Lull as remarking.[11]

To these larger social shifts in our attitudes towards what *can* be and should *not* be published or broadcast and related transformations in the culture of American journalism, I would add an important dimension to such changes: slowly but surely for the past decade or so, a social transformation of its own has been taking place within the ranks of journalists themselves. The formerly well-defined and tight-knit community of local and national reporters, foreign correspondents and editors-in-chief and -at-large[12] seems now to have splintered into intractable categories, further complicated when individual journalists replicate their coverage or comments through multiple personas and platforms, setting themselves up for possibly morphing indistinctly into the larger community of non-professional content creators on the Net.

Johannesburg-based *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Robyn Dixon mixing coverage of South Africa's domestic and foreign affairs news with personal stories and recipes of African dishes on her Facebook page is a case in point.
The new practice of these updates and personalized profiles accompanying the key stories has by now been fully embraced by many in the profession, as print publications have digitized themselves and launched their Web sites. While these added tidbits of data no doubt give valuable contextual information on the news events being covered, they also create new personalities and meanings within the traditional relationships between reporters and their readers and sources.
My former supervisor at CNN International, Moscow Bureau Chief Jill Dougherty, now Foreign Affairs Correspondent in Washington, whom I have 'befriended' on Facebook and whose updates and personal photo essays I consult avidly and regularly, is a perfect example.

Indeed, what is undeniable about the new media landscape is that the biggest change, the one that has been the most disruptive to established norms of personal conduct and work ethics, as journalists have made the transition to working on the Internet, is

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[11] Jeremy W. Peters and Brian Stelter, "The Facebook Skeletons Come Out," *The New York Times*, Sunday edition, Nov. 7 (Nov. 5 online), 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/07/fashion/07indiscretions.html. Accessed Nov. 5, 2010.
[12] From my own conversations with colleagues as a Moscow-based correspondent for eight years, I recall that we and other members of the small community of foreign journalists in Moscow used to joke about how foreign correspondents from the major networks and publications, who are usually assigned to several foreign bureaus in the course of their careers, would keep bumping into each other in major cities around the globe, confirming the widespread rumor that the community of foreign journalists posted in these various parts of the world is in fact a very small one, full of familiar faces. This is in stark contrast to today's many online communities who aggregate, comment on, or otherwise publish news content on the Net, who in most cases have never met their readers and online 'colleagues' or fellow contributors, and have never experienced first-hand the place they write about, or had any contact with the original sources of the news stories they post. I will leave my readers to draw their conclusions on the 'quality' of such news-reporting.

this 'social' disintegration of the professional community of journalists.[13] The breakdown of the predetermined roles and titles in the traditional hierarchy has engendered a still incalculable number of categories of 'journalists' - all with varying degrees of affiliation to a centralized system, ranging from full to non-existent - and all not only possessing various skills and experiences, but also mostly in the dark as to what constitutes ethical news production on the Net - albeit, I assume, with different levels of awareness about this deficiency.

Here I should note that while it is true that digitized journalism has produced a multitude of offspring of bewilderingly varied pedigrees, which would be very hard to quantify accurately, the four categories of people who are today producing content on the Web that can be defined as 'news,' (whom I introduced in Chapter 1) still provide a helpful 'map' for us to use as potential 'test subjects' of a proposed code of ethics and standards.[14]

These are 1] the traditional mainstream press and major broadcast networks - the most centralized and professionally bound by internal, institution-based codes of ethics, media- and cyber legislation and other laws that affect First Amendment Rights[15], they are also under the greatest pressure to resist and reverse the declining quality of their coverage under the financial hardships of trying to remain sustainable in the digital economy; 2] those same media's efforts at digitizing their operations and adopting the social online practices that have arisen from new technologies - here adherence to a common code of work ethics and standards is fitfully enforced and contested even within their own ranks[16]; 3] the online (often multimedia) creations of the 'digital natives,' a rich terrain of innovative news projects and individual journalists' Blogs and Web sites which did not originate from earlier printed versions, and which are even more left to their own designs when it comes to the adoption of professional norms, with some embracing their own concoctions of editorial rules, and others fiercely resisting any forms of control, self- or externally imposed; and finally 4] the largely undocumented[17] numerous individuals who, broadly speaking,

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[13] I am still here primarily referring to American journalists, but this particular statement can be applied to all professional journalists in news organizations around the globe, so long as they are using Web- and other digital technologies in their work. I am referring to a community of professionals here, not a geographic community.

[14] I am proposing here to use the four categories of journalists and news producers simply as a tool to help us mentally map out the potential applications of the proposed regulation; I am not implying that application to all four categories is necessarily desirable (although I personally strongly lean towards this conclusion), or easily feasible to enforce.

[15] For more on these and other media laws, see Robert Trager, Joseph Russomanno and Susan Dente Ross, *The Law of Journalism & Mass Communication* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2010) 46 and especially 62)

[16] As explained in my 'Goals' section in Chapter 1, it is one of the purposes of this thesis to seek to encourage the professionals now working online to devote more time and attention to the ethical dimension of their work and hopefully find solutions to the problems they encounter through the prism of shared values and guidelines.

[17] 'Undocumented': I mean here that based on my own observations, there is little interest - and therefore research in studying the professional and ethical habits of the broader segments of Internet content producers by the journalism profession itself, not necessarily by new media analysts, researchers, students and academics. The latter have been actively engaged in such studies and surveys.

post news content on the Net and participate in discussion- and creative media forums, and whose concern for ethics and professional standards is little probed by their audiences and other Net denizens. Their norms, if they have any, are often known only to themselves.[18]

Although clearly differing in skills and affiliations, these four 'artificial'[19] (or perhaps more appropriately defined as heuristic) categories of news publishers cohabiting in cyberspace and the real world, at times competing and at time collaborating, do share the common trait of being in a quandary as to whom to apply what kind of moral and professional standards in the heavily and eclectically populated spaces of cyber journalism, and how.
Not surprisingly, given the controversial nature of ethically sensitive news topics and their sources, and these four groups' (and their derivatives') widely differing associations and backgrounds, there is much contestation among them on the subject of media ethics and enforcement, and clashes of tastes and tempers when personal values are involved predictably occur.

What transpires then from these media critics' analyses (and my own) of the current turmoil in digital journalism is that our combined conclusions set the stage for my argument, pinpointing the need for at least some guidance, and at most some form of regulation and standards.
Even if there might be - understandably - some disagreement about enforcement and the reach that such guidelines should have (the eternal question of whom do we include among those we expect to comply is a nagging one), at the most basic level, it is hard not to agree with *Media & Values* authors' simple observations on the need for moral guidance and the ABC of healthy, functional enforcement.

They start by reaffirming certain well-established truths about our intrinsic, human need for direction, finding confirmation in the Neo-Aristotelians' writings: "We need governance to help us develop the virtues required for fulfillment and happiness," they write, adding that "the point of legislation and regulation on this view is the cultivation of our well-being."[20]
Identifying the decline in society's moral performance in its growing lack of "a moral language by which to express judgment," they then observe that "It is as if people had been left alone in the world to decide upon the value of cultural offerings."[21]
After giving evidence of people being stranded on their own in an increasingly morally complex socio-cultural world, they then stress the logical need for "the application of values to practice," and the necessary support of one's immediate

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[18] Although in this thesis I am not primarily addressing this last group, the most 'decentralized' of all, I am certainly encouraging anyone to join and continue among themselves the debate that I am starting in this thesis, and to apply some sort of consistent values-based standards to their work online, be it my proposed OP Code of Ethics and its accompanying principles and guidelines or any other form of established regulation.
[19] 'Artificial': a simple reminder that these are not official categories, established by any journalistic institutions, but a proposed classification system for better understanding and visualizing the hybridization of the current news media landscape.
[20] Morrison et al., 25.
[21] Morrison et al.,7.

community in this endeavor: "Whether some act makes social sense[22] depends on whether it is seen as appropriate to the situation the individual inhabits as a recurring experience, but nevertheless it will at some point require collective legitimization by a body of theory of how to behave; in short, be given the force of moral principle."[23]

It is easy to see in these simple statements and logically sequenced process of moral enquiry a blueprint for my own argument about the moral challenges facing today's online journalists, the lack of concrete support for them, and my proposal for a moderate form of regulation of the digital news industry as an answer to this need.

Yes, But...

Now that we have established that revolutionary technological change in the news media is at the root of the disintegration of ethics in today's journalism, and that, as I started to explain earlier, we may want to consider an open-source form of code and regulation to allow for possible further fluctuations in standards and practices in this fast-evolving news environment, then we may well stop and ponder for a moment Expert Lab Director and Blogosphere pioneer Anil Dash's very pertinent observation that this period of great and unpredictable changes might not be forever, nor be the ongoing process that we assume it to be.

Commenting on the different connotations that Facebook's newly expanded notion of privacy will likely have for us in years to come, Dash told *The New York Times* that the times of change are now at their apex, and that they will be inevitably followed by a lull of sorts, when we can expect to return to a more stable configuration of values - before the next big revolution in a much more distant future. "By the time the next generation comes into power, they'll just assume this is how it's always been," he said in an effort to reassure us about possibly damaging consequences following the posting of private data on social sites. He is echoed by San Jose University's Lull who said that the public may need more time to 'digest' politicians' possibly incriminating disclosures on the Net, "but culturally we're going to get used to this, (...) there's going to be an erosion to the impact."[24]

The possibility of a more stable state of affairs in the near future - which is bound to seep into the sphere of journalism and the news - forces us to consider the need for an open system of news publishing more critically: what do we do with our freshly drafted code of ethics? Do we make it open-ended and adaptable to new ethical cases and situations, or do we fix it more firmly into an already established framework of tested and tried existing standards? These are good questions to keep in mind when reading the elaboration of my proposed Code in Chapters 6 and 7, and for all those engaged in similar regulatory projects.

Welcome to the Digital

The Face of Change is Digital

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[22] 'Social sense': and I would add 'moral sense' too.

[23] Morrison et al.,63.

[24] Both quotes appear in Peters and Stelter.

In addition to introducing the revolutionary shifts that the digitization of news has brought to American journalism, this chapter examines closely the changes that adoption of the Web and other technologies have entailed for journalists working in the major media forms (print and broadcast).

This is the key point about Chapter 3: it is about *the changes*. *Not* about the new editorial difficulties and ethical dilemmas that these changes have spelled for professional practitioners as an inevitable corollary - at least, not yet.
Even though I do mention here some of the aspects of news production that have been affected - including adversely - by these changes and that might be at risk of deteriorating into ethically sensitive situations, I have made the conscious decision of reserving such new forms of ethical dilemmas for Chapter 4. I have in fact considered them complex enough to devote to them an entire chapter, where their particularities can be examined through the illustrations of the case studies.

For the first time also, we are fully stepping into the feared and enthralling world of online journalism, with the intention of 'not looking back.' So from this chapter onwards, all references to news-gathering, -writing, -editing, or any other publishing activities is assumed to be performed online (whether via a computer or mobile device), unless otherwise stated.
While a full history of the evolutionary appropriation of digital technologies by newspapers and traditional media will not find space in this thesis, I would like to direct my readers to Boczkowski's study of innovation in the American press, which I cited earlier.[25] In it, he meticulously documents the efforts of American dailies to adapt to technological changes by developing their own electronic publishing ventures, from the pre-Web years and hesitant exploratory efforts of the 1980s to the latest interactive and multimedia developments.

But it is his close analysis of the buzz of activity in publishing reforms in the second half of the 1990s that is the most revealing for our purpose.
Describing newspapers' tentative and dispersed efforts at launching new kinds of information production practices, Boczkowski compares these multiple and multifaceted attempts to the process of hedging. As the chapter entitled "Hedging: A Web of Challenges in the Second Half of the 1990s,"[26] shows, these new publishing activities involved a lot of 're-doing' - a practice that to this day is still very much in use, and shows no sign of disappearing (to define today's aggregation craze in mild terms). He cites three of these in particular: newspapers repurposing their content by using the same material from their print edition on their Web sites; their recombining information by mixing and enhancing their print content with material from other sites and added interactive features; and finally creating original content, with regular updates, breaking stories, and Web-only material. The point about this diversifying, 'hedging' practice, he said, was for newspapers to "spread risks by moving in many and often counterbalancing directions" in a news environment that was volatile and of undetermined duration.

From Boczkowski's descriptions we can extract two important points.
First, as these creative but also hotchpotch preventive measures, and most literally the

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[25] Pablo J. Boczkowski, *Digitizing the News - Innovation in Online Newspapers* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004).
[26] Boczkowski,51-72.

title of his book's third chapter suggest, the new challenges faced by the press in the second half of the 1990s were intrinsically linked to the nature of the changes undergone by newspapers in their attempts at modernizing themselves. And we can safely assume that this close, interdependent relationship exists in today's news environment too - which would explain the rise of unprecedented ethical difficulties for media professionals who have made the move to working online. This is one of the strongest pieces of supporting evidence for my argument that new technologies have created new ethical dilemmas for the profession of journalism.

The second noteworthy point in Boczkowski's description of newspapers' 'hedging' practices in their Web adoption efforts is the inherent contradiction at the heart of this mix of publication methods. As he explains, torn between their allegiance to their roots in the American print journalism tradition and the call of change and innovation resonating throughout our new digital era, American newspapers "often appropriated new technologies with a somewhat conservative mindset, thus acting more slowly and less creatively than competitors less tied to traditional media," while at the same time, their emerging online editions "exhibited a technical infrastructure, nascent communication and organizational patterns, and a suite of products that looked very different from those of a typical print counterpart. It appears that in a relentless pursuit of permanence, newspapers ended up undertaking substantial change," he concludes.[27]

This intrinsic conflict too may still be at work now, as I write in 2012 and for the years to come, causing further friction between the nostalgic 'traditionalists' and the younger generation of less traditionally trained journalists (to mention just the two extremes in the spectrum). It also adds a deeper dimension to the ethical issues tormenting reporters and editors in their day-to-day decisions, as the bastions of (in the words of Carl Bernstein[28]) "what good journalism really is," such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Wall Street Journal*, jump right into the unmonitored maelstrom of creations by mass amateur media producers and reproducers, and all cohabit in this vast sea of 'digital news.'

Another important aspect of my analysis of the changes that have been caused by and are shaping digital news is the fact that I examine them from different perspectives, from both outside and inside the profession. This 'double' analysis imparts insights into news professionals' struggles with the changes in their newsrooms and the editorial difficulties encountered in their jobs as well as the public's perceptions of them. Media ethics may have all the external features of an objective science (and in fact should be one), but it certainly appears in very different shapes, depending on who beholds it, and what interests and investments are involved. This becomes most evident when the rights and duties of the various players in a news story's coverage come into conflict - a typical recipe for a journalistic ethical dilemma.
To illustrate further how the technological changes in today's news media and their underlying complications can play out very differently within newsrooms and in the world outside, among audiences, I look at several specific problematic areas, such as the economic aspect of digital user-generated news, free speech rights and new news-

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[27] Boczkowski, 52.

[28] Remarks made in an address to Boston University's College of communication on Sept. 20, 1997, and published in Boston University's College of Communication brochure devoted to the event.

gathering techniques, and I present a selection of views on them - both from experts in the field and my own observations.

Here I should note that while not all the changes I cover in this chapter may ultimately lead to editorial difficulties for reporters or be the source of ethical contention among editors or sources, I must admit that I display a rather pronounced bias towards potentially negative changes. By 'negative,' I mean having potentially undesirable consequences, or being deemed problematic by people inside the industry or the public or both. It is not my intention in this thesis to raise a celebratory glass to the groundbreaking technological developments that have unquestionably pushed the field forward and enhanced it with numerous new and useful social and civic practices. This is not my goal, as should be evident from my 'Goals' section in Chapter 1.. Thus, my predilection for potentially 'problematic' changes that can lead to constructive conclusions on how best to tackle them - ideally in a manner that has the potential for standardization. I thought it wise to acknowledge this bias here.

My reason for focusing so narrowly on the changes and revolutionary effects of Internet practices on journalism then is mostly for the purpose of introducing my argument in this chapter, and reinforcing its premise that in the face of such changes, professional journalists and the related categories and sub-categories of online media producers are underequipped and untrained to deal with these changes, especially when the need for sensitive ethical decisions arises. From this observation, which I support with illustrative examples in my case studies, emerges a deeper, more pernicious truth about the working conditions of people involved in the news business, whether they are on staff in a news organization, freelancers with multiple clients, or independent self-published bloggers and multimedia creators: they do not have an industry-wide established set of rules or code of ethics that they can turn to whenever they are confronted with a controversial issue, or have to evaluate the ethical implications of whether or not to go ahead with a story and publish it.
As my interviewed sources and those whose published studies I consulted confirmed, there is not at present an ethics code or a set of standards in any of the major media spheres (the printed and electronic press, radio, television, and photojournalism) that covers for journalism in general or for its own field even the most obviously treacherous areas of online news-gathering, -writing/blogging, -editing, and other publishing practices.[29] Not only are online journalists poorly equipped[30] to deal with the changes and new practices newly-imposed on their positions, but they are even

[29] As I mentioned in Chapter 2 when writing about the evolution of codes of ethics, of course there are numerous codes - The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics being the most recognized one, but there are also the more specialized codes of The Radio-Television News Directors Association, The National Press Photographers Association, and The Public Radio News Directors Incorporated, to name but a few. For more, see *Doing Ethics in Journalism - A Handbook with Case Studies* by Jay Black, Bob Steele, and Ralph Barney (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995).
[30] 'Poorly equipped': By this I mean that all journalists working online today, regardless of their affiliations and skill levels, lack universally acknowledged professional standards and ethical guidelines to work in digital journalism. It is on the level of knowledge of these issues and regulatory standards and enforcement tools that the profession is 'poorly equipped.'

less so when these changes evolve, sometimes unexpectedly[31], into ethically difficult situations or controversies - as we will see in Chapter 4.

This chapter will address the origins of my argument, of the not yet fully recognized thorny situation (ethically, socially and culturally) in which professional journalists find themselves, and of the need for the regulatory system that I am proposing, or at least some form of support.
And may this particular passage also serve as "overture' to my more elaborated argument and closer look at the new ethical dilemmas facing the profession in Chapter 4.

One need not look very far for evidence of a radically different and newly challenging working environment and the need for professional guidance. While the 24/7 deadline-driven world of digital news-reporting does not lend itself well to reflection and concerted action and working journalists may not have much time to think about the larger dimension of their work and its possible ethical consequences - (or, as I also argue, may not even be aware of them - hence the need for raising awareness -) plenty of alarm bells and cries for help, however, have been resounding in the quarters of media watchers and researchers.

In *Digitizing the News*, Boczkowski quotes John Pavlik as saying with regards to news production, that the convergence of computers and telecommunication has brought forth a "new media system [that] embraces all forms of human communication in a digital format where the rules and constraints of the analog world no longer apply," and that these technologies are "rapidly rewriting the traditional assumptions of newsroom organization and structure."[32]

Chicago Tribune veteran Jack Fuller goes even one step further, with his belief that not only standards have changed, but in fact no longer exist.
Denouncing newspapers' attempts at remaking themselves for the new information environment with at times overly emotional content, he writes, "Responding to the challenge of the information revolution, journalism is more than dipping its toe into emotion. It has dived in headlong. The water is deep and dark, and there are no real standards to buoy it up."[33]

Not that emotions have to be entirely left out of the equation, and cannot serve as a means for refocusing on the ethical dimension of journalism's role. But here too, Fuller identifies some pitfalls:

"The first place to look for ethical guidance turns out to be in the emotions

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[31] 'Imposed unexpectedly': It is interesting to note that many of these new practices, especially online social sharing and other interactive ones, have often been 'imposed' from the bottom up - with the professional mainstream media feeling somewhat 'forced' (although they rarely admit it) to join the general public and independent amateur journalists on blogs, online forums and social updating sites such as Twitter and Facebook, just so they can keep up with- and be on top of the times and trends.
[32] Boczkowski, 1; The original source is: John Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) xii and 108.
[33] Jack Fuller, *What is Happening to News - The Information Explosion and the Crisis in Journalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010) 153-154.

themselves. Many philosophers and scientists now see the brain's emotional systems as central to our moral life. But we can't expect them to give us simple, easy-to-apply rules. As far back as Aristotle, ethical thinkers have realized that tough moral questions defy such rules. The situations in which issues present themselves are infinitely varied, which makes all ethics at some level situation ethics. Nor can we simply follow our gut impulses; we have to think with our whole brains if we want to behave morally."

Pavlik's and Fuller's concerns were echoed in Tom Ashbrook's podcast on "Crowdsourcing and the Future of News," in which he and his guest speakers discussed the power of technologically-equipped members of the public to enhance or undermine the quality of mainstream news.
More specifically, a caller to the show introduced as 'Scott from Virginia,' expressed his concern about eyewitnesses not holding themselves to the same standards and codes of ethics as the professional correspondents covering news events:

"My comment is, while you can have a member of the crowd on the scene immediately, they are not necessarily going to hold themselves to the same journalistic code of ethics. So you have to take into account the lack of accountability that the crowd has, and the journalists themselves that are conveying this to the public need to be acting as a strong gatekeeper," he said, to which Ashbrook replied "It's a great point."[34]

But the enunciation of the moral deficiencies in the new journalism and the missing tools for dealing with them that is the most attuned to my own observations and argument for new regulation can be found in *Normative Theories of the Media*. Its authors put their fingers exactly on the cause-effect relationship between the changes in the news media and the new ethical dilemmas that I draw attention to, and like me, they argue that there are currently no rules for dealing with such issues in the online world:

"The arrival of new, online media has given rise to a number of new issues and new uncertainties about the proper conduct of those who seek to use them for communication in the public domain. Partly because of the essentially unregulated character of the Internet, as yet there are no or few ethical rules and guidelines to apply in cyberspace."[35]
They add that as a result of this lack of adequate regulation adapted to the new realities, people in the profession simply make do with what they have, which fails to cover all the nuances in the issues that can occur:

"In the absence of any new legal framework, the existing laws concerning public

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[34] "Crowdsourcing and the Future of News," "On Point with Tom Ashbrook" Podcast, WBUR Boston & NPR, Sept. 23, 2011, at the 12:47 mark, http://onpoint.wbur.org/2011/09/23/crowdsourcing. Accessed Sept. 23, 2011.; Guest speakers were Derrick Ashong, host of Al Jazeera's The Stream; Mandy Jenkins, Social News Editor at The Huffington Post; and Robert Hernandez, professor at USC Annenberg.
[35] Clifford G. Christians, Theodore L. Glasser, Denis McQuail, Kaarle Nordenstreng and Robert A. White, *Normative Theories of the Media - Journalism in Democratic Societies* (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009) 230-31.

communication also apply to the Internet, especially where harm to others or the state or property rights might be involved. Similarly, where the Internet is used for typical old media activities such as news journalism, we can expect the same professional norms and ethics to apply and for the same reasons. These reasons include the need to meet the criteria of quality, and in the case of news, to establish relations of trust and credibility. Where market relationships are involved in Internet communication, there are also ethical guidelines for practice that cannot be evaded. Even so, there are quite a few gray areas where existing rules do not fit or do not really exist."[36]

One aspect that neither these authors nor most professionals in the media who are now facing these issues acknowledge is the need for some industry-wide consensus on how to harness the changes and respond in the most appropriate and consistent manner whenever a news story raises ethically sensitive questions either during news-gathering or following its publication on the Net. Even the most institutionalized of the aforementioned four (or more if we include sub-categories) groups of news practitioners publishing on the Internet today is very much on its own when dealing with ethical quandaries that - in the case of national or international news - may well be causing concern to most editors in newsrooms across the nation and affecting their decision-making in pretty much the same way. Similarly, when it comes to the foundational, universal principles of journalism, an independent blogger working from home will be faced with the same kind of ethical questions and decisions as any journalist on staff in a news organization. Whether or not to publish the photograph of a crime- or car crash victim and to think of his/her family's need for privacy and respect are questions that *everyone* has to face, regardless of skill or affiliation. Should we hold differently skilled and affiliated journalists to different levels of standards, and expect more decorum and restraint in publishing such a photograph from the most 'professional' and centralized news operations?
We often do, letting the independent writers and online news content contributors 'get away' with much more than those officially qualified and paid to perform these activities.

Yet, so far, even the professional mainstream media has been acting on its own, individually, trying to solve issues as they arise on a case-by-case basis, and acting alone, within the walls of their own news organization. With no precedents to look back to, and no colleagues outside the company to compare their response with, the challenged editors and newsroom leaders' decisions often amount to putting out the fire in an emergency-style, patchwork kind of way.
It is worth citing here in full my description of the hand-wringing struggles of major newspapers trying to regulate the use of new social media practices by their staff reporters from an earlier research paper for CMS[37]:

Another crucial question, which is challenging today's professional practitioners of journalism is what to make of the pervasive use of online social networks and communication services such as Facebook and Twitter: should their use in newsroom be regulated, and even officially included in the daily practice of news-reporting?

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[36] Christians et al., 230-31.
[37] This passage is cited from my Thesis Proposal assignment for the CMS. 791 course.

As Editor & Publisher reported in a May 15, 2009 report entitled "Newspapers Tweeting Like Crazy – But what are the Rules?"[38] editors and heads of newsrooms are grappling with the explosion of such online services by their staff and designing various guidelines and codes of conduct for their proper use – mostly to avoid compromising their news organization's name. The Wall Street Journal, the report said, was forced to expand its own code of conduct "to include a whole host of online-related restrictions, including warnings not to 'friend' confidential sources or get into Web-related arguments with critics." The New York Times, meanwhile, has been trying to deal with some internal controversy after several reporters posted items of an editorial meeting on their Twitter accounts.

It is not all about leaking Tweets and inappropriate use of personal accounts at one's company of course, many newspapers have not only embraced these tools, they have also found a way of regulating their use with common sense. The Los Angeles Times, which with 144 Tweeter accounts among its news staff has adopted a long list of "social media" guidelines, actually encourages its reporters to Twitter about their stories, but in a responsible manner that will not compromise their ability to do their job.

Still, even with these new guidelines, there is very little consensus on an appropriate code of conduct that could be applied to the whole industry, let alone a sense of vision in how to harness the powers of such services and embed them in the established practice of professional, ethical journalism. The phenomenon, E&P says, has so far produced "a mixed bag of reaction" over how to control - or not control - the use of new media services by newspapers' employees.

This development is very interesting for my own thesis and proposal of a new code for the digital age that would take into account these online, mobile and collaborative activities in news-reporting. It is interesting because these attempts by news companies to regulate their reporting practices by introducing new rules specifically for the use of new social media betrays a dire need for a code of ethics for the profession designed specifically for such new media uses, and these efforts, although disparate, may well be seen as a first step in its creation. However, it is important that news media leaders, as they formulate these rules of conduct for the responsible use of Twitter and similar services, think beyond simply protecting the image and name of their company – as current efforts tend to focus on – and think of the larger ethical implications of welcoming new media technologies into the daily practice of professional journalism.

The major national publications (and many local ones too) have been tinkering with their own, DIY methods for adopting new social-sharing and Internet practices, while striving to retain their internal rules and those of the profession - and not the least, trying to *control* the influence of the new behaviors on the established, long-approved ones. And all this, with mixed results...

The lesson to be learned from these mixed results is that there would likely be great benefits in trying to tackle these changes in digital journalism with the help of others

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[38] Joe Strupp, "Newspapers Tweeting Like Crazy -- But What Are the Rules?" *Editor & Publisher*, May 15, 2009, http://www.editorandpublisher.com/Article/Newspapers-Tweeting-Like-Crazy-But-What-Are-the-Rules-. Accessed May 15, 2009.

in similar situations, or at least to open a debate with them, to eventually come to a consensus in both the traditional (professional) and 'new' news industries on how to adapt to these changes in the most coordinated and ethical manner.

It is clear that these newspapers' individual, uncoordinated efforts are well-meaning, and even well-directed by their management, and one can reasonably expect that some of them will succeed at monitoring their internal operations - at least for now. But how will this play out long term? How will they translate their present success and adapt it to the next generation of new media practices?

With no system for recording the behaviors and choices that do work in a present situation, how can the journalists who will be confronted with the same or similar problem later on (whether occurring once again in their own company or outside of it as a larger trend) know how this problem was dealt with earlier, if at all? How can they attune their present decisions, actions and solutions to the next new destabilizing Internet social practice that comes along, if there has been neither discussion, nor record of the current problem-solving? Not to speak of the independent freelance writer or videoblogger, who has no one to turn to, no model to consult when faced— inevitably-- with the same issues.

Most of all, these newspapers' isolated, disparate attempts at managing the tide of new developments in their field will not do much to bring clarity to the larger order and to create a model to be used by their peers (including their competitors - in this new media order![39]) and to refer to in subsequent cases. A shared model would indeed benefit everyone in the field facing similar issues.

From all this, it follows that collaboration then might be the key to adjusting to the changed realities of today's journalism, (as well as to possibly smoothing out the differences in skills' and experiences' levels between the various groups of journalists previously described[40]), which could be achieved through the design of a system of shared values and standardized instructions for news-reporting in the digital domain. I will direct my readers to the Proposals section of Chapter 7 for a fuller description of how the collaborative approach may work for producing ethics-conscious news-reporting.

For now, we can sum up the basis of the argument that I have started to develop in this chapter by noting that professional journalists (as well as all those working in news independently) in their current working conditions in online journalism have two unmet needs[41]: first, they are ill-equipped[42] to face the changes in their profession

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[39] For more on the benefits of competitive-free collaboration, one of the foundational principles of my open-source system for collaborative news and regulation, see the Proposals section in Chapter 7.

[40] Here the desirability of such leveling of skills and standards among the vast variety of news producers on the Net is assumed: as I explained earlier, I encourage the non-skilled, amateur writers of news and other personal narratives on the Internet to join in adopting a code of ethics and raise their standards of writing and decision-making about what is professionally, journalistically acceptable to post online. The feasibility and successful implementation of such equalizing is another question.

[41] 'Needs' here can, in fact should be understood as 'deficiencies,' features or qualities they should have but do not, or that are missing because of their circumstances.

[42] 'Ill-equipped': this is meant on several levels: technologically (there is no technology so far that supports a shared regulatory system or tool on the Net or

and resolve the difficulties that may arise from working specifically in the Internet medium; and secondly, they are on their own to try to do so. This means that even the most well-connected journalists in the most well-established institutions - in fact even the leaders of those institutions - have no precedents to learn from and can only make do with what tools and advice they currently have at their disposal (which is to say, very little), and therefore can only concoct company-based, rapid-fire solutions as problems arise.[43]

To deal with these two needs we must first look at *the roots* of the problems and ethical dilemmas complicating journalists' work in the online medium, that is, at the changes that have shaped our new informational milieus for the past decade or so. These changes is where it all starts.

So What Has Changed?

Before we delve into the particularities of changes in given contexts and how they are perceived by the different sides of the media equation in the designated (sub-titled) sections below, a few general points should be made.

First, the authors of *Normative Theories of the Media* are useful to consult for their concise yet comprehensive overview of the larger structural changes that have affected journalism and the news industry.

To start with, they do not hesitate to declare that the great catalyst of change in the media's revolution, the Internet, has "no obvious central purpose or definition as a medium within the spectrum of what is familiar," and is simply developing "in directions towards which its providers and users are inclined," with innovation and market opportunities being its true and only leaders. Their cool-headed assessment of the Internet leads them to pinpoint the root cause of one of the most nefarious aspects of the changes imposed[44] upon us - both journalists and the public - by the new media economy: the increasing commercial pressures, which they say is a corollary of the Net's success.[45]

They also give us a sweeping the media revolution and its consequences:

"As a result of media industry changes, what was once understood as the press is simply one component of larger media industries - often multimedia conglomerates. Typically there is no clear organizational separation from the press, and it is subject to the same logics and pressures as other components of the media industry. The result

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elsewhere adapted for new media); corporately (most organizations so far do not have an official support system in place to address new media issues); ethically (this is the main premise of my argument: there is no new or revised code of ethics to cover the newly problematic areas of journalism); and even personally (organizations too often fail to place personal moral conduct above the drive for profits)..

[43] 'As problems arise': literally, during the occurrence, with no time to prepare or the possibility of relying on an already drafted plan of action or ready-to-use tool.

[44] 'Imposed upon': Just a way of phrasing it; of course, many of these changes and processes have been have been happening naturally or been self-generated with the help of users.

[45] Christians et al., 235.

of other changes that are mainly technological is to bring the press' identity and autonomy into question and introduce numerous ill-defined informational activities into its domain."

But even with these disruptions in the traditional press, they still see the larger and more positive picture: "The outcome is untidy and sometimes disturbing, but this is not in itself undemocratic. Perhaps even the reverse is true, since it also has the effect of weakening the grip of monopoly control of news, as well as control by professional newspeople."[46]
But they admit a persistent underlying tension in the new paradigm, particularly with regards to the very defining regulatory frame that we are primarily concerned about in this thesis: "More is involved than a territorial dispute and control over the rules of the game. There is a new uncertainty about, and a fragmentation of, press roles as we have come to understand them," they write.[47]

They also make some very good, bold and progressive points about the changed media industry that not everyone has dared to make.
Their open attitude towards the imperfect, still forming principles emanating from the new model of news, for example, should be an inspiration for all those who are, like me in this thesis, engaged in formulating new values and standards for digital journalism. "Despite the lack of coherence and direction (of the Net), a few principles affecting journalistic practice that the Internet has encouraged are to a limited extent an alternative to the mainstream model," they say, adding that "They are also disparate and sometimes contradictory."[48]

Very usefully for us, they elaborate on these new principles: "They include: a highly relativistic notion of truth as expressed opinion loosely associated with a universe of certified facts uncovered by search engines; a principle of equality that equates all sources and views and recognizes no hierarchy among them; a high value placed on intimacy, subjectivity, and personal interaction; and considerable liberty of individual expression."[49]

While there is beauty in keeping an open mind towards new and/or alternate models, the ideological framework of new media that these authors cite also raises alarm bells as to what we should pay attention to when drafting our own code of ethics. There is no arguing that free expression and equal access and participation for all are highly desirable traits, necessities even. However, I would argue that we would want a much more stable notion of 'truth,' even if we have to redefine it to include new media realities. No matter how idealistic this sounds and how challenging enforcement would be, I would also highly recommend prior agreement on this notion, so that it can then be commonly shared - another key characteristic of my proposed principles. Similarly, blind acceptance of sources, as the new model seems to advocate, can be fatal for accuracy and the basic requirements of ethical journalism as well. As I show in the next chapter, the dangers of online news-gathering, during which reporters have to scrupulously discriminate between clearly and unclearly sourced information, are very real.

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[46] Christians et al., 233.
[47] Christians et al., 233.
[48] Christians et al., 235.
[49] Christians et al., 235.

Christians et al.'s list of principles identified as reflective of new journalism can be used as a template against which to measure our own drafts of principles and proposed codes.

They warn us, however, that these principles and instructions need to be seriously revised in keeping with the multifaceted nature of digital journalism: "As is reflected in the typology of Internet-mediated content we have outlined, it is no longer feasible to propose the same prescriptive guidelines for all forms of journalism. This was always a rather doubtful project, by turn quixotic and imperialistic, designed to protect and advance journalism's mainstream institutional forms, often with the good intention of securing the news product's minimum quality. This is no longer realistic because of the increasingly successful incursions into the flow of information by other variants. It is no longer in keeping with the media's changing structure."[50]

And just as they unconventionally denounce the darker, secret purposes of traditional media, they also offer an unusual but refreshing take on what has often been lamented as its 'woes' in the wake of the new media invasion: "The mass newspaper has been in a slow but steady decline for some time, although what looks like decline by a criterion of mass impact is partly a matter of transformation into a different kind of medium, in which breaking headline news is no longer the key feature. The typical television channel is no longer strongly anchored in a journalistic role, compared to its counterpart of twenty-five or more years ago, and its varied functions are now often dispersed."[51]

We too, may we see these changes as opportunities to grow as moral individuals and to change journalism in a professionally and ethically transformative way.

But speaking of television: one cannot overlook the biggest change in that industry, the mega merger of Comcast and NBC Universal following the FCC's approval, and on a more abstract level, the resulting mega convergence of television, the Web, news and entertainment. Then outgoing NBC President and NBC Universal CEO Jeff Zucker, speaking on NPR's "On Point with Tom Ashbrook" early this year made an interesting remark about what has changed in television, pointing to the wider impact on our social mores and cultural practices.[52] In response to Ashbrook's reminder that in the past, American families used to congregate around the radio, and subsequently the television to share the experience of hearing the world's news, and wondering if this will still play out in future with the new technologies, he said:

"I think it's a fair question in the decade ahead, will we all congregate around a device or will we all be individuals on our own computer, or telephone or whatever device comes next. I think that's one of the dangers not for media companies or television broadcasters because as long as people are seeing that content and thinking about it, then that's good for the media companies. I think it's more a *social*[53] question, as we think about family time, about communal time, about nationally shared experiences that we all had around a set. I think that's a bigger societal question that will be answered in the years to come."

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[50] Christians et al., 235.

[51] Christians et al., 235.

[52] Jeff Zucker Talks NBC & the Media-Entertainment Future, "On Point with Tom Ashbrook" Podcast,WBUR Boston & NPR, Jan. 20, 2011, at the 02:10 mark, http://onpoint.wbur.org/2011/01/20/jeff-zucker-nbc. Accessed Jan. 20, 2011.

[53] Zucker stressed that word when speaking, hence my italics.

In his interview of Tom Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach when presenting their new book *Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload* on his NPR "Talk of the Nation" show, Neil Conan ended up providing a great summary of the impact that recent developments in media technology and practices have had on the quality of journalism.[54] The trio agreed that among the worst evils are the rise of the neo-partisan press and the blurring of facts and fiction as opinion pieces become ubiquitous and often craftily blended amid the hard news stories.[55]

While claiming to offer "tools to ferret out the truth amid the barrage of content on radio, television, the Internet and in newspapers," and insisting on more transparency and sharing with audiences about the news-gathering process, Rosenstiel and Kovach offer little in the way of concrete tools or elaborating on how to achieve these goals. More to the point: what values should we strive to instill, what kind of habits and practices can we try to introduce, so that they become second nature for journalists? This is where the need for concrete, practical tools, such as the ethics code I am proposing, makes itself most evident.

While navigating the world of analyses on media change, one should beware of a few fallacies, some so common that they have become akin to myths.

In their Introduction to *The Ethics of Emerging Media*, editors Kathleen German and Bruce Drushel correctly identify the changes that "may be subtle or dramatic, and so appear to be periodic when they are, in reality, continuous."[56] But like so many before them[57], they tend to overestimate the capacity of these social and technological advances in media evolution to overturn the present ruling order, both inside journalism, and by extension in the world at large. "The magnitude of the current changes facing us promises to have a more enormous impact than any previous transformation," they write. They then add, "Emerging media are altering the fundamental relationship of individuals to their social structures, the configuration and interaction of social communities, and the places where power is practiced."[58] While there is certainly plenty of evidence of the social empowerment successes of certain participatory news projects that have emerged from the new alternative media, and that we, the public, are indeed communicating in radically different ways, including with journalists themselves,[59] it also seems that these developments have so

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[54] "As Media Lines 'Blur,' We All Become Editors," "Talk of the Nation with Neil Conan," NPR, Sept. 1, 2011, http://www.npr.org/2011/09/01/140118092/as-media-lines-blur-everyone-must-be-an-editor. Accessed Sept. 1, 2011.

[55] Admittedly, the concern about partisanship in the press is a typically American phenomenon, but I mention it here because my thesis deals primarily with American journalism.

[56] *The Ethics of Emerging Media - Information, Social Norms, and the New Media Technology*, Edited by Bruce E. Drushel and Kathleen German (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011) 1.

[57] See the chapter entitled "The End of Hierarchy" in Fuller, 55 for another example of this widespread misconception about the revolutionary powers of our newly decentralized media ventures.

[58] Drushel and German, 267.

[59] Virtually every online publication and wire organization now offers ways for readers to not only interact with (i.e. comment on) their news content, but also to enter into direct contact with reporters, ask them questions, email them suggestions, etc. Bloomberg was one of the first news organizations to provide the email addresses

far had little effect on the basic power structures at a higher level in the news industry and on the surrounding socio-economic environment. Despite claims to the contrary and the appearances of user empowerment embedded in many news Web sites, financial resources, connections and other larger forces anchored in the traditions of mass media often conspire to keep the final editorial and managerial decision-making procedures firmly in place.

Recent research on the new dynamics and connections between news content producers and their audiences is more modest in its conclusions, but also much more to the point.[60] Interviewed for an article on the relatively new science of 'sentiment analysis,' social media analytics firm Bluefin Labs CEO Deb Roy spoke of "a fundamental change in the relationship between creators and consumers of mass media," and of how a nascent "two-way conversation has begun."[61]
"What I have learned by hanging out with TV executives, talent agencies, and creative types is that the assumption is built into their organizations' DNA that this is a one-way dialogue. Audience members speaking through social media is effectively a shift in power," he said, in what amounted to be a much more realistic approach to the questionable, whole social media-enabled 'new balance of power.'

Jack Fuller in *What Is Happening to News* helps perpetuate another misconception about the role and identity of journalists in the changed media environment. Calling the voice of standard journalism "staid" and "detached," in an introductory note[62], his publishers seem to suggest that the 'new journalist,' perhaps the 'empowered' citizen journalist or unskilled but cell phone-equipped witness of a news event, has a more engaged relationship with their sources and the world they cover.
Since this point is at the core of the philosophy and work ethics behind my proposed rules, I take the opportunity here to draw attention to the fact that professional journalists are in fact anything but 'detached' from their stories and subjects. On the contrary, they have always engaged deeply with their sources, first by seeking them out with the help of contacts, meticulously cultivating them over long periods of time (depending on the news event), and interviewing them in writing, by telephone or even in person, not hesitating to ask the hard or uncomfortable questions if need be. For longer features, some journalists even decide to spend time, sometimes up to several months, 'following' and living with the people they cover and their immediate community. This level of engagement, I believe, is still unknown among the untrained independent bloggers, online multimedia producers and on-location 'citizen' reporters that form today's new corps of journalists. Through training, experience and values, professional journalists have developed a degree of intimacy with their sources and the public that I reckon would be too uncomfortable for the non-traditionally trained new 'citizen' journalist.[63]

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of its journalists under each story. This new 'conversation' is certainly one of the main changes in journalism experienced by both sides.
[60] In fact, ongoing.
[61] David Talbot, "A Social Media Decoder - New Technology - deciphers and empowers - the millions who talk back to their televisions through the Web" *Technology Review*, Published by MIT, Nov/Dec 2011, 47.
[62] The quoted words appear on the book's inside cover. I am assuming here that Fuller approved of this note, and therefore supports its statements and underlying messages.
[63] Of course it can be argued that many bloggers are by definition specialists in their chosen topic, sphere or Blog's theme. This is often the case. But if one thinks of the

This is not to say that traditionally trained journalists have not changed or been influenced by the unconventional ways of their 'new colleagues' in the alternative independent news models and the active members of the public-turned-on-location' reporters. As I described at length in my introductory chapters, their roles have absorbed new reporting and writing practices as the press and broadcast networks have sought to adapt to the new trends.

But it is not just journalists and their audiences who are challenged in new ways by fast-developing technologies and social online practices, and are being altered in the process. In a changing communications environment, media law is scrambling to keep up with the needs of the times and to provide for informed decisions on unprecedented cases.

As Trager, Russomanno and Dente Ross explain in *The Law of Journalism & Mass Communication*, in a heady age of "media emergence, convergence and consolidation," in which technology has made "historically discrete forms of communication virtually indistinguishable," (...) "the Supreme Court has struggled to decide when and how the First Amendment protects these diverse media." Among the questions they are struggling with: "Are they members of the press? Is all communication via any medium for any purpose 'speech'?"[64] Indeed, should a non-trained 'witness-type' of citizen journalist posting cell phone pictures of victims on the Net while having little sense of his/her responsibilities as a publisher, enjoy the same legal rights and protections as a professional member of the media? Similarly, should such protections be extended to controversial, even potentially offensive content published on the Net, under the 'free speech' criterion? These are very good questions that any proposed ethics code or media guidelines should strive to cover.

These authors go on to explain that "The rapid transformations of the communication environment stretch the traditional definition of 'the press'. They also challenge understanding and application of First Amendment guarantees. (...) As the discreet characteristics of different content and distinct media continue to blur, consistent application of established First Amendment precedents become even more difficult. (...) The increasing overlap of once-distinct media also blurs once-clear distinctions under the First Amendment, posing new difficult questions for the courts."[65]

Just as in the face of the new challenges presented by issues of media convergence and consolidation the Supreme Court has been struggling to interpret and apply the First Amendment, both journalists and the public have been at pains to interpret the new meanings of once clearly defined and firmly established, staple notions and terms of news-reporting.
A case in point: Speaking at a CMS Communications Forum conference on "Local

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original definition of blogging, one may recall that it pertains to the writing genre of the personal narrative. Most Blogs are personal Blogs, and thus often represent the author's personal comments, opinions, thoughts and interests on topics that he has close to his heart. This in most cases does not require interviews and interaction with external sources among the public, as a news story would. Therefore my conclusion that blogging, by definition, does not engage the journalist with his/her community as traditional news-reporting does.

[64] Trager et al., 75, 77.
[65] Trager et al., 88.

News in the Digital Age" at MIT[66], Adam Gaffin of the online news site Universal Hub described how he devotes most of his energies these days: "I'm doing a lot of breaking news now, much more than before," he told his audience of students, academics, and local journalists.[67]

The problem with this is that, as one commentator to a Politics & Religion online forum astutely wrote, "Everything is 'breaking news' these days."[68]

From here, one can then wonder what to do with CMS Communication Forum guest speaker-WGBH talk show host Callie Crossley's account of how she scrupulously covered a community news lost dog story, which she said received front-page, 'breaking news' space in her newspaper at the time. Of course, a certain relativism has always been useful in editorial news decision-making, but in an age of apparent adoration for the local and 'hyperlocal,' which seems to have been embraced en masse by both local and national news publications lately[69], one may wonder what news item can rightly be called 'breaking news' today, and more broadly speaking, if some re-defining of some of the key terms and concepts of American journalism is not in order to reflect the changing tastes and interpretations of news in the digital age. A project for another thesis, perhaps.

These somewhat altered versions of some core concepts of news-reporting, which might appear as liberties that are being taken with what used to be established terms and practices in traditional journalism, are reminiscent of a comment made in response to the announcement of Wikileaks Editor Julian Assange's extradition to Sweden.

Responding to the article "Assange loses fight against extradition" on CNN.com, a poster under the digit-only nickname of '567123' wrote: "Anyone else notice how sex crime cases are increasingly shaping our world? Cain, Strauss Khan, Assange, and even historically the case of Bill Clinton. All cases that never ended up in a conviction but ruined careers. This looks suspicious to me."[70]

The increasingly frequent and screaming headlines of such high-shock value news in *all* of our media outlets' outputs, including the best of the major, 'traditional' newspapers and networks, is hard to deny. The speed at which such items and their underlying forces seemed to be propelled to the front of American and international news raises several questions for us who are trying to elaborate guidelines for ethical journalism. First of all, are we going to go with the flow? Are we reporting, in the same manner and with the same intensity as most journalists today this type of news

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[66] In early fall 2011.

[67] Communications Forum: "Local News in the Digital Age," MIT CMS, Sept 22, 2011. The Podcast of the conference can be heard at http://cms.mit.edu/news/2011/09/podcast_communications_forum_l.php?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+mitcms%2Fnews+%28MIT+Comparative+Media+Studies+News%29. Accessed April 9, 2012.

[68] Comment written in response to news about the Wall Street Protests - http://prince.org/msg/forum.php. Accessed April 9, 2012.

[69] Even *The Boston Globe* (in its online version at Boston.com) has fallen for the fad, with a spate of news Web sites devoted to single small towns or regions.

[70] Atika Shubert, "Assange loses fight against extradition" CNN, Nov. 2, 2011, http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/02/world/europe/uk-wikileaks-assange/index.html?hpt=hp_t1. Accessed Nov. 3, 2011.

and the underlying socio-cultural messages? How can professionals find out the truth regarding such sex-scandal cases and report the facts without falling into tabloid-style writing and falling prey to commercial pressures? How can they incorporate taste and respect for their sources and readers in their coverage?

And indeed, how can the deadline-pressed online journalists of today investigate the dubious frequency of such news reports, as referred to by the CNN poster, and 'get behind the story'?

But more importantly, we may want to think about the larger implications of these frequent narratives on our news airwaves and online spaces, which have ostensibly been selected for front-page coverage by a limited set of editors and decision-makers in highly centralized places. It is even sadder to think - and this should spur us into even greater action - that the self-publishing public is actively engaging with these suspiciously pre-selected news narratives, commenting and reacting to these stories across the Internet, instead of questioning them, or even better, creating their own, or investigating the facts behind these mainstream, mass media-originated stories.

One even trickier question for us is how to encapsulate all these concerns in a moral code for today's journalist. I will propose some tentative answers through my own Code in Appendix A.

In any case, no matter what age we are in, digital or otherwise, it might be time to dust off our old investigative reporting course books.

As an antidote to these last rather depressing paragraphs on how the old lines between the decision-makers and the consumers in news have *not* changed that much after all, I highly recommend Cecilia Friend and Jane B. Singer's book *Online Journalism Ethics*, which offers not only a great summary of the major changes I have covered or mentioned in this chapter, but also a much more positive outlook on the changed gatekeeping role of the editors working in online media.

Far from seeing this "ethical matter" of selecting and omitting what makes the news of the day as remaining the sole territory of editors and major media professionals, the two authors see a task that is much more equally shared among the traditional gatekeepers and the public. Simply put, the task has changed: "Although the gatekeeping function indisputably changes in this new media environment, it does not disappear. Nor does it become less ethically important. Like many other aspects of journalism as it moves online (...), gatekeeping simply becomes different."[71]

They then go on to enumerate the different ways in which editors and news audiences now share the same playing field, with the ever-increasing number of diverse news providers forming a powerful counterbalancing force to the formerly all-deciding select group of journalists. As "each of those individuals is his or her own personal gatekeeper, choosing what information to produce as well as what information to consume (...), the roles of producer and consumer have become wholly interchangeable," they write.[72]

What is most relevant and encouraging for us, code-drafters, in Friend and Singer's evaluation of our changing media is their assertion that "As each person becomes a gatekeeper and goes about setting an individual information agenda (...), people

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[71] Cecilia Friend and Jane B. Singer, *Online Journalism Ethics - Traditions and Transitions* (Armonk NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007) 43-44.
[72] Friend and Singer, 44.

quickly realize that they need help in understanding events, in identifying what is most important, most relevant, most interesting."[73]

In light of what I just wrote on the ubiquity of suspiciously selected and presented news, which spreads though the Net with lightning speed while losing accuracy and quality with each new reproduction and aggregation, it is heartwarming to hear these two journalism professionals say that even in the Internet era, the need for "a professional press corps" has not disappeared, and that on the contrary, "Journalists' ethical obligation becomes helping citizens find and understand information they can trust."
They conclude by saying that "Journalists in such an environment become not gatekeepers but sense-makers. The emphasis shifts from regulating the quantity of information that enters public discourse to ensuring the quality of at least some of that information."[74]

"Sense-makers"... or whatever names we want to assign to these new professionals for digital news. As should be clear from my earlier chapters, the field of new media and 'new journalism' does not lack new and fancy terms to describe the still evolving developments and practices in the field. From Axel Bruns' "produsers" to Friend and Singer's "sense-makers" - it is clear that we do have an emerging terminology and means to *talk* about these new phenomena and issues in journalism. What is most unnerving, though, is the remaining gap between the talk (which we have) and the means for acting and implementing palpable change in the moral quality of our news coverage. Clearly, we are still missing the tools for bridging this gap and achieving concrete results, tools to empower the public to be more ethically sensitive and discerning when it comes to the quality of the news it consumes and reproduces.

The case study of Chapter 5 will show how journalists can still (in the words of Friend and Singer) "fulfill their ethical public service obligation as gatekeepers in a world without gates."[75]
According to the two authors, "Online journalists can do this more easily than their print or television counterparts because they work in a medium that facilitates participation" - which is good news for my proposed open-source, participatory system.

But before we delve into the concrete situations of Chapters 4 and 5, it is worth taking a closer view and analytical reading of the social and technological changes in the news media *as they are perceived* by different constituencies. This precisely what we will do in Part I of Chapter 4, "How Changes Lead to Challenges," with its three sections are devoted to, before introducing the case study and its 'assigned' ethical dilemmas in Chapter 5.

The first two main sections of Chapter 4 deal with a specific view of these changes: The Background: Politics, Economy and Society looks at the external signs of change in the general media landscape, that is, those that are easily observable by everyone, essentially by the media's audiences. News Media: Trends and Transitions, on the other hand, examines these changes as they are being experienced by the practitioners

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[73] Friend and Singer, 45.
[74] Friend and Singer, 45.
[75] Friend and Singer, 46.

themselves, inside the industry.

I should stress here that my two 'lists' of changes by no means claim to be exhaustive or close to comprehensive, given the scope and reach of these changes. Rather, they represent a selection of the developments and responses that I have observed in the field and the profession and subsequently researched.

Such rigorous classification has a definite purpose: these two different perspectives will throw light on the different types of ethical pitfalls both media practitioners and consumers are encountering when engaging with the news. Hence, we can attune our response and draft a code of ethics that will address these different needs and concerns.

The third and last section of that first part of Chapter 4, Approaching Digital Ethical Dilemmas, reveals how the changes we have examined in the first two sections as well as others play out in the real world of media practice including possible difficulties, with a special focus on enforcement of current and possible new rules and standards - one of the hardest riddles yet to be solved. Last but not least, we will hear perspectives on these issues from media professionals personally interviewed for this part of the thesis.

Chapter 4: New Ethical Dilemmas

Part I: How Changes lead to Challenges

The Background: Politics, Economy and Society

This section focuses on the trends and developments in those areas of the US and global contexts that have led to the particular changes in news media production that concern us and that have provoked the reactions to them.

I am concerned here with *what has changed for the public* consuming this fast-changing and challenged digital media, and how it is responding to these changes and the new pitfalls and opportunities of this new hybrid brand of media. In addition to the particular actions that this newly participatory public has been taking in response to these changes (such as self-publishing, engaging with the mainstream media, and starting collaborative news and civic media projects) and the changes in American society's attitudes towards the news media, this chapter will trace issues such as the public's growing lack of trust in the institution of American journalism and the bi-partisan affiliations that often color much of this journalism.

Simply put, we will be looking here at the new trends and phenomena occurring in the news media in general, as they are being observed and experienced by society at large. This is the high view of how the changes in the news industry have been affecting the world at large, if you will. Most of these developments are easily observable by anyone in the general public, and not exclusively journalism experts or trained people.

In contrast, the next section examines those changes from the perspective of the journalist, as he/she goes about reporting on the news events of the day and will take a more detailed look at how these new trends and changes are affecting the reporters' and editors' job on a daily basis.

Web-Supported (Mis)Information Policing

"How can Americans talk to one another - let alone engage in political debate - when the Web allows every side to invent its own facts?" asks an exasperated Michael Hirschorn in an article for *The Atlantic* magazine.[1]
Of course, the high incidence of partisan biases in American journalism is nothing new. But the latest innovations in social media and Internet technologies seem to have facilitated these tendencies and "awkward gymnastics around what is and isn't true" thanks to Photoshop and content takedown functions, among other Web tools, according to Hirschorn.
Throwing a bucket of cold water on the early promises of the Internet as "a truth engine" and of social media as a democratizing agent of truth that would put an end to the mainstream media dominance, he asks "In a time when mainstream news organizations have already ceded a substantial chunk of their opinion-shaping influence to Web-based partisans on the left and right, does each side now feel

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[1] Michael Hirschorn, "Truth Lies Here," *The Atlantic*, Nov 2010, 58, 62- 64.

entitled to its own facts as well? And thanks to the emergence of social media as the increasingly dominant mode of information dissemination, are we nearing a time when truth itself will become just another commodity to be bought and sold on the social-media markets?"[2]

Hirschorn's perspective is useful because he highlights what has changed in this aspect of the news over the years - and this, in rather sobering terms: "The dislodging of fact from the pedestal it had safely occupied for centuries makes the recent disturbances in politics and the media feel like symptoms of a larger epistemological, even civilizational, rot."[3]
But even more relevant to our concern about the moral implications for ethical journalism of increasingly blurred facts and fiction, and in Hirschorn's words, more far-reaching, is his question of "how does society function (as it has since the Enlightenment gave primacy to the link between reason and provable fact) when there is no commonly accepted set of facts and assumptions to drive discourse?"[4] For all those media leaders and researchers drafting ethical guidelines for their news operations or the industry at large who are still undecided on whether to make their code 'universal' or more targeted at a specific group of journalists, this question should have special resonance.

But eventually, all these technological developments are not what makes this era in journalism uniquely different; according to the *Atlantic* contributing editor, the difference is the pace at which all this is happening: "What is unique, and uniquely concerning, about digital media is the speed with which properly packaged (dis)information can spread and how hard it is for fact and reason to catch up."[5]

MIT Center for Civic Media Director Ethan Zuckerman in an interview of author Eli Pariser for *The Boston Phoenix*[6] unearthed another new and insidious way that bias, misinformation and censorship have spread like wildfire through online news spaces: automated filters that are embedded in the internal mechanics of online social networks such as Facebook, and which 'personalize' a member's site-generated feeds. Thus, Pariser[7], the majority of whose friends on Facebook have liberal leanings, started to notice that he was gradually receiving fewer feeds from conservative sources. This discrepancy alerted him to the risks of missing out on perspectives different from his own, as Facebook's EdgeRank algorithm "overfiltered" his content and activities, and narrowly and automatically personalized his views of the world. Pariser's call for more transparency on the part of Facebook (or the hosting site) about these filtering processes, which eventually boils down to respecting freedom of speech and accuracy in news production, could usefully be applied to our own code of ethical guidelines for online journalism.

Amid the heady technological revolution in the news and the mainstream media's

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[2] Hirschorn, , 62.
[3] Hirschorn, , 64.
[4] Hirschorn, , 62.
[5] Hirschorn, , 64.
[6] Ethan Zuckerman, "News Feeding," "Back Talk, Q&A with Eli Pariser," *The Boston Phoenix*, May 27, 2011, p. 54.
[7] Pariser was presenting his book *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding From You* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).

scramble to adapt to our era of contested reality and the new social practices of shared mass knowledge, it is also the long-established notions of 'expert' authority and 'the voice of objective reason' (often disparaged for being based on somewhat elitist academic theories) that come under threat.

This existential crisis is precisely what is happening to CNN, as it strives to reinvent itself for an age of commoditized, high-drama, politicized news, according to *Time* media critic James Poniewozik. In his column "Tuned In," he described the cable network's malaise in the following terms: "CNN also suffers from being a mainstream institution at a time when mainstream authority is in crisis. CNN's problem is the problem of *The New York Times*, the banks, the government and climate science. If you are an institution or 'expert,' especially one claiming impartiality (...) - you are suspect."[8] In fact, it is even such foundational values of professional journalism as objectivity that are under question in the new news media psyche. "CNN did try rebranding itself a while back as the network of passionate non-partisanship," Poniewozik writes, but that is its weakness in today's context: "CNN too often gives both sides, then shrugs. A CNN anchor interviewing two party hacks and leaving us to decide who we should believe doesn't cut it" (and I would add, anymore).

As the big networks and major print titles strive to smooth out their transition to new media, somehow blending in so as to keep up with the 'cool digital natives,' while also remaining competitive and standing out from the crowd and looking 'unique', Poniewozik's question sounds even more urgent: "In a polarized era, it's tough to be non-partisan. What's a mainstream news organization to do?" - especially when so much of television offers hot, impassioned content, from outspoken conservative talk shows to melodramatic reality TV series.

Poniewozik gives us his solution for CNN (and by extension other mainstream media): just give audiences the truth: "CNN should focus not on both-handedness but on truth. (...) The slogan for my ideal for my ideal CNN - or any news outlet - would be 'The news: whether you like it or not.'," he says. The problem with this approach, of course, is that we are pretty much back to square one, since both sides in any debate invariably claims it holds 'the truth.'

Of course, the tensions between the repositories of expert knowledge and those who seek to tear down or reform the top-down model (of the news industry, among others) are as old as the hills. In fact, Neal Gabler in an Opinion piece for *The Boston Globe* traces these liberalistic processes to the origins of populism, "when it first arose as an organized movement in the Midwest in the late-19th century, (and) it was fueled by anger."[9]

Perhaps endorsing the traditional journalistic value of objectivity and a clear demarcation between news and opinion in news coverage might seem to go against the times and tastes of the moment, but so be it. In fact, they not only remain important, but are actually becoming more essential than ever. We would be well

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[8] James Poniewozik, "Can the CNN-ter Hold?, Tuned In" *Time*, May 3, 2010, 60.
[9] Neal Gabler, "The Arrogance Divide - Why can't liberals capture the populist movement," *The Boston Globe*, Opinion page, Feb. 22, 2011, http://articles.boston.com/2011-02-22/bostonglobe/29344534_1_liberals-populism-tea-partiers. Accessed April 11, 2012.

advised to heed Gabler's words of warning, which can easily be applied to news: "Americans don't like being told that their opinions don't matter, that they are not smart enough, that they ought to leave politics to the professionals and experts."[10]

Changes in News Economy: From Chaos to Order and Back

In addition to the strong partisan undercurrents in our 'officially objective' news, apparently amplified recently by Internet technologies, there are also the visible, very real economic consequences (big and small) of the recent changes in our news media that are affecting the consuming public, and are not just confined to the media companies' internal budgeting woes (although these are obviously linked).

One example of such 'external' financial impact, which may affect or alter in some way people's media consumption habits, is the industry's various creative ways to try to get readers to support the cost of journalism - (meaning, good journalism, the kind that relies on original reporting, and not aggregated, reheated content), in an age when revenues have been in constant decline.
The latest of these efforts is *The New York Times*' much scrutinized new online subscriptions payment system, which relied on the bold bet that readers would readily pay for content they were used to receiving for free.[11]
In a piece for *The Washington Post* on the long-term prospects of the news industry, *Elements of Journalism* author Tom Rosenstiel also identified "the crisis facing traditional media [as being] about revenue, not audience."[12]
Jeremy W. Peters writing on his newspaper's new pay package for electronic subscribers notes the head-scratching conundrum that changing times and practices are forcing upon this 'legacy' media source: "The debate consuming the newspaper business now centers on the question that The Times hopes to answer: can you reverse 15 years of consumer behavior and build a business around online

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[10] Gabler..

[11] For more on The NYTime.com paywall, one recommended article (out of many): Jeremy W. Peters, "Times Rolls Out Its Pay Design For Web Users," *The New York Times,* March 18, 2011, front page of print edition; also entitled "The Times Announces Digital Subscription Plan" in the electronic version, front page of Media & Advertising section of 'Business day', March 17, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/business/media/18times.html?_r=1). Accessed March 17, 2011.
Here I should add that at the time of editing (October 2011), it is not clear to me whether the system is still fully operational, and if so, how successful it is deemed to be by *The New York Times*. According to the Pricing section on Wikipedia's New York Times page (checked one last time on Nov. 8, 2011), the newspaper only *announced* the March 28, 2011 launch of its payment system, and there are no indications of how the program is doing, or even if it is still in place. There is however, the suggestion that the paywall plan has been reportedly dismissed by "some sources" as being easily circumvented, and apparently there have been reports of such successful attempts. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_York_Times. Accessed April 11, 2012.
[12] Tom Rosenstiel, "Five Myths about the Future of Journalism," *The Washington Post,* April 7, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-the-future-of-journalism/2011/04/05/AF5UxiuC_story.html. Accessed April 7, 2011.

subscriptions?"[13]

As if echoing Peters, Rosenstiel also captures a moment of change in industry practices that directly affected customers. Drawing attention to this change, he kills two birds with one stone, proposing at the same time his solution to this economic dilemma: diversification. "Journalism thrived in decades past because news media were the primary means by which industry reached customers. In the new media landscape, there are many ways to reach the audience, and news represents only a small share," he writes.[14]

Ironically, for all the perceptible chaos engendered by the technological revolution in the news business, which most news outlets on the periphery, media watchers, and the public have been clamoring against, there is also increasing 'order' and clarity in today's news ecosystem, although they come with side effects.

As I documented in earlier chapters, we are in an age of large-scale mergers and the news is at the beck and call of mega monopolies - just a tiny particle in a multiple-platformed, highly franchised communications and entertainment system.

As *New Yorker* staff writer Jeffrey Toobin explains in an interview with Tim Wu, chairman of the media-reform organization Free Press, while summarizing Wu's book *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*, there is even a certain cyclical quality to these processes: "At the heart of your book is this idea of a cycle: that technologies - whether it's radio, movies, telephone, today the Internet - go from chaos to centralization."[15]

And Wu confirms: "These cycles tend to go about thirty years. The Internet became a mass phenomenon in the mid-nineteen-nineties, so we're getting toward the period of consolidation. You don't see hundreds of companies anymore. (...) If history repeats itself, we should see one, two, or three companies try to take over everything."

But if, over the years, this consolidation of media provoked a change in public attitudes with regards to this trend, then one can sense it in the doubt and pangs of conscience palpable in Toobin's subsequent question: "Is it this a good thing?" Perhaps, increasingly, we are not so sure anymore.

Wu doesn't beat about the bush: "I don't think it's a good thing. I think it has advantages for viewers and consumers, but the real question is whether you really want one or two people, or one or two companies, in charge of what people see and hear,' he says."

The ethical challenges to quality journalism resulting from this process, of course, are fewer voices, and eventually less free, diverse speech in our news coverage.[16] And less frequent but certainly not unprecedented, there is also the risk of conflicting interests as some key people in the newly merged companies have sometimes found

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[13] Peters.

[14] Rosenstiel.

[15] "A Vicious Cycle - A video conversation about communications, monopolies, and the future with Jeffrey Toobin and Tim Wu," "New Yorker Currents," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 18, 2010, 30, to see the full video, visit newyorker.com/go/currents. Accessed April 11, 2012.

[16] For more on the direct link between ethics and fair, balanced and diverse quality journalism, see Robert I. Berkman and Christopher A. Shumway, *Digital Dilemmas - Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals* (Ames IA: Iowa State Press, 2003) 252, 265-266.

ways to get involved in other related yet separate ventures, whose boundaries and affiliations are not always easily detectable in the new, huge media maelstrom.

For the public and those independent media watchers from outside the industry observing this increasingly tense news playing field, echoes of the changes and turmoil inside can be heard through the increasingly vociferous and warfare-like language.
In fact, if we look more closely at how the usual tensions in traditional journalism have changed in the new news economy, it can get quite bloody.

In an article for *Harper's Magazine* aptly featured on the cover under the teaser "The War Against Journalism," Thomas Frank describes the new realities in catastrophic, irremediable terms: "Now it is journalism that is collapsing. Ad revenue is in decline. News-gathering staffs are decimated. Distant bureaus are closed. Print editions shrink or disappear. It is next to impossible to make readers pay for online content. There is no point in denying it. The industry is dying."
To Frank, whom I gathered to be a skeptic about all things new media, it is precisely the "fun, non-linear, creative" new news production and consumption experiences constructed "in the name of revitalizing the business" that have strangled quality journalism, and "declare(d) righteous war on journalistic professionalism, closing career opportunities to the qualified, and [what is even more bad news for media ethics], conspicuously blending advertising with editorial."[17]
For Frank, the battle lines are simple: it is a war not just between 'old' and 'new' media, but also between profits and professionalism, and it is one or the other: "The problem is not the end of the newspaper; it's that professional newsgathering organizations can no longer be supported by the for-profit system. Either the profit must go or the professionalism," he writes.

When Frank goes on to describe new-media enthusiast Jay Rosen's journalism philosophy in less than endearing terms[18], his position stands as a warning against what we do *not* want to fall into as well as a reminder about how we must leave such extremes behind and take a more balanced approach to the problem at hand. In fact, balance - a harmonious mix of the best of traditional and new practices, as well as a new model for news-reporting. More on this in my 'Proposals' section in Chapter 7.

The state of 'war' in journalism is, of course, not confined to the philosophies, ideologies and business plans for new models behind it. The fight is on in the sphere of its supporting technology too. For all the astonishing democratizing powers of the cell-phone-wielding crowds in the 'Arab Spring' regions and other witness-citizen reporters in collective news projects around the world, *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* reminds us quite brutally what this is all really about. In a cell phone market overview article earlier this year, the title "Mobile Wars!" towers over the two-line sub-head "After Nokia's software surrender, the five-way struggle for mobile dominance heats up; The game has changed from a battle of devices to a war of ecosystems."[19]

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[17] The note about media ethics is my own, not paraphrased from Frank.
Thomas Frank, "Easy Chair - Bright Frenetic Mills," *Harper's Magazine*, Dec. 2010, 11-13.
[18] See Frank, 13 for a critique of Rosen's theories and methods.
[19] Peter Burrows, "Mobile Wars!" *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, Technology section, Feb 21-Feb 27, 2011, 37-39.

If we look for signs of change in this heated competition, they are to be found in the quantity, rather than the quality: "What is different this time is scale, Peter Burrows writes. "Mobile is the biggest platform war ever," he quotes International Strategy & Investment analyst Bill Whyman as saying.

For Marvin Kitman of *Harper's Magazine*, the times of troubles and deep divisions in journalism started at a very precise moment: "At 6 a.m. on October 7, 1996, the stone age of American journalism officially began," he writes of the day that Fox News Channel went on the air with 18 million subscribers.[20] Kitman indeed zeroes in on the rise of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and subsequent threatening dominance of the U.S. media world with its "news-lite celebrity 'journalism,' and less-than-meets-the-eye reporting," as the main catalyzing culprit for the current sorry state of affairs. He too, uses graphic terms that paint a bellicose landscape to describe the growing animosity between the Australian-born media mogul and his main competitor Ted Turner. With its "hands around the throat of news," Murdoch's Fox News launched vicious media attacks against Turner's prized possessions, such as CNN, he says. Most of all, Kitman bemoans the fact that the American journalism establishment didn't see Murdoch coming and act: "Fifteen years ago, we had a chance to stop the relentless march of Rupert Murdoch. (...) The failure to stop the barbarian at the gates of New York, resulting in the rise of Fox News - it has been number one in prime-time cable network news for the last forty-one quarters[21] - also marked the demise of Ted Turner as a player in the media wards. By the end of 1996, he had been fired, as Turner put it, by Time Warner CEO Levin," writes Kitman. "Fox's success also destroyed Turner's beloved CNN. It had been the network of record, the one people turned to. In 2006, seeing Fox's escalating ratings, CNN unveiled a new, unimproved, more-like-Fox CNN. Today it is often fourth in the hearts of cable-TV-news viewers, behind even NBC."[22]

Simply recognizing that Rupert Murdoch is a businessman, not a journalist, would have saved the profession's leaders and journalists a lot of deep analyses and soul-searching. By this, I mean that an individual's personal qualities and inclinations are a good, in fact crucial, indicator of what kind of professional he will be in any occupational sphere.
Eventually it all boils down to personal moral and work ethics, which as we know, are radically different in business than in journalism.[23]
The audiences of these major media players (whose view of these tensions we are observing in this section) may also wish for more transparency about these internal workings and infightings, as well as about the editorial decisions on news coverage,

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[20] Marvin Kitman, "Murdoch Triumphant - How we could have stopped him – twice," *Harpers' Magazine*, Criticism section, 29-35.
[21] Of course, the success of Murdoch's news ventures may leave one skeptical about insisting on higher quality in news-reporting. But this is very much a question to be resolved between journalists and their conscience or personal moral credo, namely, how they define 'success' and the mission of journalism: whether the goal of journalism is to inform the public as best it can, or to be a cash cow.
[22] Kitman, 35
[23] I am referring here to the quintessential conflict at the heart of news between the commercial pressures and the need to fulfill journalism's functions of independence and duty to inform the public.

which still take place mostly 'behind closed doors,' and which after all are in great part about access to their wallets.

At this point we can only note the importance of including such a feature in a new model for collaborative news-reporting - although in principle, the open-source model should lend itself well to such transparency.

The ripples from the seething tensions beneath the surface of mainstream media can easily be intercepted by the public and are often the subject of heated discussions on the news offerings of the day in online forums. But to long-time news producer and media critic Danny Schechter, it doesn't take much digging either to find out what is really going on behind the scene and what are the roots and motivations for these conflicts, which seem to have only been exacerbated by the advance of digital media.

"The problem I see is that you have different audiences and communities. So there is a media war (for these audiences)," he said in a telephone interview.[24]

"The News Dissector," as he is also known on his Blog, then cited a list of ills afflicting the major U.S. corporate media, from the lack of funding and a new business model to the 24-hour news cycle which would have us believe that 'more is better.'

But even more interesting are Schechter's revelations on the inner workings of big media. First, he observes certain pernicious undercurrents beneath the breaking news and flashing headlines: "There is still a tension, a certain elitism. There are double standards, and that is self-serving. This journalism is very flawed," he says.

Probed a little further, and using references to his own prolific writings on the hidden forces and agendas behind media messages[25], he reveals how during the news coverage of the second Iraq War, it was obvious that Fox News had a clear agenda. As a result, he said, "a lot of news sites were funded to go after Fox News." Even with the ruling powers "10 blocks away from The Washington Post, NBC" and other major media's quarters in Washington, "nobody ran to scream at them," he said. "You want to be accurate, you need fairness and accuracy. But your mentality is framed by the mentality of the government," he sternly observed, speaking from a journalist's perspective.[26]

The conversation that ensued uncovered an even darker side to the publicly visible media manipulations that we have all come to detect easily. "If the media is filtered today, it's not just the content, it's the commentary. That's what is being reconfigured, it's about shaping values," he said.

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[24] The interview with Danny Schechter took place by telephone, followed by a few email exchanges, on July 29, 2010. He is a television producer, documentary filmmaker, independent blogger (on MediaChannel.org, among others), media critic of American and global media, and the founder of the television and film production company Globalvision. He is also known as "The News Dissector." MediaChannel.org was suspended in 2010 for lack of funding. He now blogs on his Web site at http://www.newsdissector.com/dissectorville/. Accessed April 11, 2012.

[25] See especially *Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception: How the Media Failed to Cover the Iraq War* (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books, October 2003); *Media Wars: News At A Time of Terror* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); and *The More You Watch, The Less You Know* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1997).

[26] See Schechter, *Embedded* for more on this particular example.

Taking cable network TV to illustrate how all news today is being 'packaged' for certain audiences and purposes, he showed how the spectator sports of wrestling is being used by television companies as a blueprint for "the most popular package." In wrestling, he says, "all the participants have already agreed who is the winner. This is the science of building audience. And it (the media) might be spending more money on building audience than on content. The whole idea is that it provides, it creates a brand, an identity. Fox News used the wrestling model to do just that. It's a strategy. You can't take news out of this context of marketing, of branding," he said. Wrapping up his conclusion into his thoughts on how journalism has changed under the influence of such processes 'from above,' he said. "This is what I would call 'a post-journalism environment.' It is a presentation, a packaging of news. Take CNN for example: it's cheaper to have opinion than to report, than to send a journalist in the field. This is no longer the dominant form of journalism. You can no longer tell the difference between the fictional and the factional. The media is there for the commercial. Ads are designed to serve that purpose. The news are structured to play to that audience. This is why there is so much uniformity in the news. In short, I'm getting 'a diversity of presentation techniques'," he concluded.

Of course, Schechter's cold but realistic assessment of the present state of the media and journalism raises some serious, disturbing questions not only of a professional, but also moral nature.
"A lot of it is about who the audience is, about what journalism is, about what to cover," he says, prompting us to think about "the way we are selling the war," the way that a woman with her hand cut off might find herself splashed on the covers of magazines worldwide. He prompts us to think of a more sympathetic approach to cover her plight. "Journalism if often framed, it's not being put in that social context" of the woman's war-torn conditions for example. "This is the conversation we should assume."
Indeed, the antidote to such ethically irresponsible journalism, he said, is to start a debate about journalism. "What we need to have is a discourse. We have to ask ourselves, 'is the media there to serve democracy or the corporate needs of companies?'" he says, adding that he has tried to start such a media analysis and address some of these questions through his books and other online writings, and his documentary films, such as most recently "Plunder" The Crime of Our Time," produced by the company he founded, Globalvision.
Despite the difficulties and work ahead, he is an optimist, including about drafting a new code of ethics that would address these new roles and configurations of our news media today: "It would be challenging, but it's not impossible," he said.

For *We the Media* author Dan Gillmor too, the changes that have affected all levels of news production have a destructive force about them, but in it he also sees potential for innovation and renewal.

In a Blog post on his latest digital news project "Mediactive," he calls the upheavals in the news business "cataclysmic": "The journalistic ecosystem of past half-century, like the overall media ecosystem, was dominated by a small number of giant companies. Those enterprises, aided by governmental policies and manufacturing-era efficiencies of scale, controlled the marketplace, and grew bigger and bigger. The collision of Internet-fueled technology and traditional media's advertising model was

cataclysmic for the big companies that dominated."[27]

But it doesn't have to be, Gillmor says. Echoing his media scholar-colleague Tom Rosenstiel, cited above, he spurs us to embrace the 'unknown' - or even better, to create it, and sees diversity as a key element in a new participatory model for news: "But is it catastrophic for the communities and society they served? In the short term, it's plainly problematic, at least when we consider Big Journalism's role as a watchdog, though the dominant companies have served in that role inconsistently, at best, especially in recent years. But the worriers appear to assume that we can't replace what we will lose. They have no faith in the restorative power of a diverse ecosystem, because they don't know what it's like to be part of one."

The only problem with Gillmor's solution for the industry's ills, is that the diversity card has already been played, or at least brandished with much fanfare in new journalistic enterprises, promising 'empowerment' to the previously passive public both in the mainstream and alternative media, and a complete overhaul of the rigid traditional hierarchy in media management - without any concrete, enduring effects or results taking root in the system. As noted earlier, even new digital news projects have not really subverted the decision-making structures of the ruling elite in today's journalism.
This passage will be invoked again in my 'Proposals' section regarding how diversity and participant empowerment can be implemented and preserved in a collaborative news-reporting system.

This section of Chapter 4 would not be complete without mentioning the waves, or rather tornado, of both positive comments and discontent that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has unleashed in its attempts at regulating a changing and ever more cruelly competitive media environment. 'Regulating' here is understood as 'bringing some fairness and equality to the market's players, especially the minor ones, through legislation.'
It is interesting to note the changes that these government efforts have brought into the public's notion of Internet access and opportunities, and the seeds of discord that they have implanted in the digital debate.
Peter Suderman, writing on the newly passed regulation in *Reason*, reminds us what the battle lines are: "Despite an initial bipartisan consensus against regulating the Net, there was always dissent. As the Web matured, that dissent grew, and when the Obama administration took power, it gave dissenters the keys to the regulatory command post." (...) "Since taking office in June 2009, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski has led the commission on an unprecedented quest for power over the Web's network infrastructure, sparking a thunderous, confusing lobbying battle over who gets to control the Net," he wrote.[28]

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[27] Dan Gillmor, "Ecosystems and Journalism," *Mediactive*, Dec 28, 2009, http://mediactive.com/2009/12/28/ecosystems-and-journalism/. Accessed Dec 28, 2009.
[28] Peter Suderman, "Internet Cop - President Obama's top man at the Federal Communications Commission tries to regulate the Net," *Reason*, March 2011, 20-29. I should add that in no way is this article meant to represent a balanced view of the Net Neutrality issue. On the contrary, Suderman shows clearly his skeptical stance towards the new rules. I use it here to illustrate the level of disagreement that exists on the issue, not to endorse Suderman's viewpoint.

But whatever side of the debate on NN one stands, it is hard to see how a more equalized system for Internet communications would not help bring in more voices and eventually diversify the electronic news (and other) content the public consumes. This is precisely the goal that Washington D.C.-based non-profit organization Free Press has devoted itself to achieving, through what it believes most in: regulation - that is, *improved* regulatory policies.

Recognizing that the American media system and the Internet on which it now relies are in crisis and prey to the growing control of a select few mega conglomerates, Free Press argues that the best way to come to the rescue of the critical and diverse alternative voices crippled by such commercial pressures is through media reform. "It is up to us to change the media. The way we do this is by changing media policies," the organization writes on its Web site.[29]

Of course, we know that on the level of editorial monitoring and ethics code drafting and implementation within media institutes and news companies, there can be no such thing as official 'legislation.' As discussed in Chapter 2, codes of ethics in journalism have to be 'enforced' on a *voluntary* basis.

Still, in the much larger context of bringing order and fairness to our media structures generally, then Free Press is right about official regulation being the way to go. As it explains: "Our media system wasn't created by the 'invisible hand' of the free market. It's the direct result of policies made by Congress and the Federal Communications Commission in Washington. There's really no such thing as 'deregulation.' We're always going to have rules. (Just try starting your own radio station without a license and see how fast the FCC shows up.) The question that matters is whom those rules will benefit. Do the laws and regulations benefit the public or do they just benefit big companies that can afford high-priced lobbyists?"

This last question about whom lawmakers should have in mind when drafting regulations is most relevant to our own, smaller-scale but no less important purpose of drafting a code of ethics for online journalists.
And the very fact that there are, alongside Free Press, quite a few organizations and entities that are devoted to this cause of analyzing media policies and introducing reforms on such a scale, only reinforces the stark lack of a similar concern for establishing editorial reforms for journalists working with new forms of digital media. In comparison, the need for 'regulation' at the smaller-scale level of newsrooms is evident, and thus urgent.

Furthermore, Free Press' suggestion that new media regulation-making should be participatory and representative, in the best democratic traditions, is also wonderfully applicable to the sphere of regulating (or 'guiding' to use a gentler word) journalists' work online and off-.
"For decades, communications policies have been made behind closed doors in the public's name but without our informed consent. That's unacceptable in a democracy," Free Press's site says. "If we want better media, we need better media policies. If we want better policies, we must engage more people in policy debates and demand better media. (...) Only by restoring public input in the policymaking process can we

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[29] "Beginner's Guide," *Free Press,*
http://www.freepress.net/resources/beginners_guide. Accessed 4/12/2011.

create policies that serve the public interest."

This could not be truer or more desirable for building guidelines and standards for collaborating journalists in the digital age. As will become apparent in my 'Proposals' section in the next chapter, this participatory model that engages the public is one that my proposed open-source code of ethics seeks to emulate for the more specific environment of electronic news-publishing.

Original Reporting: An Endangered Species

Another area of journalism that has been severely affected by the changes in technological and social practices and has had adverse consequences for the public is the sharp decrease in original news-reporting and -writing.

Indeed, however people are getting their news (through the print, online or broadcast medium), it is hard not to notice the increasing dearth of original news coverage in our new media ecosystem as originally-sourced journalism has pretty much been replaced by an ever-growing reliance on the long-established wires by.

There are understandable reasons for this development. As *The New York Times* itself acknowledges, professional journalism is an expensive service: "Fundamentally, the sort of reporting that organizations like CNN, The New York Times, The Associated Press, the BBC and Al Jazeera do (why isn't Al Jazeera in my 800-channel cable lineup?) doesn't come cheaply — especially in parts of the world like Libya, Egypt, Haiti and Japan. From an economic standpoint, it is essentially a loss leader," writes Nate Silver on his NYT Blog, in a post explaining his paper's new pay model and 'the Economics of Reporting.' "The traditional way of subsidizing this reporting — through monopoly profits on print advertising — is not working as well as it used to, so news media organizations are looking to alternatives."[30]

One of the biggest changes in American journalism for both journalists and their audiences is the fact that aggregated, re-heated and microwaved news are now a fact of life, 'the new normal' in news-reporting.

The 'AP-ization' of News

However, there are less discernible problems underneath this facade of what at first sight passes for news reported by the client print or digital publication: in an accompanying, eye-opening graph entitled 'News Outlets Cited Most Often for Original Reporting,' Silver shows us how of the media outlets most often cited by the majority of media, including electronic ones, The Associated Press (AP) comes first by a large margin for straight news (with 3,108 citations), followed closely by *The New York Times* (with 1,785 citations)[31]. "The Associated Press, with 7,388 citations, is the top-ranked news organization; as a nonprofit corporation, it is cited most frequently by the American newspapers and broadcast outlets that make up its members. *The New York Times*, second on the list, is cited more often by bloggers,"

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[30] Nate Silver, "A Note to Our Readers on the Times Pay Model and the Economics of Reporting," "Five Thirty Eight Blog," *The New York Times*, March 24, 2011, http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/24/a-note-to-our-readers-on-the-times-pay-model-and-the-economics-of-reporting/ Accessed March 24, 2011.

[31] I should note here that these are the figures reported by *The New York Times* and that I have not independently checked them for accuracy or consistency.

he writes.[32]

Generally the wires, (such as Bloomberg and Reuters) are the source of the most cited material, but nothing comes close to AP. This is especially true for foreign reporting, with even *The Boston Globe* and similar major news publications now relying almost exclusively on AP and other wires for their foreign coverage. It is no exaggeration to say that we are seeing a kind of 'AP-ization' of the news.[33]

And here is where, in reference to Silver's note about bloggers being among the most avid reproducers of content from the wires and other news outlets, there is a problem on a deeper, more personal, and even ethical level.

If the mainstream media is thus being cited and reproduced so much by bloggers (many of whom we can safely assume to be independent, freelance writers)[34] then what is the point of working as an independent blogger? What was the point of excitedly hailing the unlimited freedoms and self-publishing empowerment that the early days of the Internet promised? What are bloggers and other online writers doing with their hard-earned independence, cyber speech rights and technology-supported self-publishing powers? Why fight to acquire and retain these assets and the just copy and reproduce others' findings and writings? The online work of these bloggers - and there are many, even if we consider only the sphere of news - has a vague quality of 'manufactured' news, produced 'in chain-like conditions,' to use the terms of my friend-colleague journalist Yuko Ito who once described what it was like to work in the fast-paced, Spartan environment of the Reuters news agency's Tokyo Bureau. "There is no time to think, you just produce, produce, produce. And of course, you can't put anything personal in the stories," she told me.[35]

The beauty of the independent publishing and open-source movements in journalism is that they have given their self-taught practitioners nearly unlimited powers of expression.

But once we have acquired the moral freedom to be our own publisher and editor, we must think very carefully about what we are going to do with that freedom. Although this is not happening on an official level, as would be the case if we are working as staff in a media company, there is still responsibility to be taken towards one's audience when posting one's writings on the public space of the Net: are bloggers going to be upfront about their reporting techniques and tell their readers openly about their sources? In many cases, this is not happening, and the sources of the information found in Blog posts are not clear, or are inaccurately attributed, or worse - quotes are tampered with and made to fit the writers' purposes. Details on how the information or quotes were acquired are also rare in online news-writing - a sharp difference with

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[32] Silver.

[33] 'AP-ization': term or my own coinage.

[34] I should note here that I am referring to all types of bloggers, paid and non-paid, professionals and non-professionals - or perhaps more accurately, to the practice of blogging in general, which, I am arguing, is largely devoted to repurposing content rather than producing original news.

[35] I should also make clear that my concept of original reporting means just that - personally seeking out and verifying information. The fact that the practice of using material already reported by other sources is widespread among the professional mainstream media is no excuse. This is about breaking new ground.

traditional print publications' practices, whose articles often indicated[36] how and when the interview was conducted (i.e. by telephone, in writing, etc, in addition to the exact date). This important detail seems to have dropped off the radar of many online editors, perhaps due to time pressures. Should online writers who do use a wire story or other news source for their postings be open about this with their readers and plainly state that this is re-published material, whenever it is the case? One rarely sees such acknowledgements. Shouldn't they themselves double-check the information with the sources of the primary material before publishing, just as a professional journalist working in the traditional industry would do? What if a primary source has made an obviously erroneous statement - are online content producers just going to repost it on their own site? What about providing the links to the original stories whose elements appear in their own, or which they have summarized in their own Blog posts? Should bloggers and all online news producers be somehow made to provide this information on sources? Should there be rules for this? And of course here, the question of enforcement arises again.[37]

For now what is clear is that all these 'non-activities,' meaning, deliberate omissions in sourcing and news-reporting laissez-faire from online journalists (both staff and independent ones) amounts to one of the biggest visible changes in the quality of our news coverage, and eventually one that reduces the level of information the public receives. This irresponsible 'reproduction' of information on a mass scale deceives the public, who may think that the new multitudes of bloggers on the Net represents a multitude of voices, viewpoints and new news events to read about - while it is clearly not the case, when so many online producers are looking to the wires, Yahoo.com and the like and other mainstream media for their Web sites' material.

This responsibility for one's postings on the Internet, no matter how innocuous or outwardly professional and accurate a personal Blog may appear, also pertains to media ethics.
And as I explain in the next chapter, I strongly advocate for making bloggers who specialize in news content and all those who present themselves as 'journalists' on the Net accountable for what they post online, and overall more responsible towards both their sources and readers.
After all, 'Responsibility' is the very first entry in the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics,[38] and bringing more professionalism to news publishers on the Net, regardless of their skills and training levels, is certainly a desired outcome for this thesis - even if it only instills in them more awareness of the need. In

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[36] 'Indicated': Please notice the past tense here - because it seems that the print operations of news organizations have now also let standards drop in this area, perhaps due to reduced staff and budget constraints, or as a result of the influence of new online practices that have been shown to be 'more flexible' in the areas of accuracy and attribution.
[37] Just to clarify my focus on bloggers in this paragraph and concern for sourcing and original reporting - these elements of journalism are at the core of what constitutes my argument for professional and ethics-based news-reporting, which I elaborate further in Part II of this chapter.
[38] For the current SPJ Code of Ethics see http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp; for the 1987 version I am referring to, see *The Journalist's Moral Compass - Basic Principles*, Edited by Steven R. Knowlton and Patrick R. Parsons (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1994) 5.

explaining journalists' professional duties, the code's authors write: "We believe those responsibilities carry obligations that require journalists to perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy, and fairness"[39] - qualities that the most advanced Web technologies or online social and collaborative knowledge cannot replace.

And it is not just the untrained or non-professionals who are at risk of being cavalier about verifying the news events they write about on the digital versions of their publications or original Web sites. Let this be very clear: if the information you publish is incorrect, you are responsible for the errors. Or, as long-time journalist and journalism teacher Steve Buttry[40] put it when commenting on the SPJ Code of Ethics' provision for dealing with sources: "Remember Judith Miller's absurd dismissal of responsibility for her false reporting about intelligence on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq: 'If your sources are wrong, you are wrong.' I think the SPJ Code of Ethics needs to state unequivocally: Journalists, not sources, are responsible for the accuracy of the stories; you should verify thoroughly enough to refute false information from sources."[41]

The lack of care in sourcing and verification is certainly one of the key responsibilities of journalists that has seen the biggest 'change' since the news' transfer to the Internet - meaning, the most pronounced slackening of discipline and standards, and this both among the 'digital native' media producers and the mainstream media professionals.
And this problem should certainly be addressed in a revised code for digital journalism.[42]

The reason I mention these issues in this particular section on the changes in the industry is because one should never assume media consumers, even in their most traditional embodiments[43], to be completely passive and oblivious of journalists' failings.
To take the two issues addressed above - the need for *original* news-reporting and careful, accurate sourcing - I would like to cite two astute observations from the

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[39] Knowlton and Parsons, 5.

[40] Steve Buttry is currently Director of Community Engagement & Social Media for Journal Register Co. and has trained journalists since 2005 through his work for the American Press Institute. He has also written a very detailed critique of the SPJ Code of Ethics, which my readers will hear more about in Chapter 5. His Web site is at http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/. Accessed April 11, 2012.

[41] The full post with his commentary is dated Nov 7, 2010 and can be found at http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2010/11/07/journalists-code-of-ethics-time-for-an-update/. Accessed April 11, 2012.

[42] I should make clear here that I am not arguing for 'imposing' anything on journalists, professionals or not. I am only proposing some guidelines for online news-reporting though a reformed code. Of course, its adoption is on a voluntary basis. Also, as I noted in an earlier footnote, I do not consider citing AP or other wires and/or mainstream news sources quality, original and desirable reporting - even if the practice is widespread. This does not make it acceptable, and least of all 'original' journalism. Only a personal phone call/interview with the source meets the criterion. This is a key component of my argument.

[43] Meaning the readers, viewers and listeners of the print and broadcast traditional media, who are often deemed 'passive' by new media analysts and supporters.

readers and commentators of the news site AlterNet, posting their reactions to an article on *The New York Times*' new pay model.[44] AlterNet poster Matthew Zillhardt wrote: "If the *Times* had original content worth reading, the paywall might make some sense. Too bad most of their stuff is just rehashed AP articles and a handful of op-ed pieces which can easily be found on many other sites." Another poster, whose goes by the nickname 'DJR96' shows knowledge of what constitutes quality news-reporting, as well as the usefulness of providing details on one's sources: "Pretty much any other media outlet RELIES on increased distribution via social media linkages. Good quality journalism will by its own merits be popular and attract readers to its source for more good articles."

Participants in online forums and the general public cannot be fooled and can recognize quality, professional journalism when they see it.

The New York Time's David Carr puts his finger on the way that changes and innovations in information technologies themselves are contributing to this disturbing sense of similarity across our news media's offerings. Thanks to the new distribution devices, screens and platforms and their ever-smarter functionalities, the substance and quality of the news we are reading on them has taken a back seat and may appear as one big mass of data to glazed-over eyes, Carr says.

"What if there were no such thing as television, print, Web and radio? What if they were all just one big blob of media?" he asks. "Well, if you are staring at an iPad or some other tablet, that future seems to have already shown up.
On a Web-enabled, back-lit device, the difference between the BBC, The Washington Post, The Huffington Post and ABC News are tough to discern. Each has video, audio, text, social media and pictures. All can be navigated effortlessly by the swipe of a finger. I helped my 87-year-old father set up the iPad that Santa brought, and as he looked over my shoulder he said, 'Everything sort of looks the same.' My point exactly."

Even the very tools and technologies through which we access our news are becoming blurred and indistinguishable, he says: "And even beyond the four corners of the iPad, things are beginning to look mighty mashed up. Gawker, the influential media blog, is being redesigned and looks a lot like television. The Web and application world will grow to look like TV because consumers and advertisers find things to love in the format."[45]

Even though the multiple platforms of cross-media franchises have been already well documented, most notably in such sphere-defining works as Henry Jenkins's *Convergence Culture*[46], Carr seems to imply that all the different platforms and interfaces that we are staring at may end up looking like just one big, boundless

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[44] Stephen C. Webster, "The New York Times' $50 Million Paywall Crumbles With Simple Code Exploit," AlterNet, posted on March 23, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/story/150349/the_new_york_times%27_%2450_million_paywall_crumbles_with_simple_code_exploit?page=entire. Accessed March 23, 2011.
[45] David Carr, "The Great Mashup 2011," *The New York Times*, Jan 3, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/03/business/media/03carr.html?pagewanted=all). Accessed Jan. 2, 2011.
[46] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture - Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

screen. That might be true, especially for those who are not used to navigating them. However, the potential consequences of this development for media ethics are insignificant.

And that is the problem. Carr does not seem to be overly concerned about the possible ethical implications of his otherwise accurate and important observations. In fact, at no point does he draw any conclusion to that effect.

Likewise, Ann Blair in *The Boston Sunday Globe* gives quite a comprehensive account of the realities and consequences of the "information overload" and "unprecedented change" that our age is experiencing, which she says have reached "crisis proportions."[47] But even though she mentions the fact that "we (too) are devising ways to cope," citing the tools that we have developed to manage "in novel ways all these texts" and the "proliferation of cooperative information on the Internet," nowhere does she bring up the questions of what these changes mean for the preservation of a sense of morals among the users of this information, what kind of new ethical issues are tied with these new ways of interacting with digital data in such quantity, and how users should adapt their behavior and actions to ensure ethical use of all this data.

This would suggest that while many among journalists and the public have noticed the outward signs of the changes in our news media environment, few have made the extra mental stretch of prognosticating what these changes mean for media ethics and the standards of the profession.

Facts or Fiction (or Both)

Another 'new reality' (no pun intended) of our news media confronting the public is the blurred line between facts and fiction in news coverage, particularly the use of fictional elements in news shows for the purpose of entertainment. The benefits of such satirical news shows, especially when they offer a lone, alternative voice to mainstream media, are undeniable.

News shows that use comedy and satire are nothing new and are now a fixture of our evening news programs (in the United States and to my knowledge many European countries). We all have heard of Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* and Stephen Colbert's *The Colbert Report* on Comedy Central. Perhaps it is a sign of our times that, being constantly bombarded by catastrophic economic- and cataclysmic climate news, we have an increased appetite for humor in all spheres of life. Stewart and Colbert certainly were aware of this when they organized their "Rally to Restore Sanity" or "March to Keep the Fear Alive" in the fall of 2010, which according to a *Boston Globe* report, "was a one-of-a-kind schizophrenic mash-up: part satire, part pop culture festival, part Halloween carnival. And by blurring the lines between politics and entertainment, it was nearly impossible to categorize."[48]

But it seems that in an attempt at keeping eyeballs for as long as possible on the screen, the lines between real news and 'faked' ones are getting increasingly hard to distinguish, as the sphere of 'infotainment' expands at the detriment of pure, real

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[47] Ann Blair, "Information Overload - the early years," *The Boston Sunday Globe,* Ideas section, Nov 28, 2010, K1.

[48] Joseph Williams, "Turning out for sanity. Or maybe fear," *The Boston Globe*, Nov 1, 2010, 9.

journalism.

To start with our first example, the *Daily Show*. Despite host Stewart's openness about the comedic nature and self-professed entertainment mandate of his show, it has been nominated several times for real news and journalism awards (in addition to clearly classified variety-themed ones) - which admittedly might send conflicting messages to audiences.[49]

Other similar insinuations about the increasingly dubious and malleable nature of news can be found in *Time* opinion writer James Poniewozik's coverage of *The Onion*'s new cable news show on the fictional Onion News Network, *FactZone with Brooke Alvarez*, a TV spin-off whose philosophy Poniewozik says is that "24-hour news is itself a kind of performance."[50]

While all this might be a lot of fun for viewers who are depressed and tired of hard-news stories about real life, it must be observed that this subtle message that 'our newscasts are just a performance, a glitzy show' is not counter-balanced or contradicted in any way by anyone in the current debate on remaking the news for the future. We can only guess what goes on in the subconscious minds of the viewing public and journalism students in particular, when they hear such messages. For all the fun and at times very good critiques these shows offer, these suggestions that somehow devalue real news and journalism do not constitute the best background for raising awareness on ethical values in today's news.

And these subtle (and I believe relatively recent) messages in our news offerings that seem to suggest that real news events and the way they should be covered by journalists can perfectly be married to the sphere of entertainment and form with it a pair of partners of equal status, are pervasive in our information environment. Poniewozik, when assessing the chances of The Onion's new show, has noticed this unorthodox but increasingly popular marriage of news and entertainment in television:

"*ONN*'s bigger problem may be that cable networks — earnest as they can be when grave news breaks — already use the rhythms and devices of comedy. Keith Olbermann delivers zingers when he's not delivering special comments, and Glenn Beck uses tropes right out of morning-zoo radio (where he started out). HLN hired comic Joy Behar to host a talk show; CNN's replacement for Larry King, Piers Morgan, proved his chops not just in newspapers but on *America's Got Talent* and *Celebrity Apprentice*."

The big difference with openly comic and satirical offerings such as *The Daily Show* or *The Onion*'s Web and print editions, is that Poniewozik's examples in television news are not really acknowledged and openly recognized by either the TV networks/journalists themselves or the viewers (who, it is understandable, may well not be aware of these in-house decisions). This is where I believe the key difference

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[49] More on these awards can be found at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2043438,00.html. Accessed Jan. 20, 2001.

[50] James Poniewozik, "Faking News," "Tuned In column," *Time*, Jan. 31, 2011, 65; also as "The Onion's New Fake News Show" published Jan 20, 2011 in the online edition at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2043438,00.html. Accessed Jan. 20, 2011.

with early 'infotainment' practices lies, and where the biggest change has taken place. The blending of news and entertainment or other material is now less visible and acknowledged, let alone debated. This is where we could argue that the public needs guidance - including ethical - to distinguish among the facts, fiction and fun in today's news and to be able to think critically about them.

This ethically questionable blending of the light and the serious in new news products ironically creates new challenges for the comedy-news ventures themselves: "Walking that line between reality and comedy — and showing where it disappears altogether — may be *ONN'*s biggest joke and best service. But it will also be a challenge to sustain. The *Onion* headline for its own foray into TV might be "Satirists demand that target medium stop parodying itself," Poniewozik writes.[51]

The Village Gossip on the World Wide Web

The broad challenges to professional journalism that have been provoked by the digital turn, from widespread use of others' reporting to economic changes in the industry and inaccuracies in online news reports, are only a selected few among a sea of other difficulties. Below I describe an additional one.

When in this heady mix of facts and fiction we stir in the voices of the now 'active' audience, the result can be quite disorienting and for some, downright troubling. According to a *New York Times* article[52] (one in a growing series of reports on this issue), the major change experienced by small rural communities in America as they started to exchange news and stories on the Net versus in person has led to a spate of malevolent gossip, lies and personal threats, all facilitated by people's use (or rather abuse) of their cyber-enhanced anonymity.
According to *The Times'* reporter, A. G. Sulzberger, and the experts cited in the article, the use of online social networks by communities whose interactions and news-sharing used to be heavily reliant on the face-to-face has now unleashed a disconcerting amount of backstabbing and bullying in open online forums - which are thus read by most of these communities.

While gossiping is as old as the hills and such immoral (or amoral) conduct may well be reinforced by the close ties of small and/or rural communities, the reporter[53] seems to be committing an ethical misstep of his own when speculating about the possible reasons for the spreading of malicious misinformation and other ill-intended liberties some people tend to take once on the Net.

"In rural America," he writes, "where an older, poorer and more remote population has lagged the rest of the country in embracing the Internet, the growing use of social media is raising familiar concerns about bullying and privacy. But in small towns there are complications. The same Web sites created as places for candid talk about local news and politics are also hubs of unsubstantiated gossip, stirring widespread

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[51] Poniewozik.

[52] A. G. Sulzberger, "In Small Towns, Gossip Moves to the Web, and Turns Vicious," *The New York Times*, Sept. 19, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/us/small-town-gossip-moves-to-the-web-anonymous-and-vicious.html?pagewanted=all. Accessed Sept. 19, 2011.

[53] *NYT* Publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.'s son, Arthur Gregg Sulzberger.

resentment in communities where ties run deep, memories run long and anonymity is something of a novel concept."

This passage seems to imply that being old, poor, a rural resident (vs. an urban one), or not technology-equipped and/or -savvy makes one more prone to gossiping, bullying, and similar malevolent and immoral conduct in one's social interactions within one's community. Yet, I would argue that such irresponsible behavior and acts can be found everywhere among people from all walks of life, regardless of social or economic status, geographic location or level of technological knowledge.
One may well want to question the faulty moral judgment that is being passed here. First, ironically, the Internet and its related technologies and practices were blamed for encouraging all sorts of vices and immoral acts in its initial days - which would question (or rather turn on its head) *The Times*' implication that lack of access to such technologies has made people less moral and less kind to each other.
Of course, this is a problem for pre-digital news as well, but I would argue that the sheer distribution and speed powers of the Internet make it all more intractable and therefore uncontrollable.

Another, related discernible change in our information landscape involves gossipy and controversial personal news about high-level political personalities and celebrities being widely published and discussed online. Some of these online postings and personal disclosures are 'self-inflicted' without regard for the potential consequences, such as the Facebook-facilitated revelations[54] mentioned in the introduction and the infamous graphic postings on the Internet of New York Congressman Christopher Lee, which led to his resignation[55].

Other new trends in the forms of online publications that jostle for space and attention with the real news of professional journalists on the Net are much more cognizant and calculated. These include the very creative uses of fake identities behind accounts on social networks such as Twitter. The undeniable rise in the quantity and boldness of such fake personalities, often parodies of politicians and other news-makers, and of their updates is an additional challenge for both online journalists and their audiences, as these are granted equal space and importance in the limitless world of cyberspace. In a report on this phenomenon, Ashley Parker of *The Times* cites '@DCJourno,' "a self-described 'important political reporter in Washington' who recently advised cable television bookers that he would be happy to appear on their shows to talk about Egypt — he has, after all, 'been following this stuff pretty closely for almost a week.' And there was a short-lived Twitter feed in the guise of Robert Gibbs, the White House press secretary."[56]

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[54] See Jeremy W. Peters and Brian Stelter, "The Facebook Skeletons Come Out," *The New York Times*, Nov. 7 (Nov. 5 online) 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/07/fashion/07indiscretions.html. Accessed Nov. 5, 2010.
[55] See Raymond Hernandez, "New York Congressman Quits After E-Mail Exchange Is Posted Online," *The New York Times*, Feb. 10, 2011, A 1, 20.
[56] Ashley Parker, "Fake Twitter Accounts Get Real Laughs," *The New York Times*, Feb. 9 (Feb. 10 in the print edition), 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/10/us/politics/10fake-twitter.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=You%20Wouldnt%20Believe%20What%20Rahm%20Emanuel%20Is%20Saying%20on%20Twitter&st=cse). Accessed Feb. 9, 2011.

She then adds, "The person behind the handle @DCJourno, who would not reveal his identity and agreed to be interviewed only via e-mail, said that he started the account in the hope that it might make its targets a bit more self-aware. His tweets toggle between fact and fiction so closely that he said: "Several of my followers still don't understand that I'm a parody. They think I'm just a cool D.C. journalist, which really says it all.""

Indeed, this is perhaps one of the best examples of the newly blurred identities and moral purposes behind them one now finds in abundance on the Internet, and which can be as confusing for media professionals as for the public.

If we take the ethical implications of the relatively mild gossip and disparaging comments from real and fake personalities and people on the Net one step further, we reach the sphere of hate speech, which even among professional journalists-commentators has been on the rise. The ire and hurtful comments seem to have reached a new level since the debate on hate - and by extension free speech - that followed the attempted assassination on Arizona Senator Gabrielle Giffords[57]. In fact, filmmaker and journalist Rory O'Connor, who spoke on hate speech in the media at the National Conference on Media Reform in Boston earlier this year, even suggested that we take speech 'offline,' and into the real world of meetups as a remedy to the apparently fiercer, more violent character that personal comments and opinion are now taking on the Web[58].

Of course free speech itself has gone through a whirlwind of changes and transformations since going online progressively from the early days of the public Internet, and cyber rights are a constant and complex issue for all participants.

But it is reassuring to see that despite the still murky waters of cyber legislation[59] and the regular strident alarms being raised about speech deemed offensive by certain segments of the population (which admittedly may indeed sound offensive to some ears), the basic protection of expression rights are still being defended and provided for.

One of the most encouraging examples in this regard is Chief Justice Roberts Jr.'s decision in the Snyder v. Phelps case to "protect even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that we do not stifle public debate."[60] The Chief Justice justified his decision by saying that "it is about matters of public import, (including) the political and moral conduct of the United States and its citizens."

Such progressive decisions on what can or cannot be said in the virtual spaces of the

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[57] See my Introduction in Chapter 1 for more on this event.

[58] Rory O' Connor, "Is the Future of Online Media to Go Offline?" AlterNet, April 7, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/story/150540/is_the_future_of_online_media_to_go_offline/. Accessed April 7, 2011.

[59] See my earlier mention of this issue in Chapter 1 and in Edward A. Cavazos and Gavino Morin, *Cyberspace and the Law: Your rights and Duties in the Online World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995) for a comprehensive examination of the laws regulating cyberspace from their inception.

[60] The case concerned the display of offensive signs during the funeral of Marine Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder. For more, see the source of my quoted material: the editorial "Even Hurtful Speech," *The New York Times*, Opinion page, March 3 (March 2 in the online edition), 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/03/opinion/03thu2.html. Accessed March 2, 2011.

Internet unquestionably affect positively journalists' work and enrich their readers' experience. As a *New York Times*' editorial put it, "Even deeply flawed ideas must be defended because they are part of the public debate on which the country depends."[61]

Mobile & Micro = the New Cool

Two other notable trends of our digital journalism age that we should briefly mention, although not so much debated anymore as they have been pretty much integrated into everyday news production and consumption practices, are the 'mobile' and 'micro' phenomena. Both trends are still evolving fast, though.

As described earlier in this chapter, what started as a battle of mobile devices has evolved from competition in software design innovations to the development of new practices surrounding the use of these cell phone products - what *Bloomberg BusinessWeeks*' Peter Burrows called "a war of ecosystems."[62] As he writes, "This war will probably go on for some time, too."

The same magazine also writes about the similarly important trend of 'micro-news,' or what seems to be a tendency to reduce both the news content's size and the time it takes for consumers to read it and interact with it. The social network Twitter must be one of the best examples of this phenomenon, with its 140-character limit per individual posting. And 'news digests,' 'flash news,' and other news briefs formats both in print and broadcast have now long been a feature of our news landscape. But in an article on the revival of long-form journalism, *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* writer Brad Stone is rather critical of today's trendy and ever-faster 'mini news' delivery: "We are living in a media culture defined by appetizer-size articles and hastily assembled content, all tailored for discoverability by search engines," he writes.[63]
In the context of this thesis' earlier discussion about reduced budgets and editing staff in today's newsrooms, it goes without saying that we should take this remark very seriously when, in the next chapter, we will be thinking of ways to ensure accuracy and comprehensive news coverage despite this prevailing trend towards the fast, short and (perhaps consequentially) superficial.
And generally speaking, it is such broad, society-wide and already deeply entrenched technologies and practices that we should scrutinize carefully to assess the possible ethical pitfalls for journalists and their audiences whenever they engage with them. But with habit has come a certain complacency, and no one is really asking these questions. Hopefully my case study and other example-based observations address some of them.

I'd like to turn to one more change in our news environment, one that can be categorized as socio-cultural: *The New York Times*' naming of Jill Abramson as Executive Editor to replace Bill Keller in 2011. In an Opinion article for AlterNet,

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[61]"Even Hurtful Speech," *The New York Times*, Opinion page, March 3 (March 2 in the online edition), 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/03/opinion/03thu2.html. Accessed March 2, 2011.
[62] See Peter Burrows, "Mobile Wars!" *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, Technology section, Feb 21-Feb 27, 2011, 37-39.
[63] Brad Stone, "Will 'TiVos for Reading' Save Old Media?" *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, Technology section, Feb 21-Feb 27, 2011, 40, 42.

Sarah Seltzer encapsulates the spirit of change and fresh air that this step by *The Times*' management is injecting into the rusty, hierarchical traditions of the industry:

"Bill Keller, the Executive Editor, has stepped down and will be replaced with Jill Abramson, who was his 'right-hand woman' for much of the past decade, and will be the first woman at the editorial helm. Moving into her newly-vacated seat is Dean Baquet, an African-American. So for the first time, the top two editorial positions will not include any white men. It seems appropriate for a post Obama-Hillary age. And indeed, inasmuch as such reshuffling can effect change at massive entrenched institutions like the *Times* , (which it can, if slowly) then this is definitely positive news for the reading public and our 'paper of record,'" she concludes.[64]

This single incident of change does not mean that the battle for diversity at all levels in today's journalism is over. But it is certainly an encouraging sign, and a great introduction to my own enquiries in my Case Study 3 on how to use collaborative news-reporting to ensure more diversity in news coverage.

News Media: Trends and Transitions

If the Federal Communications Commission's Report on "the Information Needs of Communities and the Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age"[65] is correct about its belief that "Attempting to convey a clear picture of the modern media landscape is like trying to draw a hurricane from within the storm," then this does not bode well for our goal in this section to capture in a reasonably clear and concise manner the changes that have affected the media industry internally.

The FCC's Views on News

We now take a closer, more detailed look at how the technological changes and new communication practices and the challenges they pose are being perceived inside the profession. Towards the end of this section, we will consider some specific ethical dilemmas as a means of announcing the later chapters, where we fully focus on trying to solve them.
Again, this is only a selection of the potentially consequential changes that have shaken traditional media business, as informed by the expert sources interviewed for this thesis.
After all, the FCC itself acknowledges that "fully describing the current media landscape is impossible."

But even with the report's dire warnings, the FCC Report's authors are optimistic

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[64] Sarah Seltzer, "Major NY Times Editorial Shuffle: For the First Time, No White Men on Top," AlterNet, June 2, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/604747/major_ny_times_editorial_shuffle:_for_the_first_time,_no_white_men_on_top/. Accessed June 2, 2011.
[65] Steven Waldman and the Working Group on Information Needs of Communities, "The Information Needs of Communities – The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age," The Federal Communications Commission, June 2011, www.fcc.gov/infoneedsreport. Accessed April 11, 2012. All quotes on this page appear on page 10 of the report.

about the future of American journalism: "While the problems are serious, they are manageable. If citizens, entrepreneurs, nonprofit groups, and businesses work collectively to fill the gaps and continue to benefit from a wave of media innovation, the nation will end up with the best media system it has ever had," they write. And of course, such a prediction and faith in the powers of the collective are most encouraging for the prospects of my own proposed collaborative model of regulation and news-reporting.

Despite the stormy conditions of the current media environment (to use the FCC's imagery), authors Steven Waldman and his partners provide a clear and comprehensive enumeration of the signs that trouble is brewing in the nations' newsrooms.
Part One of the report, in addition to citing the concrete consequences for communities, such as the reduced number of all-news local TV and radio stations, gives statistics on American newspapers' declining advertising revenues and on their cutbacks on staff and other editorial expenditures. The latter is what interests us most in this section, since such realities as "Television network news staffs have declined by half from the late 1980s" and "Newsmagazines reporting staffs have dropped by almost half since 1985" and what this means for day-to-day working conditions for journalists can only be fully grasped by media professionals and industry insiders themselves.[66] In this light, the decisions that journalists working with the additional challenges of digital media have to take come into sharper relief. Deciding how to give accurate coverage of a certain news event for example, complete with follow-up reports, which may extend long into the future in the case of a protracted story (such as court cases can be), while relying on one or two reporters may prove a new challenge for newsrooms managers. Should they complement their reduced staff by encouraging their lone reporter to make use of the collective knowledge found on Twitter and similar online networks is a question of an ethical nature, because who, under these media companies' current working conditions, is going to spend time (i.e. money) on verifying the quotes and statements found on these sprawling online networks?

This is only a glimpse into the kind of difficulties that news organizations are facing. Even from within, it is hard to predict how things will evolve and to make the right decisions with the requisite speed.

The Report cites another, similar quandary facing news professionals and leaders. It states that "Hyperlocal information is better than ever. Technology has allowed citizens to help create and share news on a very local level - by town, neighborhood, or even block. These sites mostly do not operate as profitable businesses, but they do not need to. This is journalism as voluntarism - a thousand points of view."
This evaluation by the FCC actually presents not one but *two* quandaries. First, those who try to take the profession into the future and be news visionaries may want to wonder how long this success of the local and hyperlocal will last. The news industry and its audience have seen their share of news fads and passing 'cool' trends. Of course, industry leaders and innovators are in great part responsible for creating these trends and 'needs' in communities. But once they catch on, it might be hard to predict how long their success will endure. To judge by the recent history of journalistic

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[66] For the full list of statistics on the current conditions in the industry, see Waldman et al., 10.

trends, we often see a surge towards all things 'global' and large-scale (from the 'village' to the Internet) followed by an infatuation with the small, local and personalized - and back - and back again. Such trends often come in waves. In view of this, how are media companies' leaders to make concrete and efficient plans for 'the future of news' within their organizations?

Secondly, voluntarism is beautiful, and volunteered information and news stories are a dream come true for most of today's media leaders. But this still leaves us with the recurrent problem of who is going to verify those "thousand points of view" (another volunteer?), and how? And also how fast? We need to face the real-life conditions of having to write, edit and produce news reports or packages on tight daily deadlines.

The FCC report identifies a similar problem with local TV news. "More stations are increasingly relying on 'one-man bands'"—reporters who interview, shoot, and edit. In some cases, this is a powerful and sensible efficiency that stations could use to increase the number of reporters in the field. But in many communities, that is not what has happened. "Let's face it—it is what it is, and it is economic," the report cites Con Psarras, former news director at KSL in Salt Lake City, as saying. "It is an ability to cut heads and it is a full-time equivalent-reduction campaign. It does not make the pictures better, it does not make the stories better—it does not make the coverage on the web better. That's a mythology—it just saves money."[67]

The report also assesses as "most disturbing" the numerous and "persistent" cases in which local TV news programmers have "allowed advertisers to determine on-air content." Following concrete examples of these "egregious" and "worrisome" practices, it cites Tom Rosenstiel in order to reinforce the idea that change (for the worse) has occurred: "The evidence we've seen suggests that this is much more widespread than a few years ago," said the director of the Pew Project on Excellence in Journalism.[68]

The report also cites news executives as saying that in this new ecosystem, newspapers are headed in the wrong direction, while local journalism is sorely lacking in radio.[69]

But it is in the areas of the Internet and mobile media that the FCC is asking the most gnawing questions: "The enormous challenges facing traditional media would be of less concern if the vibrant new digital media were filling the gap. Is it?"[70]

After recognizing the innumerable benefits of non-professional citizens' contributions to professional news organizations, which Web and open-source technologies have enabled in the form of personal narratives and comments forums, live video streaming and images submissions, Twitter feeds and independent local and social-sharing Web sites for activist groups, to cite just a few, the report's authors then proceed to question the coherence of such a wealth of information and the ease of navigation within it for the professional journalists who are now using this additional data in their own news reports.

Even more poignant is their realization that the use of all this additional content from the wide world of the Net accompanies a decline in personally gathered and originally sourced news from professional journalists: "The number and variety of websites,

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[67] Waldman et al., 13, 14.

[68] Waldman, et al, 14.

[69] Waldman et al., 14.

[70] Waldman et al., 15.

blogs, and tweets contributing to the news and information landscape is truly stunning. Yet this abundance can obscure a parallel trend: the shortage of full-time reporting."[71]

Waldman and his co-writers offer a chilling example of this relatively recent but very gradual trend: "the Pew case study of Baltimore revealed a profusion of media outlets. Between new media (blogs and websites) and traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers), researchers counted 53 different outlets—considerably more than existed 10 years ago. But when Pew's researchers analyzed the content they were providing, particularly regarding the city budget and other public affairs issues, they discovered that 95 percent of the stories—including those in the new media—were based on reporting done by traditional media."[72] As I noted earlier, such a practice by the new media leads inevitably to the absurd cycle of repeating the content of what one tried to avoid or outdo in the first place with the power of the open Net - the news of the overpowering corporate/mainstream media. No doubt professional journalists are scratching their head as to the logic behind this unexpected development.
While praising citizen media and online news aggregators and commentators' "tremendous value--distributing the news through alternate channels or offering new interpretations of its meaning," the report's author also say they are seeing "a decline in the media with a particular strength—gathering the information—and seeing it replaced by a media that often exhibits a different set of strengths (for instance, distributing and interpreting it)."[73]
These FCC media researchers are certainly being kind with this latest analysis. There is no excuse for lack of quality or for lack of *ethical* thinking in news-reporting - a concern that seems sorely absent from the FCC's report, which leads me to conclude that while we have a plethora of statistics and facts on our hands of the deteriorating conditions of today's news media under the tides of change, few reports and surveys try to analyze the effects of these changes and new issues on journalists' ethics. How has media ethics changed in this world? Meanwhile, the case study of Chapter 5 throws some light on how media ethics have changed in the context of concrete situations in editorial partnerships.

Even the Titans Are Struggling

So how are the professional media and fully-fledged journalists coping with these changes and challenges? As we will see in the section that follows, even the titans of mainstream media are struggling with the new realities, trying to adapt to the times and solve their new difficulties It would seem that the scale and impact of the changes and their associated risks are only starting to dawn on some of them.

In a piece dated March 13, 2011, *New York Times* Public Editor recounts *The Times*' efforts at adopting Twitter skills and etiquette and at incorporating them in its daily news-gathering.[74] Admitting that despite "early adopters at *The Times* (going) there

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[71] Waldman et al., 16.
[72] Waldman et al., 16.
[73] Waldman et al., 16.
[74] Arthur S. Brisbane, "A Cocktail Party With Readers," "The Public Editor," *The New York Times*, March 13 (March 12 in online edition), 2011, Opinion page, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/opinion/13pubed.html). Accessed March 12, 2011. This article is the source for the following two paragraphs.

(to Twitter) four years ago," he himself "made the move only in the last few weeks," and that he hadn't been "tweeting long enough to judge its merits," Arthur S. Brisbane still seems to be strongly leaning on the side of cautious suspicion regarding the benefits of including tweeting into professional news-reporting. Having noticed that his tweeting colleagues are sending out "thousands of tweets to thousands, and in some cases, hundreds of thousands of followers," he wonders "Is this a good thing (...), or an epic waste of time?" Given the amount of information that passes through Twitter's 200 million accounts worldwide, missing out on that information, surely, mustn't be a good thing for journalists in traditional news organizations who haven't made the plunge into Twitter waters yet, he reckons.

But like similarly minded doubters who have been trained in journalism (or received their training through experiences in newsrooms), Brisbane is starting to realize the risks and loopholes that this new practice is creating in the profession's standards. "There are risks though. An obvious one is that tweets are free to go forth unedited," he wrote, echoing one of my main arguments for installing some form of monitoring-editing system within new digital news projects. So far, he says, save for a misstep involving one reporter tweeting "Toyota sucks" following his disenchantment with the company's handling of a press conference, "nothing terrible has happened." The Times has a laissez-faire approach to its Twitter policy, which "simply cautions them (*Times* reporters and editors) to follow the basic rules of common journalistic sense" - which is precisely where, I argue, the ethical dilemma lies: whose "common journalistic sense" are we following, whose rules and sense of morals should prevail in a multi-faced and globally-connected world? Without some form of consensus, even on this apparently 'universal' notion of journalistic common sense, we will be creating problems for ourselves in the near future.

Another tricky question, he notes, is that most Twitter accounts of Times' staff writers and editors are individual accounts, the owners of which have, in some cases, created powerful brand names for themselves. If these individuals leave the paper, "where does that leave *The Times*" with regards to these accounts? Are they still under its editorial management? he asks.

Although much less tangible, Brisbane also observed a certain self-limiting 'hive mentality' and secrecy surrounding the various self-contained communities on Twitter and similar networks, which is counterproductive to the initially proclaimed benefits of using such networks to 'open up our horizons' to the troves of information and opinions to be found on the Net.

But putting aside obvious dangers such as "tweeting a giant unedited gaffe or overindulging in personal brand building," Brisbane appreciates the many informative benefits of Twitter. However, in final analysis he cautions journalists not to "confuse sharing with reporting."

One of the key changes in journalistic practices that have emerged from the rising popularity of online social networks is the increasingly blurred line between what are essentially distribution activities and the actual production of news. In the traditional newsroom, the distribution operations would be a distinct department, in a physically separate room from those accommodating the editorial desks, business, management and other departments, and the process of distributing the news would take place *after* the news had been verified for accuracy, edited, designed, produced and finally packaged for distribution; now online practices involve sharing and distributing news content that is essentially 'unfinished' since most of it has not been checked for accuracy, consistency and other potential errors, proofread or accurately updated with

the latest information, and packaged for reading/viewing. There is plenty of fun and innovative sharing, commenting, aggregating and re-purposing taking place on increasingly creative multiple platforms and cross-media ventures, but the basic work of news-gathering and -reporting has not been done for much of that news content. The news is being distributed 'raw' as the participants start interacting with- and spreading the bits of information they laid their hands upon immediately upon receiving them (often from other non-independently verified sources), in a reversal of the chronological order of professional journalism.

In an enlightening piece on the collaborative relationship between technological and social movements, opinion writer Bob Ostertag confirms my freshly conceived theory when he writes that "What the Internet has revolutionized is not production but *distribution*." (italics in original).[75]

Distribute first, or rather, straightaway, without doing the painstaking work of identifying the best sources, reaching them, and asking them the hard questions. This is the equivalent of eating dessert before one's spinach and cannot be considered good.

In another, much more promising project aimed at embracing Twitter as a valuable, professional news-reporting tool, NPR digital media senior strategist Andy Carvin has developed a way to use the social service as a reporter would a newswire, according to a *New York Times* review of the project.[76] Taking the 'Arab Spring' protests as the background for his experiments, he started collecting people's postings on Twitter, Facebook, their photos and videos and other messages on the events unfurling in places like Tunisia and Egypt, and very innovatively in my opinion, proceeded to verify the sources of these troves of multimedia material and mostly unconfirmed messages and comments from protesters and their supporters and/or detractors. Carvin's postings would be preceded by the question "Source?" "He was fact-checking in full view," the *Times*' report concluded. Even more boldly and innovatively, Carvin announced that he now wanted to meet his sources in person, with plans to go to North Africa soon. In an age when the Web has encouraged 'news-reporting behind a screen,' sparing online news writers the difficulties of telephone- or in-person interviews, the hardships of on-location news-gathering and the moral awkwardness of having to stick a microphone in the face of a victim/accused person/politician or other challenging source to ask the delicate, sometimes ethically hard questions (i.e. How do you feel? to the mother of a murdered child).

The New York Times' attempts at 'Twitterizing' its staff's news-reporting while keeping a modicum of control over this sprawling practice - *without* a much needed code of rules for such new media activities - is far from the only challenge the newspaper has faced in the new world of digital, less tractable journalism.

In another "Public Editor" piece, Brisbane laments the tensions between speed and

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[75] Bob Ostertag, "What Role is Social Media Playing in the Mideast Revolts?" Alternet, Feb 23, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/media/150025/what_role_is_social_media_playing_in_the_mideast_revolts/. Accessed Feb. 23, 2011.

[76] Brian Stelter, "From Afar, News About Egypt," "Media Decoder," *The New York Times*, Feb 14, 2011, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9806E4DB1239F937A25751C0A9679D8B63. Accessed Feb. 14, 2011.

credibility that the demands of digital round-the-clock, every-minute-updated journalism impose on reporters and editors.[77] As he tries to explain the *New York Times*' professional failings in initially reporting, as did other media at the time, that Representative Gabrielle Giffords had been shot dead (instead of just shot in the brain) in the 2011 attack, he captures the essence of the ethical dilemmas now facing online journalists: "The mistake, quickly corrected, happened because of a breach in *The Times'* editing defenses as it worked to cover the story quickly from a distance. The episode dramatizes an important philosophical choice that editors face in an era that has transformed the way formerly old-media organizations like *The Times* handle and deliver the news," he wrote. "While it's true that in the bygone era of print-only newspapers, editors sometimes had to make tough on-deadline calls about the accuracy of their reporting ("Dewey Defeats Truman" comes to mind), the reality is that digital news delivery on a continuous cycle drastically increases the volume and the difficulty of these decisions."

But *The New York Times*' efforts at digitizing its operations are not confined to the domain of acquiring the new skills and habits that come with new participatory media while maintaining its standard of professionalism - although I would argue that this is perhaps where they should be focused, rather than on the superficial external signs of digitization. Judging by the *New York Times Magazine*'s Editor's Letter announcing its new design as it strives to "intensify the experience of reading a print magazine (...) in this moment of technological upheaval," it would appear that *The Times* sees the best ways of representing the new market's needs and tastes purely in cosmetic terms.[78] The March 6, 2011 announcement promises "to make everything sharper, clearer, more alive and dynamic," and this means "a new Web presence for the magazine," with a new Blog, a new look, and a 20 percent increase in size. No word on how to make the content and news-gathering behind it reflective of those aesthetic changes, especially on a professional level.
On *that* level, the magazine's management seems to have favored caution and traditional forms, as it openly states its opposition to "altering the foundation of the magazine," and its intention to keep its articles "based on long-form narrative journalism." Even more telling of *The Times*' cherished ties to the traditional model of relying on trained and experienced writers (vs. the new trend of welcoming citizen-generated contributions), Editor Hugo Lindgren writes that "Everybody on staff will contribute now and then."
In other words, when it comes to the actual journalistic tasks of news-reporting and -writing, the publication has not reformed and made the leap into the new media era at all. Or even to have given any thought to how can it best represent the ethical values of *The New York Times* in a re-designed format? The need for the bastions of traditional media to conduct such a debate as this thesis proposes seems evident.

The New York Times is not the only media giant grappling with the complexities of our changed media landscape. A quick check of The Associated Press' Wikipedia page will reveal an entire section devoted to the controversies and problems AP has encountered in the course of providing its services in a changing and still poorly

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[77] Arthur S. Brisbane, "Speed and Credibility," "The Public Editor," *The New York Times*, Jan 30 (Jan 29 in the online edition), 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/30/opinion/30pubed.html. Accessed Jan. 29, 2011.
[78] Hugo Lindgren, "Everything But the Crossword - The how, what and why of our new design." Editor's Letter, *The New York Times Magazine*, March 6, 2011, 8.

regulated cyberspace.[79] These range from being sued for breach of contract by iCopiright for misappropriation of information and business intelligence; to legal action for copyright and intellectual property violations such as cropping a photograph without the authors' permission; and fair use problems involving takedown demands and threats of legal reprisal against Internet Blogs that AP said violated its copyright in using non-cleared content in their links. The latter incidents, which took place in 2008, are evidence of the murky, still-evolving legal landscape regulating digital news media. Many bloggers and media online producers often regard AP news (and other wires' material) as "falling squarely under commonly accepted Internet practices and within fair use standards," and thus do not hesitate to link to AP stories and use AP's headlines and summaries in their Blog posts - which AP vehemently opposes. Other users, according to the Wikipedia entry, have demonstrated that AP itself regularly takes excerpts from other sources without license or attribution. In a sign that rules and practices are being drawn up as we speak, AP said it was "defining standards regarding citations of AP news."

When it comes to staying abreast of the times and moving into the digital domain, some key players in the established press have not hesitated to leave their pride and traditional practices at the door, and take some drastic measures, such as hiring 'the enemy.' Recognizing that it had "struggled to find its voice in a media culture where its particular niche - being a an irreverent journal of the New York City elite - is no longer unique," in 2011 *The New York Observer* weekly newspaper "replaced its editor after barely a year on the job, bringing in a new leader whose experience is not in newspapers but in the blogosphere that has eaten away at The Observer's exclusivity," according to a *New York Times* report.[80] Elizabeth Spiers, one of the first editors at Gawker, replaced Kyle Pope, formerly of ink-on-paper media enterprise Conde Nast. The *Observer*'s owner Jared Kushner explained the hiring by emphasizing where its new priorities now lay: integrating the paper's print and online operations, and developing its Web site.
Behind this management move "to take (our) print and online products to the next level" lies a series of heated disagreements and heart-rending decisions, from how to distribute resources between online and print products to whether to keep the long-form style of some stories, that is characteristic of the digital 'rebirthing pains' of the transitional press.

Traditional Values Revisited

If the changes that news organizations and independent journalists had to adapt to were confined to the difficulties of digitizing their work and operations, perhaps we could draw a concluding line here for this section. But the foundations of journalistic values have been shaken to their core and opinions on once well-established, untouchable principles of ethical news-reporting have started to clash in unprecedented discussions.

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[79] All quoted material comes from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Associated_Press. Accessed April 11, 2012.
[80] Jeremy W. Peters, "New York Observer Hires Former Gawker Editor" *The New York Times*, Feb 5, 2011, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=990DE7D61430F936A35751C0A9679D8B63. Accessed Feb. 5, 2011.

In an Opinion piece reminiscent of the concerns I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Poniewozik predicts (but does not bemoan) "the End of 'Objectivity,'" and summarizes the ethical dilemma facing traditional media outlets: realizing that "they are losing audience to online media and organizations like Fox, which encourages the kind of outspokenness and first-person voices that poker-faced news pages and evening newscasts have long repressed," he writes, "They're caught between the old paradigm of journalism, in which authority derives from hiding one's subjectivity, and a new one in which authority derives from being transparent about it."[81]

And this is turning not only the journalistic principle of objectivity but also the rules of the profession upside down: "The long-held rule of journalism was, Keep your point of view to yourself. The new rule is, be outspoken, engaging and colorful - until we decide you've crossed the line." Poniewozik's additional, tongue-in-cheek comment suggests that there are in fact few guidelines as to what constitutes 'the moment of decision of when the line is crossed.'

Poniewozik says that there *should* be new guidelines for our new media realities: "This doesn't mean there should be no rules," he writes, promoting the notion of transparency regarding journalists' leanings on a controversial story, advising them to be "up-front about their predilections and their prejudices." We can see solid reportage from such journalists, he says, and a point of view is not detrimental, on the contrary, it can help reporting.

While at this point we can only conjecture about the feasibility (and even desirability) of such an 'open' notion of news, an actual plan or set of guidelines for how this would work to produce professional-level news-reporting that is at once personally opinionated *and* accurate, fair and balanced would be welcome, because to my knowledge, none exist. In any case, those who propose to redesign the rules for journalism in the digital age would do well to consider radically rethinking long-held values that we may wrongfully expect to be readily applicable, unchanged, in their new media environment. However, core media ethics principles such as objectivity should be treated with extreme caution.

In addition to objectivity, accuracy is another cornerstone of journalism that is being tested. Aside from the errors cited earlier that often result from reduced staff and editing resources, some of the liberties being taken with facts spring from the very agents of change themselves: the new communications tools and practices that compete for journalists' attention. Some of these are brand new and making their first step on the market, others, like Facebook and Google,s products, have already proven themselves as genial new means for information searching and sharing.

In a *Time* article extolling the creative potential of new question-and-answer site Quora to expand the news-gathering experience, McCracken fails to ask some crucial questions: "On an Internet that can feel as if it's inhabited largely by belligerent know-nothings,"[82] one may want to ponder how news professionals can verify the validity and sources of the information and responses to their queries that are posted on the site. True, the project has a voting system that helps define the best answers - but the same question can be applied to this voting system. Moreover, who decides what is 'best' and why? None of this appears on Quora's Web site. With the growing amalgam of disparate potential sources on the Net, these are questions that any professional journalist now working online should ask him/herself. The potential ethical

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[81] James Poniewozik, "The End of Objectivity," *Time*, Nov 29, 2011, 71.
[82] Harry McCracken, "Query Club - Why question-and-answer site Quora has Silicon Valley all Twitter," *Time*, Feb 14, 2011, 53.

consequences for failing to do so are examined in the fourth case study.

But on a broader level, and given the success and adoption of online search tools and sharing networks by journalists for their work (including journalists on staff in news organizations), one may also wonder whether these media organizations and established journalists will also adopt Quora to the same extent as Twitter and Facebook and entrust it with the same tasks during their news-gathering activities.

This leads us to consider how the standardization of such new technologies and services takes place in today's news environment.

Will professional institutions and their journalists soon adopt Quora as their own, as one of their news-gathering tools, as they have done with Twitter and Facebook? How can journalists test it? What are the signs it that it might become successful? When will it be broadly adopted, and can it be considered an 'established' informational tool? Would it be desirable to standardize the use of these social networks, and if so, all of them, or just a select few? And just how do we 'establish' them, so that they attain the same level of respectability among the profession as the now well-known news-reporting techniques and practices that took years to develop?

What transpires from these questions is that the terrain in which digital journalists now operate is still largely unregulated and untested. 'Unregulated' means not supported by any broadly accepted rules or guidelines for their use of any kind, not just legal ones. And 'untested' - because, with no or few precedents, it is too early yet to predict how these will evolve in the future, with regular use by citizen and professional journalists.

The second section of this chapter examines more closely the potential problems through the use of concrete news-reporting situations, and looks at how best to solve them in an ethical manner.

Editing Troubles

Editing represents another area of journalists' day-to-day activities within their companies[83] that has been challenged by the new working conditions and practices in the field.

Due to space and time limitations, we will consider only one aspect of the editorial process: editing in its literal sense, as the proofreading, correction and preparation for dissemination of journalists' work and contributions by their editors and superiors, which is just one small aspect of the larger monitoring and gatekeeping activities of the traditional news hierarchy. Interestingly, even though the traditional practice of editing has been, in a way, rendered seemingly outdated by the new dictates of electronic self-publishing, it has been embraced by all non-professionals and self-anointed journalists, who, by definition, rely on themselves to edit their own work. Even when financial consideration are not an issue, it would seem that those practicing news-writing outside of the profession have preferred to learn the skills and rely on themselves, rather than pay for professional editing services. As a result, quite

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[83] 'Within their companies': this may also be taken in the abstract sense, in the case of independent journalists contributing to a news organization on a freelance basis. Thus, what this implies is that unless the journalist is a self-publisher (a blogger publishing on his personal site), most journalists are attached to a news organization, either by being on staff in a company or having clients as a freelancer.

ironically, the non-professional community of news producers has become quite skilled and experienced in the art of preparing their copy and accompanying material for mass consumption. On the other hand, the professionals of the mainstream media are facing the most complex editorial decisions since they are better trained at recognizing ethical minefields and more attuned to these editorial processes than the 'citizen' journalists.

What is certain is that today, both sides of the journalistic practice (the professionals *and* non-professionals) have to work with material that has most likely already been edited or transformed in some ways, by at least one person from either camp. This is especially true for the news content found on the Net. This arrangement may prove to be much more disruptive to the professional journalists from the traditional press than to the digital natives self-producing on the Net. Professional journalists today cannot ignore the vast amount of information and comments coming from the 'amateur' news producers on Web-based forums, Blogs, social networks, and alternative news sites such as Slashdots and GlobalPost. At the risk of missing half of the 'conversation' on any topic or issue, professionals virtually have no choice but to follow these comments and contributions on the Net, and often have to cite them in their own reports. The invaluable additional data and context that citizens' Twitter updates provided the global media during uprisings in Iran and other regions of the Middle East, to cite just one example, is a perfect case of the new interdependent relationship between professionals and the numerous levels of skills and interests out there in cyberspace.

In an unexpected twist of fate, some even speak of the 'self-correcting powers' of the Web, whose thousands eyes are quick to point out factual errors and denounce biases in the idiosyncratically "acentered" and "leaderless" world of the virtual public spaces, to quote media sociologist Tiziana Terranova.[84]
In an article on the controversial premature announcement by the media of Steve Job's death in 2008 Jeff Jarvis of *The Guardian* daily raises some very thoughtful questions about reliance on Net Citizens.[85] He also gives two excellent pieces of advice for media professionals faced with a tantalizing flow of information gratuitously offered by the news-producing crowds on the Net:

"It may be a mistake for news organisations to keep begging people to send them stuff. That's the way they think – centralised, controlling, exclusive. But the better structure may be for journalists to curate the best of what is out on the web. Rather than playing wack-a-mole on the occasional mistake/rumour/lie sent it, editors would better serve if they found the best content anywhere, not just among that which was sent to them," he first suggested.
But his second piece of advice speaks more directly to the slackening standards and reduced original reporting in American journalism: "But the sanest response to reading a report from an unidentifiable source on Steve Jobs' health is to get on the phone to Apple and find the truth." There is no substitute for the endangered art of verification with a direct phone call (or of a full interview for that matter).

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[84] Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture - Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004) 119.
[85] Jeff Jarvis, "No Bad Apple," *The Guardian*, Oct 6, 2008, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/oct/06/citizenmedia.internet. Accessed 4/10/2012.

These new phenomena of interdependence, role reversal and other interplay in the relationship between editor and reporter inevitably complicate further a process that, in the "closed editorial hierarchy," as Axel Bruns puts it[86], was relatively simple: the reporter produces, and the editor edits his/her production and makes the final call as to what gets published.

To this newly complicated process, one must add the myriad contextual agendas and biases that pervade today's news landscape.

To take but one example of how the traditional benefits of editing can easily be turned on their head and produce rather disconcerting results: In March 2011, AP reported that analysts from the Poynter Institute said that "a hidden-camera video by a conservative activist targeting NPR was edited in misleading ways to showcase inflammatory remarks from a public radio executive."[87] The shorter version of the video, which also presented remarks out of context in order to mislead viewers on the conclusions to be drawn, showed fundraiser Ron Schiller as saying that "NPR would be better off without federal funding in the long-term." Activist James O'Keefe, who posted the full, unedited video together with the edited one, said "All journalists edit, but few allow the public to see the entire video of an interview. We believe the story speaks for itself and NPR has not denied any part of the comments made by Mr. Schiller."

The edited video, according to AP, gained "wide attention on blogs and other websites." It is unclear, however, whether this expanded awareness of the issue in the broader ranks of the monitoring public helped in any way redress the situation on an ethical level. 'Where was NPR's code of ethics when this took place?' is a question that editors and reporters in newsrooms across the nation may well want to ponder. How could 'the self-correcting powers of the Web' help in similar cases, and would a code of ethics covering such new minefields as 'creative editing' be useful to them? If anything, this incident shows how editing can be manipulated to much different ends than the professional, objective and ethical ones that quality journalism calls for.

Editing has moved into unchartered territory. In an article that is at once celebratory and cautious, *The New York Times* reviews new software that makes online image editing "as easy as pie."[88] The new programs allow non-professional people to perform all sorts of transformations and mash-ups of their photos and other graphic materials so as to create the 'as if' effect (creating from a photograph a portrait of one's friend or loved one *as if* it were hanging in the Tate Modern Gallery in London, for example).

Of course this is nothing new in terms of technology - photo editing programs such as Photoshop have long been on the market and available to all those willing to learn how to use their tools - but the focus of interest here is that of the democratization of a process that used to be firmly under the control of professionals. What if non-trained users misuse their newly-acquired editing and publishing skills? Save for innocent

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[86] Axel Bruns, *Gatewatching - Collaborative Online News Production* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005) 12, see especially graph on that page.

[87] AP Staff, "Analysts, NPR: Video Edit of Executive Misleading" Associated Press (AP), March 14, 2011, http://cnsnews.com/news/article/analysts-npr-video-edit-executive-misleading. Accessed March 14, 2011.

[88] Peter Wayner, "Photo Editing as Easy as Pie" "Personal Tech," *The New York Times*, March 10 (March 9 for the online edition), 2011, B11.

creative experiments for arts' sake, such tampering with images and text can lead to misrepresentations, misunderstanding, disrespect of sources who have not given their consent for the changes to- and/or publication of their contribution, or even harm to both sources and unwitting subjects in the material in question. If the users are not going to ask themselves these questions before they distribute their self-edited content who will do it for them, and make sure the material is legally and ethically suitable for public consumption?

Photofunia.com and similar sites reviewed in the *Times* allow their users to "make photo collages, design new images (...), merge or mash up images, transform(ing) pictures to look as if they come from another time or place, and (...) tweak personal photographs without doing much more than clicking a button." One may therefore ask: if anyone may now edit digital content and play with reality with such ease, what guarantees do we have that this widely accepted practice in the creative arts will not migrate to the sphere of news and journalism, and that such liberties will not be taken with facts and the truth?

While editing images and other content for fun, social or other creative purposes is only mildly consequential, doing so in reporting news events one has witnessed or is (re)distributing over the Net implies a much higher level of responsibility, as it often involves the names, rights and reputations of all the people featuring in one way or another in said news item. As this user-generated editing practice is slowly but surely making its way to the real world of news-reporting, who is watching and making sure that each participant's rights and responsibilities are being respected and fulfilled? This is an ethical question of the highest order, but there has been very little debate so far on the ethical dimensions of such traditionally journalistic activities now being performed by the amateurs among the public. Yet the process of their appropriation of professional tools for personal editing, even of news stories, is now undeniably well underway while it is clear is that the profession has no parameters for tracking those changes and potential errors, and the public has no code of instructions or rules to guide them in their new publishing enterprises. There is thus no way for mainstream news organizations to predict how this newly appropriated practice will develop, and how they could best integrate it with the work of their professionals. The media experts' opinions in Chapter 6 and my own observations in the 'Proposals' section offer some possible versions for a scenario that brings ethics and a sense of responsibility into the use of user-generated news in professional journalism.

Free Labor and Funny Bedfellows

In the larger picture of the new digital news economy, where the technological revolution and new social practices have made information-sharing and collaborative news-reporting as natural as chatting with friends and able to take place "without the direct mediation of money and politics," as Terranova puts it[89], the question of the value of labor, collective activism, time and ideas arises.
These new internal tensions and the ethically questionable messages they send out to the public are evident in the new types of partnerships that have sprung up in recent years. Some of these are truly innovative and show potential for evolving into successful new business models, but many leave a trail of gray areas in which the new media natives find themselves without a financial or ethical safety net.

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[89] Terranova, 76.

One of the most recent and controversial examples is the bold merger of AOL and The Huffington Post. AOL's purchase of Arianna Huffington's personal product for $315 million led many observers in the industry to question the fate of the bloggers who had been providing content for free to the news Web site and now found themselves caught between two worlds, and more ominously, the implications of the merger for the future of journalism.[90] AlterNet Executive Editor Don Hazen noted how the bloggers who had been contributing free content "for the privilege of being part of the public discourse and promoting their efforts at a place they knew to be independent and welcoming of strong opinions," had been essentially contributing their unpaid labor to The Huffington Post, which was now profiting from it. Echoing other media critics, he expressed concerns that "the new partnership would be very bad for journalism and hence a vibrant democracy." For Hazen, the journalistic values of the digital age are at risk. Answering his own question what the purchase of The Huffington Post by AOL signifies for the future of journalism, he says:

"The answer to the question about journalism's future is: it doesn't look so good. And media critics would tell you the Huffington Post is probably the most obvious example of why people fear that journalistic principles are heading south. But maybe that is the wrong question. Because while there is certainly some good journalism on HuffPo, it is not why it was worth $315 million. Its worth is much more based on how HuffPo grew and embraced the online media future using all the social networking and SEO tricks available and created some of their own, while redefining journalism as lower-grade 'content.'"

While the case study of Chapter 5 examines more closely one of the seemingly unlikely and ethically controversial new partnerships that have appeared in the new media industry, for now it would be more useful to see how we can safeguard those journalistic principles that Hazen says are endangered and instill them into today's 'redefined journalism.'

This would seem to be a desirable formula to salvage an embattled NPR, in the wake of the protracted debate on continued federal funding for public broadcasting. In a business piece on how despite a growing audience and revenues, NPR (and by extension high-quality journalism) is undergoing a kind of "creative destruction," *New York Times* reporter David Carr writes that NPR is essentially suffering from poor leadership skills: "Trouble is, NPR has often been better at breaking news than running a news outlet," he writes, concluding that "Strong journalism is upstaged by weak management."[91]
Although it is easy to readily agree with him that "the legacy media companies (are) struggling for relevance," and that "journalism is in broad retreat," Carr fails to bring his thinking to its logical conclusion: that it is actually a crisis *in ethics* that the profession is experiencing. Indeed, the failing leadership he has observed in NPR seems rooted in the broadcaster's failure to acknowledge the importance of media ethics.

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[90] Don Hazen, "The Controversial Huffington Post-AOL Merger: 7 Questions That Matter," AlterNet, Feb 9, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/media/149860/the_controversial_huffington_post-aol_merger:_7_questions_that_matter/. Accessed Feb. 9, 2011.
[91] David Carr, "Gains For NPR Are Clouded," *The New York Times*, March 14, 2011, B1.

Of course a revised code of ethics for digital journalists will not solve the management and journalistic ills of the industry, but simply act as a form of guidance updated to meet our time's new challenges.

A heightened awareness of media ethics and appropriate value-based conduct at all levels of the profession could alleviate some of the difficulties described in this chapter and is precisely what this thesis seeks to inspire.

Approaching Digital Ethical Dilemmas

Now that we have a good sense of what has changed in recent years in the practice of journalism from an external and internal perspective, we can start analyzing the new challenges these changes have led to. This section offers a brief list of the key problems affecting the quality and standards of today's journalism. While Part II of Chapter 4 looks at the new difficulties that journalists encounter in day-to-day news-reporting using digital media, the present section cites some of the issues that are hampering the profession in its attempts at digitizing its operations while struggling for sustainability and to maintain standards of credibility and integrity.

Tensions from the Start

To start with, the authors of *Normative Theories of the Media* usefully point to some basic, inherent tensions in the practice of journalism in its social context that inevitably lead to personal dilemmas for journalists. These dilemmas are only exacerbated by the advance of new technology, they say.[92]

These "basic tensions, oppositions, and choices (...) confront media institutions and journalists personally, despite the protection given by the consensual or dominant version of the journalistic task," they write, citing the oppositions that have emerged as the following:

. *Adopting a neutral versus a participant role vis-à-vis the surrounding society*
. *Concentrating on facts versus setting out to interpret and provide commentary*
. *Acting as a gatekeeper for all voices in society versus being an advocate for a chosen cause or interest*
. *Serving the media organization versus trying to follow an idealistic conception of the journalistic task*
. *Choosing between social and nonprofit purposes and the criteria of the marketplace*

These dilemmas, while distinct and independent, share a common underlying theme: they reflect "the pull of divergent normative poles, (...) the diversity of what we call journalism and the variety of forms the news media can take, each with its own purpose, self-selected public, and market niche. "

But even more important for our purposes, they acknowledge that "The arrival of new media forms, especially those based on the Internet, have added to the variety and clouded the issue of what journalism is."

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[92] Clifford G. Christians, Theodore L. Glasser, Denis McQuail, Kaarle Nordenstreng and Robert A. White, *Normative Theories of the Media - Journalism in Democratic Societies* (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 120.

Indeed, it is easy to see how journalists can find themselves sandwiched between conflicting practices and expectations of what they should accomplish.
In an increasingly participatory media environment, how can they maintain the argument for neutrality and non-involvement? Are they not at risk of looking 'aloof' and disconnected, as some have accused them already, if they insist on maintaining some boundaries between professional journalism and the unedited contributions from citizens? When opinion and commentary seem to have gained new voice and power in our information society, how can journalists remain faithful to the long-established value of objectivity? This core value of ethical journalism especially seems to be increasingly under attack lately. "Objective journalism? Get real and move on,"[93] "Objectivity is a lie, the truth requires real citizen journalism"[94] screams *The Guardian* in its Media online edition. And how can journalists maintain a healthy relationship to their organizations *and* the values of their profession when these very organizations have been trying to adopt the new media practices and are encouraging their staff to do so? Finally, fulfilling their duties to the public under heightened economic pressures forms another source of tension for journalists today.

The Hardest Riddle: Enforcement

As I explained in the historical overview of the evolution of media regulation in Chapter 2, even though the law has played a significant role in shaping journalism ethics and the issue of whether to turn ethical standards into legal imperatives has been discussed at length in courts and public forums over the past few decades, journalism codes of ethics cannot be enforced by law. Unlike the medical or legal professions, the journalism profession has not been institutionalized, and therefore the implementation of its codes does not rely on the legal imposition of ethical edicts on its practices, but on voluntary self-regulation.[95]

This leaves us with the gigantic and still unresolved challenge of how to enforce any proposal for reformed media rules that one might want to draft.
We currently find two types of 'voluntary compliance' with media codes of ethics. As Walton and Smith have explained in their research on the subject, the codes written by professional associations of journalists, such as the ASNE, SPJ and RTNDA are non-binding. Peer- and other social pressures are assumed to serve as a guiding moral force and enforcement tool for journalists to fulfill as best they can the duties and

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[93] Roy Gleensdale, "Objective journalism? Get real and move on," *The Guardian*, Aug 5, 2006, http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/greenslade/2006/aug/05/objectivejournalismgetreal?INTCMP=SRCH. Accessed Feb. 10, 2011.

[94] Jeff Jarvis, Objectivity is a lie, the truth requires real citizen journalism," *The Guardian*, Nov 1, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2010/nov/01/objectivity-real-citizen-journalism?INTCMP=SRCH. Accessed Nov. 1, 2010.

[95] For more on the regulatory framework of journalism codes of ethics and media ethics enforcement, I recommend: John C. Watson, *Journalism Ethics by Court Decree - The Supreme Court on the Proper Practice of Journalism* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 1954); *Codes of Ethics and the Professions*, Edited by Margaret Coady and Sidney Bloch (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002); and Ron F. Smith, Groping for Ethics in Journalism by (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

ideals of their profession. The codes written and used by news companies, on the other hand, do have a stricter enforcement structure in place, and violations carry penalties, which may range from verbal warnings to dismissal. Compliance with the codes of individual newsrooms is often tied to the conditions for employment.[96] However, both types of enforcement have spotty histories. According to Walton, this is due to the fact that in many news organizations, the ethical conduct expected of journalists has not been put into writing, or codes have been phrased so vaguely that "they provide[d] little guidance or merely [implied] the existence of standards."[97]

It might be more appropriate then to see how we can encourage the adoption and dissemination of a proposed code of conduct for digital news production. This goal seems more appropriate for the nature of journalism, and therefore more feasible. Although it is not the goal of this thesis to formulate solutions for enforcing current or proposed codes of guidelines and standards[98], it is certainly part of a larger initiative of raising awareness for the need for more ethics in American online journalism. So ideas and efforts to foster voluntary compliance with ethical conduct should be part of the debate. And at times, it will even be evident how my proposed models and solutions can encourage self-prompted, righteous ethical decisions in content creation, editing and publishing. Thus, there is quite some overlap between the goal of code-drafting and this admittedly more ambitious one of enforcement.

Of course, hard as it was to cajole journalists in the traditional press to comply voluntarily with in-house rules and journalism codes, the Internet and emerging media are significantly complicating the task.
Ideas on responsibility and decorum vis-à-vis one's audience and sources have been shifting, and the key questions of traditional enforcement have also been growing more complex: should the digital native news content producers be exhorted to adhere to a set of rules? And if so, how should it be enforced? How do their activities and the potential risks they run for ethical missteps differ from those of professional journalists working for the online edition of their newspapers?
In fact, we cannot excise professional journalists who are now in constant and unpredictable interaction with the multitudes of media content creators in the course of their news-gathering work online.

We need to also ask who should be taking responsibility for the rules' enforcement within news organizations. What procedure should this involve? Should this be a participatory enterprise, with everyone engaging in a self-regulatory system of checks and balances for the staff and outside contributors? Or should we still rely on the old top-down hierarchical model of editorial control? The former, equally representative model, with people checking one another may sound vaguely reminiscent of the old government-imposed system of 'denunciation' of dissident friends, family and colleagues widely in use in the Soviet Union and other authoritarian states. Should this be the model of choice, surely it should be implemented with moderation - as should any new system of professional control over today's journalists.

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[96] For the sources of the paraphrased material, see Walton, 61; and Smith, 23- 24.
[97] Walton, 61.
[98] To clarify: seeking to implement current codes of ethics is not a goal of my thesis since a key part of my argument is based on these codes and current regulations being defective or somewhat wanting and thus incapable of meeting the needs of digital journalists. See Chapter 2 for more on this.

It is clear that given the complexity of the issue of implementation, not all aspects can be covered here, and it is my hope that the case studies in the subsequent chapter will help illuminates some others.

But one last important point surrounding the problem of enforcement involves the different expectations that the profession and the public may have in this regard. For example, in principle the professional journalism institutions can be safely assumed to be more readily receptive to proposed regulatory reforms than the large unruly crowds of independent news content producers on the Net. Similarly, we can assume the public knows to take with a grain of salt the news it reads on the non-professional sources on the Internet.. As one would expect such user-generated, amateur news resources to be more recalcitrant to regulation and universal imposition of any code of conduct or philosophy, this in turn - one would expect – would render the consuming public more discerning and skeptical towards the randomly self-regulated (if at all) news outlets on the periphery of the industry.

One would think it wise to encourage such critical thinking among media audiences about the non-professional, 'decentralized' news, and perhaps it even behooves the journalism profession to equip the public with tools that would facilitate such judgments. (In a way, this is what my proposed code of ethics partly fulfills). However, the professional, institutionalized media should by no means be exempt from critical scrutiny from the public and independent observers. On the contrary, consumers would be well advised to take an especially critical look at the 'higher-level' information sources, because it is principally in the mainstream government and/or corporate media that the biggest and most dangerous manipulations and cases of misinformation take place. (One only has to look at the vast history of political and social propaganda for evidence of this[99]). The little tweets of Jill or Jack, and the isolated ramblings of individual bloggers are all very inoffensive compared to the powerful reach and influence of mass media.

Problematic Partnerships

While we have seen recently that economic and other pressures and interests may lead to the creation of some unlikely media partnerships, albeit potentially quite successful ones (such as The Huffington Post and AOL), not all joint enterprises follow that promising path. Indeed, some projects can raise some eyebrows, as their journalistic foundation seems far from ethically pristine.

The changes in media practices and our more competitive times have brought new temptations for news organizations to join forces with previously unthought-of partners in order to expand profits and create associations, which raise some serious questions as to whether their allegiances lie with professionally, ethically informing the public or serving the God of Commerce. While some of these ventures' initiators are aware of the risks, difficulties and ethical traps that their activities may entail, many others seem to have launched themselves into online collaborative projects without giving a second thought as to values and goals of their partners. Most of these new media mergers and journalistic collaborations see themselves as journalism in action, and they consequently lay claim to all the attributes of the highest form of the journalism profession.

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[99] The blanket, unquestioning coverage by the American and global media of Osama bin Laden's death earlier this year is but one of the most recent and extreme examples of the kind of news-reporting by the mainstream media the public should be wary of.

While the underlying philosophy of this thesis certainly encourages constructive collaborations in the form of non-competitive cooperative relationships among individual journalists and news organizations (one of the key 'solutions' that I expand upon in my 'Proposals' section), one must question some of the more bizarre marriages among recent journalistic team enterprises, such as Julian Assange's Wikileaks anonymous news organization's contracts with major international media outlets to release classified U.S. documents(the case study of Chapter 5). For now, let us say that the ensuing disputes with some of these media outlets and the public' and other media's skepticism about the deals speak for themselves as to the kind of ethical values' system Wikileaks subscribed to.[100]

Other new collaborative projects are much smaller in scale and therefore may seem less consequential for the future of ethics in our news media. Yet, they send a powerful message to the young reporters taking part in them and to the future generations of journalists.

One such journalistic project, which also involves a partnership with a media player and looks innocent and well-meaning enough, yet which raises some serious ethical questions, is Northeastern University Journalism Professor Dan Kennedy's new "Reinventing the News Class."[101] It recently engaged his students in a "Google map project," which he described on his Blog in the following terms: "Every semester, this is always one of my favorites: students fan out into the neighborhoods around Northeastern to take pictures, write blog posts and plot them on a map. This time, they chose to review cheap-eats places in and around the Back Bay. The project is currently near the top of Boston.com's Your Town/Back Bay site [Northeastern has a partnership with the Boston Globe to provide content to Your Town]. I think the students did a great job. They took it seriously, they had fun and they learned something about how free, easy-to-use online tools such as mapping can enhance journalism."

 While the idea of instilling in journalism students the importance of covering local news is certainly laudable, the results are less so: a series of glowing reviews of various cafes and restaurants in the area. "This past Saturday I had an enjoyable lunch at a small burger joint called b.good. I've been there many times before, but each time I go I continue to become more impressed with the overall quality of food and prices," one student wrote.

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[100] In reference to my defining such new and at times dubious media partnerships as claiming to have close ties (and even equal status) with professional journalism, it is interesting to note that Wikipedia defines Wikileaks as "an international *self-described* not-for-profit organisation that publishes submissions of private, secret, and classified media from anonymous news sources, news leaks, and whistleblowers." - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikileaks - The term 'self-described' (emphasis added) here is exactly what I meant by stressing the claims to journalistic affiliations that these new types of media partnerships make - they exist mostly in their imagination and on their own terms and rules. This is what some more tolerant media analysts call the 'new journalism,' of today's media, although I would advocate stricter criteria.
[101] http://www.dankennedy.net/2011/03/24/mapping-their-way-to-cheap-eats/ Accessed March 24, 2011; http://reinventingthenews.wordpress.com/2011/03/23/cheap-eats-in-the-back-bay-and-beyond/. Accessed April 11, 2012.

It is unclear to me what kind of 'partnership' the Northeastern University class had with *The Boston Globe*, as well as what constitutes Kennedy's concept of professional journalism, but when every single reviewer gushes with praise and delight when covering his/her assigned business, some serious question marks appear as to which field we are in - journalism or advertising. The line seems indeed to be getting fuzzier. The students' "online tools" didn't seem to include any code of ethics - and the sad thing (perhaps in a new twist among our new ethical dilemmas) is had they had one, it is not clear how it would have been useful at all for such an assignment.
Finally, how such 'classes' will prepare the next generation of journalists is also unclear.

Problematic Partnerships Part II: Conflicting Interests

Apparently I am not the only one to have noticed the smart and meticulous blending of news and advertising that is increasingly creeping into our journalistic landscape.[102]
The editors of the local Boston print and electronic newspaper Weeklydig have also observed this phenomenon: "Speaking of marketing," its 'MediaFarm' editor wrote in a column acknowledging the growing popularity of hyperlocal news and *The Boston Globe*'s "newest foray into the local niche," "Politico reported last week that it had discovered the most popular junket (read: morally questionable, expenses-paid vacation for writers who then feel obligated to sacrifice journalistic integrity and cover some stupid product liquor,)" he/she wrote, before then describing how *GO*'s Ana Marie Cox seemed intoxicated with the Scotch she 'happened' to be reviewing after such a trip to Scotland.[103]

Such conflicts of interests and the risks they pose to journalists' independence were put in the sharpest relief in a much more serious incident that took place in the summer of 2010, when the authoritative research Blogs network ScienceBlogs launched the PepsiCo-sponsored 'Food Frontiers' Blog, which was effectively written by the beverage company's employees.[104] This, of course, would not be a problem, had the Seed Media Group-owned Blogs network clearly indicated above the writers' posts that this was advertorial content, as professional newspapers and other media do. A ScienceBlogs blogger complained: "(Food Frontiers) is not only a fundamental conflict of interest, it's also deceptive. If PepsiCo is providing the content, it should, in my opinion, be clearly labelled as advertising," as White Coat Underground author Peter Lipson wrote in a post.[105]
The blogging debacle, which caused many writers to leave ScienceBlogs and generated much criticism in the larger media community, is an ominous reminder of

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[102] Here I should add that while this problem is a long-running one in the field of traditional journalism, my argument is based on the evidence of increased occurrences in the digital age, which I elaborate on in the paragraphs that follow.
[103] "Pub ... Licity!" "MediaFarm," Weeklydig.com, July 7-14, 2010, http://digboston.com/?s=media+farm. Accessed April 11, 2012.
[104] For more on the 'PepsiGate' episode, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ScienceBlogs. Accessed April 11, 2012. The issue was brought to my attention by my thesis advisor David Chandler.
[105] "ScienceBlogs trashes its bloggers' credibility," Knight Science Journalism Tracker, July 7, 2011, http://ksjtracker.mit.edu/2010/07/07/scienceblogs-trashes-its-bloggers-credibility/ Accessed July 10, 2010.

the dangers of mixing the editorial and business spheres. David Dobbs, who writes a neuroscience Blog and is one of the bloggers who left the site, wrote in his final post: ""'I know all too well that the changing media landscape presents financial challenges. But this isn't the way to meet them."[106]

We can safely assume that had ScienceBlog had a Code of Ethics for its contributing writers *and* had discussed it with them to make sure they understood the rules of ethical blogging, perhaps such a sorry turn of events could have been avoided. For the ScienceBlogs' leaders to engage in consultations about the code with its contributors would have had the double advantage of serving as a way of holding not only the bloggers but also the leadership accountable. After all, it is the science network's own bloggers who uncovered the Pepsi deal and sparked the controversy with their scathing criticism of the unethical practice.[107] In fact, it is highly probable that a code of ethics alone may not have been sufficient to prevent such malpractice. A system of checks and balances would be a necessary complement, particularly given the fact that ScienceBlogs' 75 individually themed and independently authored Blogs are not subject to editorial control.

We can also surmise that an ethical slip on such a scale may have occurred more easily in an online organization than had it been at a traditional print or broadcast outlet, and that the laissez-faire environment of the Internet and lack of specific rules for blogging may have all facilitated the lack of concern for standards and oversight on both sides.

The Pros on the Problems

In addition to the changes and issues I have observed in American journalism and the news industry, hearing from those currently working in the field can also be very eye-opening and enlightening for my own conclusions.

Commenting for this thesis, Regina McCombs from the Faculty for Multimedia and Mobile at The Poynter Institute[108] said that she sees two major areas of change: speed and multimedia production. "The speed of publication, and the pressure to get even faster, makes it much more difficult to double check our work, get true balance in a story, or even have a second set of eyes look at it. This makes it important that news organizations, or even citizen journalists, be transparent in what they know now, what they don't know, and what they are still trying to find, and to make sure information gets updated in the original posting as soon as possible."

Two brief remarks on these points: First, the Internet, despite being at the source of much of the change and confusion, should in principle help in bringing more transparency to journalists' work, as it can be used as a tool to carry out news-gathering and reporting in the public spaces of the Net, and enhance these processes with interaction with their readers. So McCombs' recommendation is perfectly feasible.

On the other hand, I would advise caution in speeding up the updates. Based on my

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[106] "ScienceBlogs trashes its bloggers' credibility," Knight Science Journalism Tracker, July 7, 2011, http://ksjtracker.mit.edu/2010/07/07/scienceblogs-trashes-its-bloggers-credibility/ Accessed July 7, 2010.

[107] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ScienceBlogs. Accessed April 11, 2012.

[108] Interview carried out by email on Aug 23, 2010.

own experience of the organization[109] and reading of its in-house style guide, Bloomberg News is one of the news agencies that pride themselves on 'being the first with the story' by relying on a clever and fast system of updates. However, the news agency has also been accused of being too quick to update its stories, by taking its 'new' or latest data from other sources on the Net and adding them at the top of its previous dispatches. Bloomberg has especially been condemned for its coverage of the second Iraq war, when it was said to rely on original reporting from Reuters, whose journalists were risking their lives on the ground, while Bloomberg's own staff writers were updating their reports from the safety of their desks.

Based on this insider knowledge, McCombs' words of advice and challenging questions for our news agencies have special resonance:
"Organizations also need to have discussions about their priorities: when does speed outweigh completeness? When doesn't it? What value do we place on getting it right over getting it first? What value do we place on filing immediately from the field vs. staying with the newsgathering process until it's complete?" she asks.
For now, let us just hope that Bloomberg will follow the lead of Reuters, whose editor-in-chief, Steve Adler, announced in 2011the hiring of Alix M. Freedman as global editor for ethics and standards. "In her new job," Adler wrote, "Freedman will work closely with reporters and editors on major stories, final-reading many signature pieces and holding us all to the high standards set out in Thomson Reuters Trust Principles and the Reuters Handbook of Journalism."[110]

As regards the changes due to the rise of multimedia, McCombs says that although many ethical issues are not new, their transfer to the mutli-platformed digital media is what is causing trouble for traditionally trained journalists:

"Here, there are a ton of ethical issues and questions, but most of them aren't new, they're just new to the folks doing them now. For instance, ethical issues in audio and video gathering and editing aren't new -- TV and radio journalists have been talking about them for decades, but the issues are new to those from print organizations who have never used these storytelling techniques before. Ethical issues in database use and presentation aren't new -- computer-assisted reporting teams have been talking about them for years. These questions don't need new discussions, they require more talking across platforms and departments than we have done in the past to share the knowledge and decision-making of the larger group."

Such a call for more cross-media debate on the issues facing all journalists is certainly a need that the online Global Media Ethics Forum can help meet.
Boston University Journalism Professor and *Washington Post* veteran Chris Daly, however, throws a bucket of cold water on such enthusiastic plans, bringing in a little dose of reality to an otherwise perhaps overly optimistic thesis. Put briefly, in his

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[109] Tough conversations with some of its correspondents and editors in the Moscow and London Bureaus. During one of my visits, I was given a demonstration of the Bloomberg terminal (computer) and system of news updates by former oil&gas correspondent Greg Walters.
[110] Peter Osnos, "Reuters, Bloomberg, and the Future of Journalism," *The Atlantic*, Sep 20, 2011, http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/09/reuters-bloomberg-and-the-future-of-journalism/245360/. Accessed Sept. 20, 2011.

emailed comments he stressed the near-impossibility of bringing rules and order to the anything-goes atmosphere pervading online news.[111]

Highlighting how the vexing issue of ethics has evolved and changed over the years in American journalism, Daly said that before the age of the Internet, journalism was conducted in an in an environment of scarcity: "There were always a limited number of newspapers or magazines or radio news programs or television news shows. There was always an excess of supply (more journalists and more stories or images) over demand (the total need for new material). At the gate between supply and demand stood people who were usually called 'editors' of one variety or another. They chose whom to hire; they chose which pieces to publish or put on the air. That was the effective mechanism for enforcing such standards as existed. (To quote my former boss at the Washington Post, Ben Bradlee: 'Editors choose.')," he wrote.

"Editors don't really create anything: they don't write stories, they don't take pictures, they don't shoot video. But they were positioned to impose standards," he continued.

"Now, most of those assumptions have changed. Journalism takes place in an economy of abundance. Everybody with a computer is a 'content-creator.' The role of the editor is diminished or eliminated. If I want to post something to YouTube or to my own website, there is literally no one who can stop me. It could be false, hurtful, boorish, redundant, self-serving, misleading, or just plain stupid, and there is nothing anyone can do about it. (In fact, in certain settings, unethical, sloppy, mean postings generate the most traffic and comments, so they are considered desirable.)

"When you combine the legal foundation of the First Amendment with the technological reach of the Internet, you can pretty much forget about imposing anything on anyone," he concluded. His solution? "If there is a solution, I think it will ultimately arrive in one of two forms: a new business model in which editors regain a function, or a new set of ethical standards imposed by the audience."

While it is certainly encouraging to see such faith in a new order of sorts - whether in the form of a new business model or new standards and practices, there is some rigidity in Daly's proposals, both in the possibility of a return to a top-down, editors-controlled news hierarchy, or of a complete takeover from the consuming masses, with no room for dialogue and collaboration with the 'former' ruling elite of editors. A much more conciliatory and well-balanced solution might be useful.

First, can we really say that in the traditional model, "editors don't really create anything"? It is true that it is the reporters and photographers who create the stories, images and broadcast packages, but they do so in the same way as manual workers make cars or other products since they were assigned the tasks. The true creators and soul behind the news content were the editors, as they shaped the angle of each narrative and the overall ideology of the news outlet. As in so many other spheres, who is the true agent behind an act - the mind who concocted the plan, or its executioner?

First, as American lawyer Mike Godwin explained very well in his book *Cyber Rights - Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age*, the beauty of the Internet is that as never

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[111] The interview took place on July 14, 2010.

before, it allows one to use one's free speech rights to the full. Indeed, there is certainly plenty of emotional and offensive content online - which by the way, he stresses, is also First Amendment-protected speech[112] - but one *can* do something about hurtful comments: one can make use of one's freedom of speech and respond so as to counter-balance, question, or even destroy one's 'attacker's view point. One *can* respond, and *anyone* can do this, now, in today's digital world.

And as for the prevalence of such offending content online, there is now less of it because of the increasing (and I would add worrying) use of blocking tools in online forums and comments sections under news stories on most major and minor news sites. Even social networking sites now also have a 'Report this user' feature in their settings. In addition, many major news Web sites, such as CNN and *The Wall Street Journal*, have inexplicably decided to shut down the commentary sections of some news stories after a certain time has elapsed. Surely, the 'lack of space' on the Net, which obviously is limitless in cyberspace, cannot be the reason. Why put an end to a debate that can mature and become richer, as the story and reactions to it evolve with time?

These disagreements, however, have a very useful purpose in that they are sure to shape any design for a collaborative code of standards and news-reporting system, which must be strict enough to instill mutual respect and encourage diverse opinions - and this, without resorting to any blocking or other silencing online devices.

Judging by his responses to my request for commentary, former *Boston Globe* Editor-in-Chief Jim Driscoll supports such a plan of minimal control from above. In emailed comments in the summer of 2010, he wrote[113]:

"I am a purist when it comes to regulation: There shouldn't be any.
What that means is that self-regulation is the key, whether a citizen journalist is working independently (bloggers and twitters in particular) or in a group."
This does not mean that Driscoll does not see the benefits of codes or other standardized regulation: "A sense of fairness and common sense are the key ingredients, but there are a lot of Codes of Ethics that provide effective guidelines. Some of the best come from media associations or large media organizations," he said, adding that although he has never been a member, he personally favors the guidelines honed over the years by the Society of Professional Journalists.[114]

Driscoll unwittingly finds a kindred spirit in former *Boston Globe* investigative reporter and editor Steve Kurkjian.
In an interview for this thesis[115], he said "I am not familiar enough with the new outlets of communications – twitter, facebook, blogs, etc. – to comment intelligently about the questions you pose. But I do think that the immediacy of information and glut of databases places added responsibility on newsroom reporters and editors everywhere to keep focused on the stories they are pursuing. Long, thick, data-driven

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[112] Mike Godwin, *Cyber Rights - Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003) see section "The Case for Protecting Free Speech," 120- 121 especially).
[113] The interview took place on July 14, 2010.
[114] Driscoll gave the following link - http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp.
[115] The interview took place on July 16, 2010.

pieces can bore and lose readers/impact as easily today as they did when I was writing two-page Spotlight pieces in the 70s and 80s. And the glut of information can tend to make journalists believe that all the reporting on a certain news event has been done and all they now need to do is aggregate the information. Such laziness will result in further uncovered angles and unfairness to the poor soul caught in the media spotlight."

Kurkjian then presented his own solution to the declining standards in the profession. There is no alternative to 'picking up the telephone and making that phone call' - that is, talking to people and one's sources directly. This is how Kurkjian puts it: "The only way to get people to talk is show up on their doorstep and explain to them why it is that their information will help people understand a complicated set of facts or what to avoid so as not to be the next victim of a similar tragedy."
Too often, innocent people find themselves in the headlines or cross of fire in a highly mediatized news event, without knowing what their rights to privacy or free speech are. Media ethics demands basic respect for one's sources, as illustrated in my second case study on the ethical dimensions of visual representations of news' subjects in the media.

"A key factor to keep in mind," Kurkjian added, "especially with the ever-battling priorities of information gathering, privacy concerns and need for transparency - is that the old principles of news-gathering and -dissemination that continue to be taught in journalism schools still hold, and their need to be maintained is greater than ever. Those principles of vigorous reporting, on-the-record and document-based fact-gathering, and fair and balanced presentation are crucial to maintaining our credibility. I'm not sure what form of media that people will buy in the future, but if it's not credible it's not going to survive."
The key points that we want to retain from Kurkjian's analysis, of course, are his evident concern for what can be described as ethical, professional journalism.

Part II: Ethical Dilemmas: The Details

Online Media Ethics and Cyberlaws

If one had to extract the single dominant idea from Chapter 2 on media ethics, it surely would have to be that the long evolution of ethics from its roots in classical democratic thought has been complex and steeped in the moral dilemmas that accompanied the development of an ideal system for the free flow of information.[116] Put simply, to grasp the workings of 'cyber ethics' that I briefly address in this section, one only has to take these complexities of traditional journalism ethics, and multiply them by a zillion.

Indeed, as media analysts Paul Walton describes in an essay on ethics in emerging

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[116] For more on the evolution of media ethics and communications' regulatory tools, see Knowlton and Parsons, esp. 9; and John Walton; in addition to the other studies cited in Chapter 2.

media[117], the expansion of information and its audiences into cyberspace has been accompanied by costs, chaos, conflicts and misconceptions, specifically surrounding the question of their control.

An expert on digital dilemmas[118], Walton elaborates on "the complex ethical issues involved in the so-called information revolution," and like *Cybertrends* author David Brown, whom he cites[119], puts his finger on the inherent contradictions that the Internet and its ethical use and regulation entail. Denouncing the "overly utopian and optimistic" assessment of the digital possibilities of the information superhighway by the digerati and juxtaposing them with "the infrastructure costs and end user equipment needed to hook in," Walton identifies an ideological clash between an already well-established view of the Net as "a virtual world of true democracy where no speaker is more powerful than any other, (...) created unplanned and unsanctioned by the potentates of telecommunications and computing, a world (...) that appears to be free and unregulated," and the real-life socio-economic "restrictions on public access to new technology," (which) has "consequences for limiting democratic citizenship and rights to information technology."[120] This immaculate representation of cyberspace and technologies as the roads leading to virtual democracy "obscures and indeed prevents reasoned discussion about the nature and historical determinants of technological change and the accompanying need to have a developed social, ethical, and legal policy," he says.[121]

These developments, Walton says, have resulted in a deeply and unexpectedly contradictory media environment in which journalists have to work: "The Web, far from emerging from Eden as a democratic infrastructure available to all, has in fact been closely controlled and limited in access since its inception." And this situation has implications of an ethical nature for journalists who are trying to find their way in this (to quote Brown) "period of initial chaos"[122]: "These questions and ethical issues are not trivial because digital interactivity implies in one sense at least a greater degree of freedom than previous technologies allowed." Journalists are confronted by an ever-increasing number of pitfalls and unethical temptations, he adds: "Non-linear and non-narrative searches and sites allow massive increases in access to previously private, adult, or secure information. Moreover, the possibilities for plagiarism, forgery, data manipulation, rapidly multiply as the interactive elements grow in volume, traffic, size and complexity."[123]

Walton concludes by stressing the deep moral choices and consequences that this technological environment imposes on the journalists who try to cover it for the public: "In contradiction to the to the view that the Internet is friction free at the centre of the current debate over usage there exists the contradictions and moral politics that arise between the need for security and the need for freedom, there is a large gap between commerce and community. (...) The difference in the social dialogic relations between these forms of different social structures is of course

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[117] Paul Walton, "Cyber-ethics: regulation and privatization," in *Ethics and Media Culture - Practices and Representations*, Edited by David Berry (Waltham MA: Focal Press, 2000, 208-224.
[118] The title of his 1999 book.
[119] Paul Walton 210.
[120] Paul Walton, 209.
[121] Paul Walton, 209.
[122] Paul Walton, 210.
[123] Paul Walton, 212.

immense, for one implies free communication and the other controlled communication. It is therefore one of the undoubted attractions of the Web in that it appears to allow communication in the better moral sense, i.e. to share information in common from many to many. However, as I believe, and B. Winston and David Brown, whom Walton cite, concur, this is not a realistic view of the history of computing and the Web."[124]

What transpires from all this is that if maintaining standards and a sense of personal moral conduct was already a challenge for journalists in the days of the traditional press, the inherent struggles of the technological revolution and still ill-defined free speech ethos of the Internet have amplified that challenge significantly, to the point that at times, it may appear insurmountable.
At the most basic level, there is the technical problem of, as Walton puts it, "monitoring the estimated 200,000 photos and articles put on the Net every day, (which is) probably impractical." And on a more abstract level, there are the diverging "community standards, local content requirements, copyright and permissions, balanced political and news output,"[125] and the sometimes conflicting rights and duties of the participants in the various news worlds of cyberspace - most of which current cyber laws and practices do not adequately cover.

Walton's brief history and theory of online media ethics and its fraught relationship with cyber legislation are also useful in that they give us a sense of the complexities facing digital journalists who are committed to produce ethical work, while sparing us from being dragged too deeply into the fairly complicated legal rules of cyberspace. For example, the case study on Julian Assange's Wikileaks could certainly benefit from an examination of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act and the State Computer Crime Laws, as these cover the illegal access to classified information that was at the heart of the Wikileaks controversy. However, since this issue is not the one I have chosen to focus on in my case, I have refrained here from delving into the complexities of cybercrimes and how they are being addressed under the present U.S. law.[126]
However, understanding the rights and duties of journalists and their sources as they are being applied to the digital world is essential so that all parties can, as Cavazos and Morin say, "feel comfortable that their on-line communication activities are not going to lead to legal problems."[127]
Thus some basic explanations on how the rules of cyberspace and other environmental conditions of the Internet affect the news-reporting activities that interest us are in order. In the following three sections we will look at three specific types of difficulties of online journalism: those relating to collaborative news-reporting on the Net; those that have arisen from social mores and edicts; and those that have evolved from journalistic practice itself.

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[124] Paul Walton, 213.
[125] Paul Walton, 212.
[126] For more on the rules regulating digital information, I recommend Cavazos Morin, especially the chapter on "The First Amendment in Cyberspace," starting at 67).
[127] Cavazos and Morin, 67.

Online Collaborative News Production: Specific Challenges

The meaning and functions of collaboration on the Internet (even if applied only to the field of news) have been expanded and experimented with to such extents that the opportunities for unethical applications or simply practical problems have also proportionally multiplied. Whether we look at the practice with the enthusiasm of a new media early adopter or with the skepticism of a technophobe, Dutch media critic Geert Lovink's reference to the practice as an 'art' applies in all cases: "A key issue for critical Internet culture is the art of collaboration," he writes in *Zero Comments*.[128] And he is right in stressing the issues that have emerged from this work method recently transferred to online spaces. Some of them may not spring to mind immediately, and yet they are very relevant to my own proposed code-drafting and news-reporting collaborative systems. In fact the questions he raises should be considered by all news leaders who are launching (or have launched) new collaborative news projects.

"The High Art of Collaboration" (*Lovink*[129])

"How can we find independence and enhance freedom in the context of networked collaboration? How do you collectively manage and own a shared resource, such as a network?"[130] Lovink asks, pointing at the intrinsic tensions that cooperative enterprises entail. He then cites a series of little thought-of challenges and pitfalls of collaboration that point out the need for discussion during the planning phase of new news projects.
First, he notes, "It is hard to distinguish between the necessity of working in groups, for instance to produce large and complex art works, conferences festivals, protests or publications, and the desire to overcome isolation when you perform individual work."[131]
At the heart of Lovink's observation is the question of whether collaboration within and/or outside a news organization is voluntary or imposed upon its reporters - which relates directly to the crucial issue of how news leaders can engage their staff and audiences in collaborating in the news production process.

And here one can sense another tension characteristic of efforts to instill the cooperative habit in previously individual work models. On the one hand, he writes, "with the rise of individualization, collaboration becomes increasingly something that we perceive as voluntary, almost like a commodity purchase." On the other, "There is a growing desire for open forms of participation. As an incentive for online contribution, cooperative projects are increasingly common. The issue here is to distinguish between top-down teamwork in the labor mill and the management rhetoric that surrounds it. 'Please empty your tray in the trash - thank you for your cooperation' is not a free cooperation. It is 'friendly fascism' (Bertram Gross). Between free and forced, there is a growing gray zone of projects, applications, and practices that are not aimed at productivity gains, nor are they entirely autonomous and renegade. There is no complete snow-white innocence. There is no absolute

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[128] Geert Lovink, *Zero Comments - Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (London: Routledge, 2008) 207, 220.
[129] Lovink, 220.
[130] Lovink, 208.
[131] Lovink, 218.

autonomy of collaborative projects that claim to work outside the system,"[132] Lovink wrote. And to this, I would add that, as with so many new media trends and other innovative social practices, there is considerable pressure on people to join in and adopt the practice. Thus, even if their message is very subtle, newsrooms leaders have had little choice but to embrace the new online social practices and incorporate them as best they can into their staff's news-gathering and -writing methods. This has meant encouraging their reporters and editors to blog, share tips and information and collaborate with- or cite from sometimes non-professional or trusted sources found on the Net - all as part of their new professional online duties. And the writers and editors in turn have had no real choice but to go along.

This is certainly an aspect of collaboration that all those who seek to apply it to their digital news operations should give some thought to and decide what level of freedom and self-motivated participation they plan on granting their system's users.

Lovink cites another condition of successful online collaboration, which if ignored can also lead to problems in quality and efficiency: "The challenge for Internet-based cooperation is how to interface with the real world. It is hard to collaborate online without having meetings in real life. Online work can be very ineffective and slow. To succeed at that level requires some patience. Some people believe in the dotcom phrases about 'communicating with the speed of light,' but that is not at all the case if you work on more complicated projects with a group of active contributing people dispersed all over the globe."[133] Once again, although there are not at present any standardized rules for this, one would be well advised to think through this issue, and decide what levels of 'offline' interaction one's news system should have, and how ethical news-reporting can be best enhanced. It might be that at times, there is no quality alternative to a face-to-face interview or in-person visit to the event's location.

Another challenging aspect of collaboration, especially of individual journalists or news organizations with the larger communities of professional and non-professional news content producers on the Internet and in physical spaces, is an environmental one. In our interconnected world, such contact, cooperative or not, is inevitable. Digital journalists today inevitably 'bump into' hundreds of tweets, bits of data and other content from sources they do not always seek intentionally. But even when the search for partners and collaborative contributors is intentional and well planned, the communities one finds in online news spaces can be very volatile. As Kathleen German seems to suggest in her essay "Citizen journalists and Civic Responsibility: Decorum in an Age of Emerging Media," online communities can appear and disappear, be constructed and deconstructed very rapidly and unpredictably. "Since the rise of the Internet, the idea of community as a spatially based construction has shifted; virtual communities can be easily and quickly constructed in cyberspace, hence defying geographical limitations," she writes.[134] I would add to this, that it is not only the geographical boundaries of these communities that are now hard to define, but also, on a more abstract level, the new criteria for community building and team work online. When the fast cycle of a news event's developments or the new

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[132] Lovink, 219-220.
[133] Lovink, 219.
[134] Kathleen German, "Citizen journalists and Civic Responsibility: Decorum in an Age of Emerging Media," (*The Ethics of Emerging Media - Information, Social Norms, and New Media Technology*, Edited by Bruce E. Druschel and Kathleen German(New York: Continuum, 2011) 255.

trends and online activities that bind a virtual news community today might be gone tomorrow, how can we know what kind of constants will make a good, reliable community of sources or collaborators online? How can one foresee who will be our partners and collaborators of tomorrow, or plan joint work with people we have just met online and know nothing about? In such a shifting context, which might make one group of news content providers a great resource of collaborators today, and a useless one tomorrow, how can news leaders draw rules and guidelines for collaboration?

Even more elusive, is the question I raised earlier of how to develop and enforce a system of more or less universal or shared values on the desirable parameters and ethical conduct for collaboration? German proposes her own method for dealing with this apparently intractable problem, starting with the individual members of a collaborative enterprise.
Noting that the proliferation of new media has allowed individuals "to bypass the traditional gatekeepers in society - governments, corporations, socio-political interests, and other institutional barriers - creating a proliferation of maverick users and thereby placing even greater importance on the character of the citizen journalist," and that "Professional journalists are bound by professional codes of ethical conduct as well as laws that protect and proscribe their function," she stresses that, however, "the citizen journalist is not limited by such codes, intervening layers of editors, or other constraints. As a result, their news can take almost any form."[135]

However, the professionals are bound to come into contact, interact and strike both brief and longer-term collaborations with the non-professionals and random news writers in personal projects and larger social communities.
I would then argue that it is crucial for professional journalists to be extra vigilant and to stay in touch with their personal and professional principles when working or seeking partnerships in the ethically hybrid environment of cyberspace. And like German, I would encourage *everyone* publishing news content on the public space of the Net to develop his/her moral character and decide to adhere to a strict set of values.
Likewise, German sees that in the world of new media individuals communicate and operate "within an immediate, recognizable community or public," and then cites Walter Ong, showing how he also situated "people in a public context, needing to act, but subject to the strictures of the public environment." He recognized, she says "the need for each individual to make decisions grounded in an ethical stance within the immediate situation."[136]

As a way of 'solution' to the ethical dilemma of collaborating on news in the digital arena, German argues for "adjusting ethical practices" - in fact very much as I propose to do with my call for reforming current journalism codes: "The established codes of ethics and past practices of professional journalists have an enforcement mechanism that depends upon layers of editors, advertisers, and others who regulate what goes into print - a top-down form of centralized authority and control that is codified as standards of practice and sometimes laws. The codes of ethics that will arise in the midst of our current technological revolution must engage the user of social media

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[135] German, 254.

[136] German, 255. Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 16-49.

networks who operates in a decentralized environment that does not feature such conventional controls."[137]

German then cites three ethical principles to achieve her proposed goal of adjustment of our ethical rules for the digital, collaborative age, which can be perfect parameters for my own proposed code of ethics. Rather than analyzing in depth here German's views on these principles, I invite my readers to see how I have applied them to my case study on collaboration and the proposed solutions in the chapters that follow. This is how German phrases them: "There are three places that ethical practices should emerge - with the self, with the interaction of self and community, and with practices of power that limit the self."[138] She then goes on to elaborate on these three ethical practices, which she cites as "Responsibility of the Individual," "The Configuration of the Community," and "The Exercise of Power,"[139] the first two of which I examine in my applications of the Open Park system in the 'My Proposals' section in Chapter 7.

But the challenges of starting and maintaining effective and ethical collaborations with one's colleagues online, both professional and less so, are not confined to German's concerns about declining individual morality and its weakened capacity for good interaction with the larger community.
In their very suggestively entitled essay "Take this Blog and Shove It - When utopian ideals crash into human nature - sloth prevails," *Newsweek* writers Tony Dokoupil and Angela Wu theorize that perhaps too many rules might have a hampering effect on good functioning as a collective. They have noticed such an unproductive, paralyzing effect in the Wikipedia project, whose "aggressive editors and a tangle of anti-vandalism rules have scared off casual users."[140] They also address the issue of how to engage content producers into large journalism projects, when many existing elements of news media, such as crowd sourcing, and even individual initiatives such as personal blogging, are showing signs of decline, not to say ennui and fatigue. "Citizen journalism also has stabilized," and Web participation has far outgrown the "collective fever" of its early days, they write.[141]

The *Harvard Business Review* has some very good guidelines for media professionals interested in collaboration, which in their own way also point to some of the persistent needs and difficulties of the practice. First, the very title of the cover story of the issue it devoted to the theme, "Are you a Collaborative Leader?" suggests that the key to effective collective work is not the 'we-are-all-equal' approach often promoted by new media advocates, but one that is still somewhat tied to the old hierarchical model of editorial gatekeeping - namely, one that *needs* a leader.
"Left to their own devices, people will choose to collaborate with others they know well - which can be deadly for innovation," the authors warn, going all the way in their line of reasoning, and suggesting ways to "show a strong hand." They provide further evidence that collaborators need leaders: "When people try to collaborate on everything, they can wind up in endless meetings, debating ideas and struggling to

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[137] German, 259.

[138] German. 259.

[139] German, 260, 261, 264.

[140] Tony Dokoupil and Angela Wu, "Take this Blog and Shove It - When utopian ideals crash into human nature - sloth prevails," *Newsweek*, Aug 16, 2010, 42.

[141] Dokoupil and Wu.43.

find consensus." The key, the authors write, is "Loosening control without losing control."

What is certain is that such a 'strong-handed' view of collaboration and its simultaneous insistence on the value of guidance question the new media stance that seeks to avoid control of any kind, at all costs.

Perhaps refreshingly, the *Harvard Business Review* offers a model that takes the best of editorial powers of the past, reforms them, and embeds them in today's new realities - which is unquestionably very inspirational for the code and system of news production that I propose in Chapter 7 and the Appendix A.[142]

Perhaps it is clear by now that there probably are as many different opinions on how best for journalists to collaborate on digital news projects, as there are potential collaborators on the Internet.

Just to give a sense of the spectrum of views on the possibilities for ethics in collaborative news-reporting that one may encounter, I ought to give voice to both the ardent believers in the power of communities and the more cautious and critical skeptics.

Responding to a request for comments, new media analyst Danah Boyd succinctly replied: "Short form: ethics emerge from communities; they aren't effective when they're imposed top-down," she wrote.[143]

Productivity expert David Allen, on the other hand, has a more skeptical approach to the potential of collaborating communities for fostering the best ethical behavior in their subjects:

"The dark side of 'collaborative cultures' is the allergy they foster to holding anyone responsible for having the ball. 'Mine or yours?' is unfortunately not in the common vocabulary of many such organizations. There is a sense that that would be impolite. 'We're all in this together' is a worthy sentiment, but seldom a reality in the hard-nosed day-to-day world of work. Too many meetings end with a vague feeling among the players that something ought to happen, and the hope that it's not their personal job to make it so."

His prescription for a better functioning collective: more individual responsibility. "The way I see it, what's truly impolite is allowing people to walk away from discussions unclear. Real 'togetherness' of a group is reflected by the responsibility that all take for defining the real things to do and the specific people assigned to do them, so everyone is freed of the angst of still-undecided actions."[144]

The key word here is 'responsibility' - which in our context of journalism and media ethics is of paramount importance.

Should we decide to adopt a more egalitarian model than the leader-centered one promoted by the *Harvard Business Review*, then how are we going to ensure that this possible lack of personal responsibility does not contaminate the healthy functioning of the group? How do we divide tasks so that everyone clearly feels responsible for something? All these are important considerations for my own proposed system of

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[142] Herminia Ibarra and Morten T. Hansen, "Are you a Collaborative Leader? - How great CEOs keep their teams connected," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 2011, 69-74.

[143] The interview was conducted by email Aug. 25, 2010.

[144] David Allen, *Getting Things Done - The Art of Stress-Free Productivity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001) 245-246.

collaborative code-drafting and implementation in the field of news-reporting.

Other new media analysts take a simpler, more pragmatic approach to collaboration in the digital sphere.

Even though not about collaborating on news production per se, social media and business communication expert Chris Brogan's little black-and-red book *Social Media 101 - Tactics and Tips to Develop Your Business Online* is full of sensible observations on the community ecosystem and recommendations for enabling peer collaboration. High at the top of his list of recommended behaviors is assisting others by helping them acquire new skills or by contributing to their existing projects, as well as by encouraging new members to participate.[145]

In a Blog post for Northern University's MediaShift Idea Lab, Knight Foundation News Challenge winner (and in his own words, 'aspiring new media expert') Dan Schultz expresses his discontent with current collaborative systems found in online social media, finding it "essentially impossible to facilitate real community" in the present-day context of the Internet.[146] "The systems that are designed for groups leave much to be desired," he writes. According to Schultz, "Community tools exist, but they are drastically underpowered. The systems lack the popularity of Facebook, the societal potential of Wikipedia, and the personal relevance of email. As a result, they are drowned out by the far more successful alternatives that [he] outlined [earlier in his piece]."
Having identified those needs, he proposes a series of concrete, immediately applicable actions that project leaders could undertake to improve the workings of their communities of content creators.
"To change this, we need something that can:
. Host niche communities without isolating them from the rest of the world.
. Give individuals a chance to shine without letting their egos dominate the content.
. Attract enough people to drive collective intelligence, while maintaining the level of granularity needed to provide a truly personalized experience."
If we follow these formulas, Schultz says, "these systems will be the key to meeting community information needs. As such, I believe this is the direction that news organizations need to move if they want to maintain/reclaim their role as community informer," he concludes.

These are only a handful of thoughts, words of wisdom and warning, and proposed solutions for improving online collaboration in journalistic production, but they certainly provide some good parameters and criteria for the optimal and ethical effectiveness of such collaborative systems, against which we can measure up my own proposed system in Chapter 7.

There is yet one more aspect of the new ethical dilemmas facing online journalists

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[145] Chris Brogan, *Social Media 101 - Tactics and Tips to Develop Your Business Online* (Marblehead MA: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2010) 193; See also 174, 191, 226, 280.
[146] Dan Schultz, "In Search of a Community That Takes 'Me' Out of Social Media," MediaShift Idea Lab, Medill Network, Northern University, Dec 15, 2009, http://www.pbs.org/idealab/2009/12/in-search-of-a-community-that-takes-me-out-of-social-media333.html. Accessed Dec. 15, 2009.

that we ought to clarify before attacking the case study.

In order to better understand the narrower ethical issues confronting online media professionals in the course of their work and have a clearer sense of the ethical ramifications of their editorial decisions, it would be quite helpful to categorize them according to specific defining factors.

To this end I have found Robert I. Berkman and Christopher A. Shumway's classification of these new dilemmas into two main groups very useful: one group represents the difficult editorial decisions and situations that arise from broader social implications; and the other relates more narrowly to the ethical problems of a strictly journalistic nature (but applicable to all forms of publishing and broadcasting).[147] I must say here that I am much indebted to them, as I have used their classification as the prism through which I have studied the real-life difficulties of my case study. The section that follows gives a brief overview of how Berkman and Shumway in *Digital Dilemmas - Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals* have organized these two types of new ethical issues.

New Dilemmas for Online Media Professionals

Society-Based

The three areas in which the Internet has brought new difficulties and created potentially thorny situations for journalists that have ethical ramifications throughout society are relatively well-known to non-journalists and the general public, for the simple reason that most of us have had personal experiences with at least one of them in some way or another. Berkman and Shumway cite these three areas as privacy; speech; and intellectual property and copyright.

While the latter category, although of rightful concern to all media content creators, falls completely outside of my range of interests for this thesis, I have devoted much of my earlier background research for this thesis to the issue of free speech rights on the Internet, including a close study of cyber rights expert and lawyer Mike Godwin's accounts of key events and legal decisions that have shaped the evolution of speech and expression in the digital age.[148]

As Berkman and Shumway write, the present world of online communications is one of confusion:

"First, speech issues that have not exactly been easy to resolve in traditional media are profoundly more complicated on the Internet; they are also not likely to be resolved anytime soon. Legal boundaries are likely to appear on the Net where none existed before, and those already in place may shift as competing interests - governments, the courts, media companies and civil libertarians - provoke and, ultimately, settle new disputes."[149]

But despite the legal complications, those who communicate online need to consider "their ethical responsibilities as users of the medium and members of the global community." Berkman and Shumway call for the kind of awareness-raising and

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[147]Berkman and Shumway, see Part II starting at 91 and Part III starting at 219.
[148] Godwin.
[149] Berkman and Shumway, 148.

debate that I am seeking to provoke through this thesis: "If anything, the absence of clear legal boundaries in cyberspace should invite more dialogue about the values that underpin ethical communication and the best practices for applying them to the Internet."[150]

However, while these considerations on speech, as well as IP rights are important, I have decided to focus on the third[151] area examined by Berkman and Shumway in the case study that follows.

As the authors suggest, the concept of privacy throughout history "has come to mean different things to different people depending on physical context, cultural environment and personal preferences."[152] And the practice of traditional professional journalism presents plenty of situations that test journalists' commitment to their craft's ethic of protecting confidential sources of information and respecting the privacy and other rights of the people they encounter in the course of news-gathering. But it is those same issues amplified multiple times that I am interested here, as they are taking on new and unexpected forms.

Here too, the complexities of the interaction of U.S. law, technology and privacy most likely fall beyond the confines of even the most professional journalists' knowledge, and certainly beyond the scope of this thesis.
But a quick look at how Berkman and Shumway have organized their study of online privacy issues can provide a good framework for the specific cases that I have chosen to examine.
Their section on 'Privacy'[153] defines the various types of privacy (personal, information, communication, etc.), risks, rights and protections that "journalists and lawmakers concerned about balancing privacy with the public's right to know" have to juggle.
Their specific section on ethical dilemmas arising from online privacy issues includes topics such as the collecting and selling of personal data; the violation of privacy policies by news Web sites; inaccurate data; and news organizations' ethically questionable customizing of their Web sites to "push" certain content at a user based on his/her previous surfing.[154]
This is only a partial list of all the ethically dangerous online behaviors that pose a threat to individual and public privacy acts. And as noted earlier, studies such as Cavazos' and Morin's can provide more in-depth analysis of electronic privacy.[155]
This latter book is particularly enlightening as background to my case study on Wikileaks's disclosure of classified data to the public.

But it is specifically the privacy of journalists' sources and their close ones, as well as all those who become the unwitting subjects of news coverage that my proposed system of collaborative news and its code of ethics seek to address. Here I should note that even though consulting the various acts and statutes regulating the record and

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[150] Berkman and Shumway, 149.
[151] Actually the first part in their book.
[152] Berkman and Shumway, 93.
[153] Berkman and Shumway, 93.
[154] See Berkman and Shumway, 118 for more on this.
[155] Cavazos and Morin, see especially chapter 2 on electronic privacy, 13; and chapter 7 on cyber-crimes, 105.

publication of personal information and the laws protecting the privacy of its source is certainly useful to better understand my proposed solutions, their privacy issues are actually more related to the journalistic principle of taste and what is morally appropriate to disseminate.[156] Thus, rather than on the larger social implications of privacy legislation issues, my case study is more focused on journalists' personal ethical decisions and the morality underlying journalism.

Journalism-Based

As in their first section on the society-based problems that hamper healthy ethics in the news media, Berkman and Shumway analyze three types of ethical disruptions. Here they are concerned with dilemmas that are directly related to the practice of journalism performed over the Internet. Their three selected 'problem areas' are: speed and accuracy; sources and searches; and advertising, the Internet and editorial independence.

While this latter area where business and ethics collide is outside of the reach of my thesis, I am, however, most concerned about quality reporting, and thus the other two areas have caught my attention as potential frameworks for my own case study. It is mostly the ethics of working with sources, ensuring their quality and reliability, and the morally respectful professional relationship between journalists and the subjects of their news stories that I have decided to address in my case study and proposed solutions. Here Berkman and Shumway's list of concerns about the professional and ethical practice of online journalism has been very useful in honing my critical thinking for my own concrete case.

Starting with the errors and teething pains of the first Web versions of mainstream newspapers in the early days of Internet media[157], they cover the turbulent years of their development throughout the 2000s, as journalists struggled "to affirm and maintain their traditional values during these times of fast and unsettling changes,"[158] and on to the present-day more mature but still evolving online media industry.

Among the new editorial dilemmas and temptations to use 'easy and lazy' news-gathering techniques offered by the Net that Berkman and Shumway have identified, I should cite first and foremost their question: "Does the Internet make journalists lazy?" They worry that the reliability and trustworthiness of the sources of the information found on the Web might be compromised by the ease of locating this information, as well as already written news accounts, by searching the Net - what they call "the two temptations,"[159] a concern I share.

Berkman and Shumway's other cited dilemmas and subsidiary issues all revolve more or less around that major concern of ensuring accuracy and credibility through the meticulous use of- and respect for sources.
They give tips and advice on how to evaluate the information found online, as well as

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[156] For more on this, see Melvin Mencher, *News-Reporting and Writing* (Boston: McGraw-Hill. 1997) especially Part 6 on "Laws, Taste and Taboos, Codes and Ethics" starting at 580.

[157] In the early and mid-1990s. See Berkman and Shumway, 223, 227.

[158] Berkman and Shumway, 224.

[159] Berkman and Shumway, 245, 246.

the people who might potentially become sources or subjects of news articles.[160] For instance, they warn that one should be wary of a Web site's 'outdated look and feel,' a sign that it may not have been updated for a long time. A lack of contact details and spelling or grammatical errors should throw up red flags regarding the trustworthiness of an online source. To their list, I have added to the case studies my own tips, big and small and many of them tested by my own experience as a reporter and editor, such as The very first question to ask a potential source is his/her full name and position. If he/she won't give it to you, move on and find someone else who will.

No matter how diverse the areas of news-reporting that they cover, I have found Berkman and Shumway's recommendations for producing quality journalism in the digital medium conveniently classifiable under the one theme of focus of my case study and proposed collaborative system: research and sourcing. Even though some of these recommendations may seem at first a little too technical to be of immediate concern of an ethical nature, they also remind us that ethical reporting starts with the accuracy of one's sources of information, which in turn starts with the methods for finding and evaluating these sources.[161]

In any case, their conclusions on how to avoid poor reporting due to the temptations of the Net are directly applicable to all aspects of my case study and proposed applications for my code of ethics, be it Wikileaks' questionable media partnerships; the random alterations and reproduction of still images on the Net; or the collective (and still 'un-codified') labors of open-source news projects.

"The ethical journalist produces high-quality work, and creating quality takes a great deal of effort. Because it is so easy to do research online, the Internet may tempt journalists to neglect the hard work of digging and producing original reports," they write.[162]

The chapters that follow show how this hard work can be produced professionally and ethically.

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[160] See their tips list on 252.

[161] See Berkman and Shumway, 252 for more on this.

[162] Berkman and Shumway, 265.

Chapter 5: Case Study

<u>WikiLeaks</u>: Electronic Privacy vs. Free Speech

Introduction

This case study looks at the new, unprecedented, and ethically questionable type of collaboration that was initiated by the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks under Julian Assange' s leadership.
In it, I analyze Wikileaks' partnership with five major news publications in November 2010, which in the already complex legal and ethical context of classified data revelations has caused much explaining and hand-wringing on the part of all participants.

I start with a description of the WikiLeaks phenomenon, its founder and his principles, and the most urgent questions they have raised, such as: Can WikiLeaks's methods be called 'journalism'? Then, more challenging questions follow, such as: What are the possible threats to professional journalism caused by WikiLeaks? What are the implications of its disclosures for the profession, its sources, and the public? What are the implications for the future of journalism?
I pursue my analysis of WikiLeaks' partnership with *The New York Times* and its four collaborators through the prism of two key issues pertaining to media ethics: the respect for one's sources' privacy rights, and free speech and the public's right to know in the context of classified information- and cyberspace laws. I support my analysis with experts' opinions, personal observations based on The First Amendment Handbook[1], and legal press coverage from *The New York Times* and other publications - which admittedly gives a national dimension to my argument, but as I noted earlier, my focus is American journalism.
This segment of the case study is revealing for the insight it gives into electronic privacy as a thorny news-reporting area for online journalists, and the perspectives we hear from some of the key players in the leaks scandal of 2010 and earlier, including *The New York Times*' Bill Keller and prominent media observers.
I conclude with my own conclusions and recommendations for dealing with WikiLeaks (or similar investigative news efforts) in an ethical and professional manner.
It is my hope and goal that, as I mention later on in the chapter, these observations and conclusions will increase media ethics awareness among media professionals who are experimenting with collaborative news-reporting, and in the process improve its quality, all the while helping media consumers develop their critical skills about what they consume or interact with online, especially when it is produced by multiple sources.

WikiLeaks in its Own Words

As we attempt to describe the WikiLeaks phenomenon, it is worth pausing to see how the service sees its place and performance in the current media landscape.

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[1] Jane E. Kirtley. Gregg Leslie, Rebecca Daugherty, *The First Amendment Handbook* (The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, Fourth Edition)

On its own Web site[2], the management describes WikiLeaks as: "a not-for-profit media organisation. Our goal is to bring important news and information to the public. We provide an innovative, secure and anonymous way for sources to leak information to our journalists (our electronic drop box). One of our most important activities is to publish original source material alongside our news stories so readers and historians alike can see evidence of the truth." Thanks to its network of dedicated volunteers around the globe, the young organization has grown quickly, it says. In addition, the service, which was launched in 2007, has developed its own security technologies to support its activities.

The site adds "The broader principles on which our work is based are the defence of freedom of speech and media publishing, the improvement of our common historical record and the support of the rights of all people to create new history. We derive these principles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In particular, Article 19 inspires the work of our journalists and other volunteers. It states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. We agree, and we seek to uphold this and the other Articles of the Declaration."

In a section on how WikiLeaks works[3], the site's management explains that WikiLeaks "has combined high-end security technologies with journalism and ethical principles." Equating itself with other media outlets conducting investigative journalism, the site's managers say that they "accept (but do not solicit) anonymous sources of information. Unlike other outlets, we provide a high security anonymous drop box fortified by cutting-edge cryptographic information technologies. This provides maximum protection to our sources."

Stressing their "fearless efforts to get the unvarnished truth out to the public," they write that when information comes in, "our journalists analyse the material, verify it and write a news piece about it describing its significance to society. We then publish both the news story and the original material in order to enable readers to analyse the story in the context of the original source material themselves."

The WikiLeaks management also says that as the organization has expanded, it has developed a harm-minimization system. They describe the procedure as follows: "We do not censor our news, but from time to time we may remove or significantly delay the publication of some identifying details from original documents to protect life and limb of innocent people.

We accept leaked material in person and via postal drops as alternative methods, although we recommend the anonymous electronic drop box as the preferred method of submitting any material. We do not ask for material, but we make sure that if material is going to be submitted it is done securely and that the source is well protected." The site also mentions its network of lawyers posted around the globe who are "personally committed to the principles that WikiLeaks is based on."

Of course, it is important to remember that these are WikiLeak's own words on how it views its operations, and to remain critical about its vision of investigative journalism. As my comparison later on with The Pentagon Papers case will show, there are major differences between the two cases.

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[2] See http://www.wikileaks.org/About.html. Accessed 4/14/2012.
[3] See http://www.wikileaks.org/About.html. Accessed 4/14/2012.

The Case

Even though the conflict between free speech- and online privacy rights is unquestionably at the root of the anti-secrecy Web site's troubles and the uproar it sparked in the news media and intelligence worlds when it published reams of classified U.S. State Department cables and other secret data, it is more the journalistic and ethical aspects and consequences of Julian Assange's service and its questionable partnerships with leading Western media outlets that I will be looking at.

WikiLeaks' activities fall into two distinct categories: the Web site's initial release of classified documents exclusively to selected news organizations; and the subsequent publication of WikiLeaks' third 'mega-leak' of more than 250,000 U.S. diplomatic cables and documents. The latter's release directly to the public, compounded by Assange's legal problems[4] and the dispute with *The Guardian* after it published the password to the complete WikiLeaks files demands a different level of ethical scrutiny than the initial release.

It important to remember the distinction between these two issues - the coordinated effort with media organizations and the direct release to the public, as well as the fact that in this case study, we are most concerned with the ethical aspects and difficulties of the collaboration with the press. Thus, it can be safely assumed that most observations in this chapter on the editorial and ethical dilemmas emerging from WikiLeaks' activities are usually referring to this case of media collaboration.

In addition to its own large team of volunteer contributors, WikiLeaks' selected collaborators, a coalition of American and European print and electronic news organizations, have helped the public multi-jurisdictional service founded with the mission of protecting whistleblowers, journalists and activists who want to communicate sensitive material to the public[5], to uncover certain facts about the U.S. government's entanglements with foreign nations and about its military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.[6]

WikiLeaks itself defines its activities as "journalism," as it clearly stipulates on its Web site.[7] The reasoning behind the service's activities and ultimate purpose sounds logical and well-meaning enough: "Publishing improves transparency, and this transparency creates a better society for all people. Better scrutiny leads to reduced corruption and stronger democracies in all society's institutions, including government, corporations and other organisations. A healthy, vibrant and inquisitive

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[4] Such as the extradition process, whose procedures fall beyond the limits of this thesis.

[5] Definition based on WikiLeaks' Wikipedia's profile at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WikiLeaks Accessed April 16, 2012 and the service's own Web site at http://www.wikileaks.org. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[6] For useful summaries of the events surrounding the WikiLeaks controversy, I recommend the timeline in *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*'s Year in Review special issue of Dec 20, 2010, inside the 'Spill' supplement starting at 49; *Time's* cover story, "The War on Secrecy" by Massimo Calabresi in its special issue on the topic ("Do You Want to Know a Secret?" *Time*, Dec. 6, 2010, 30-37); and *Time'*s Person of the Year profile article on Julian Assange's third place on the Short List (Barton Gellman, 3 - Julian Assange, *Time*, Dec 27, 2010-Jan 3, 2011, 90).

[7] See 'About' section on http://www.wikileaks.org. Accessed April 16, 2012.

journalistic media plays a vital role in achieving these goals. We are part of that media. Scrutiny requires information. Historically, information has been costly in terms of human life, human rights and economics. As a result of technical advances particularly the internet and cryptography - the risks of conveying important information can be lowered. In its landmark ruling on the Pentagon Papers, the US Supreme Court ruled that 'only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government.' We agree."

The administrators of the not-for-profit service, which is a project of the Sunshine Press founded in 2007, also take great pains to describe the meticulous verification process of its news stories, affirming that WikiLeaks is not "a front for any intelligence agency or government despite a rumor to that effect," and gives a detailed account of how it protects the anonymity of its sources - a process that it says occurs early on in the WikiLeaks network - and asserts that it has never revealed any of its sources.

The service' Web site then proudly lists its prizes and other past achievements, including breaking news stories and the uncovering of various abuses, tax evasion and war-related crimes around the world.[8]
The site's About-page authors then assertively conclude that "WikiLeaks has provided a new model of journalism," presenting an intriguingly attractive picture of a smoothly working, professional collaboration: "Because we are not motivated by making a profit, we work cooperatively with other publishing and media organisations around the globe, instead of following the traditional model of competing with other media. We don't hoard our information; we make the original documents available with our news stories," they explain. "Readers can verify the truth of what we have reported themselves. Like a wire service, WikiLeaks reports stories that are often picked up by other media outlets. We encourage this. We believe the world's media should work together as much as possible to bring stories to a broad international readership."
This collaborative aspect of WikiLeaks is certainly of much relevance to my enquiry in my third case study, which describe a related (although not exactly similar) non-competitive model of news publishing collaboration.
And Assange himself does not hesitate to remind the word, vehemently at times, that "We are journalists," as a *New Yorker* article reported him as saying.[9]

But are they? Is WikiLeaks 'journalism?'
As I explained above, WikiLeaks itself asserts - and has successfully convinced some of our best news media representatives and observers - that it belongs to a professional journalistic process. The service that gives access to original secret documents has done so by working with the traditional mainstream media and with committed legal and information professionals and volunteers in the public. Seen from the outside, the picture certainly looks convincing - and ethical. In many ways, one may be tempted to liken Assange's Web site to a newswire service, on a par with

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[8] For the full list, see http://www.wikileaks.org/About.html, under "Wikileaks's journalism record." Accessed April 16, 2012.
[9] Raffi Khatchadourian, "No Secrets - Julian Assange's mission for total transparency" *The New Yorker*, June 7, 2010, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/06/07/100607fa_fact_khatchadourian. Accessed June 7, 2010.

the wire agencies of our established media.

But as I demonstrate later on, some crucial aspects of ethical, professional journalism have been left out of this model. For instance, WikiLeaks gives access to the original documents upon which their reports are based, letting the readers be the judge as to their accuracy, while as we know, newswires do not.

As we examine the organizations' collaborative model and especially its still unclear media partnerships more closely, as well as the views of media experts on them, the focus of my research is: can WikiLeaks' efforts be considered journalism? If not, how should we classify them? As is well known, some of the best investigative journalism has relied upon leaked information and the continued anonymity of its sources. But can this case be equated with that of the Pentagon Papers in the 1970s? That comparison, rather than the catalytic issues of violated confidentiality[10], transparency and information and speech rights, is the focus of this case study.[11]

The pointed question that WikiLeaks itself asks on its Web site, "Should the press really be free?"[12] is without a question important and relevant to our efforts in this thesis to define what an ethical collaboration looks like. But it is my belief that an examination of the nature of these agreements that Assange had with his selected newspapers and media companies will throw some light on the kind of journalism this relatively new project has brought us and whether it should be imitated and/or altered or improved in some ways - and if so, in what manner.

Before proceeding further, it is worth making clear here that throughout this case study and unless specified otherwise, I often use WikiLeaks and its founder, Julian Assange interchangeably. Understandably, Assange, the person and the professional, is much larger than this one project. But given the obscurity, controversy and legal entanglements surrounding the Web site's chief editor and spokesman, not to speak of the management problems within WikiLeaks[13] - most of which falls beyond the confines of my research topic - I have made the conscious decision to adopt a 'simpler definition' of Assange and simply equate him with the news service. Since the site's proclaimed philosophy and journalistic principles of free and open information reflect Assange's own views, this should not cause any discrepancies in meaning.

News media observers throughout the world haves been scratching their heads about this 'journalistic question' too.

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[10] A 1996 article in *The New York Times* said that the Pentagon Papers "demonstrated, among other things, that the Johnson Administration had systematically lied, not only to the public but also to Congress, about a subject of transcendent national interest and significance. The report was declassified and publicly released in June 2011." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pentagon_Papers. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[11] Perhaps I should make clear early on that the national and foreign policy issues of the WikiLeaks phenomenon are beyond my interests for this case study, since I am focusing strictly on the journalism aspects of the case. Thus, although unquestionably important, the larger consequences for intelligence, security, society's information needs and what constitutes good government have been left aside.

[12] The question is on the About page at http://www.wikileaks.org/About.html. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[13] For more on this and on the dissenting voices among the organization, see *Inside WikiLeaks - My Time with Julian Assange at the World's Most Dangerous Website* by Daniel Domscheit-Berg with Tina Klopp (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011).

"Julian Assange - Whistle-blower or spy?" asks *Time* magazine. And it paraphrases a former WikiLeaks steering committee member, John Young, as saying that "The worst - or best, in the view of advocates for radical transparency - could be yet to come," highlighting the vast disparity of views on the ethical stance of the controversial news service.[14]

In fact, while WikiLeaks has been hailed by its supporters as a savior of journalism, with its purist, radical approach to transparency, and a potential model for the traditional media, it is also, in some strange way, a competitor to those present-day media, as *Time* writer Barton Gellman noted.[15] Of course, technologically speaking, these media - and we, their audiences - have cause to be impressed, and perhaps even envious (in the case of the news media): "Not the least of Assange's achievements is a technological one," Gellman wrote. "WikiLeaks brought to life what one of its early advisers described as "a recurring idea in hacker culture - a digital safe haven that is anonymous, massively collaborative and highly resistant to attack or penetration by intelligence services."

Without revealing too much of my own stance and conclusions on WikiLeaks' model too early, I should still say here that it differs in significant ways from the usual procedure and ethics of leaking in the traditional professional press. Compared to the case of the Pentagon Papers, WikiLeaks' selection of the classified documents it released was widely considered to be of little informative value, being concerned with either trivial or already known facts of national and foreign policy, as well as, as some critics have said, strangely selective in their focus (WikiLeaks has been criticized for focusing too much on U.S. government abuses, for example, while in reality the service has released others documents relating to many parts of the world). Last but not least, WikiLeaks has been deficient in providing for the safety and privacy of sources.

Of course, this does not answer the question of whether today's news media should be envious too of WikiLeaks' approach to the principles of professional journalism and of its moral stance in general. This subtlety has not gone unnoticed, as some in the mainstream media actually consider WikiLeaks' sense of morality to be not only failing, but also in some respects non-existent, as *New York Review of Books* blogger Christian Caryl made it clear in his headline to an article earlier this year - "WikiLeaks in the Moral Void," it read.[16]

According to Caryl, "WikiLeaks changes everything." But has it?

For sure, the scale of the unauthorized release of classified information - over 250,000 diplomatic cables[17] if we count everything since the first release in November 2010 -

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[14] Gellman, 90.

[15] Gelman, 90.

[16] Christian Caryl, "WikiLeaks in the Moral Void" NYRblog: "Roving thoughts and provocations from our writers," *The New York Review of Books*, Dec 7, 2010, http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2010/dec/07/wikileaks-moral-void/. Accessed Oct. 23, 2010.

[17] The summaries I cited in an earlier footnote are good sources for the details of these releases. Also: "More than 75,000" U.S. military documents on the Afghan war conflict" [according to *Bloomberg-BusinessWeek*], "77,000" for *Time* ; "close to 400,000" documents related to the U.S. Army's operations in Iraq [*Time]*; and "more than 250,000" U.S. diplomatic cables and documents in Wikileaks' third 'mega-leak'

has been described as "unprecedented."[18]

And again, technologically, WikiLeaks is without a doubt a child of the digital age and the Internet, about which it has made clear that the old standards of journalism no longer apply. As Caryl very correctly points out, who among the professional journalists covering the State Department and other U.S. agencies would have had the time and patience to sift through the inhumane amount of leaked data using traditional means?

But it is not only the scale of the leaks and unprecedented use of the Internet's rapid and anonymous data storage and retrieval capacities that have shaken the world of news and journalism. The guardians of the profession have been made to feel very ill at ease, to put it mildly, by Assange's 'journalistic' endeavors, which somehow contain the tacit accusation that *they* have been failing their calling by not embracing full disclosure of *all* information to the public and pure transparency.[19]

The reason for their discomfort is that most journalists have been trying to understand and respond to the WikiLeaks phenomenon in 'old ways,' as Caryl sees it. He puts his finger on the root of the malaise: "In the old days, journalists would have done what WikiLeaks's print media partners, like *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*, are attempting to do now: make judgments about which documents to release and whether or not to redact the names mentioned in them based on the larger public interest and the risk of inflicting damage on innocent bystanders."

Perhaps I should just add the word 'ethical' before 'judgment' to make this assessment of the media's response perfectly clear. It is indeed a case of missing media ethics that we are witnessing here.

Caryl corroborates this view by noting that Assange's professional motivations and reasoning "seems to boil down to a policy of disclosure for disclosure's sake," as he has simply registered what technology would enable him to do, and merely followed its lead, he says. "I don't see coherently articulated morality, or even immorality, at work here at all; what I see is an amoral, technocratic void," he concluded, after wondering what exactly were WikiLeaks's criteria for deciding to have the cables published, considering that in some cases - but not all - it had decided in consortium with its media partners to delete names of the people mentioned in them. The 'rules' and reasoning behind such decisions, and many others, at the service' editorial offices are less than clear.

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effort [*Time* and *Bloomberg-BusinessWeek* among other news sources] - whatever "more than" means."

[18] Caryl himself describes it in this way as do countless other media reports. Caryl, *The New York Review of Books*, Dec 7, 2010, http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2010/dec/07/wikileaks-moral-void/. Accessed Oct. 23, 2010.

[19] Michael Hirschorn of *The Atlantic* also sensed that "To some degree, Wikileaks is filling a vacuum left by newspapers, which have been gutting their investigative capacities for decades." Although he too notices that "in the current environment, in which there is no widely accepted, credible entity to mediate Assange's data dumps, he is winning ideological points without offering much of a solution." Michael Hirschorn, "Truth Lies Here," *The Atlantic*, Nov. 2010, 58.

WikiLeaks 101: Defining the WikiLeaks Phenomenon

In an attempt to make clearer at least the profile and public and industry perceptions of who we are dealing with, it may be worth citing a few of the qualifiers and descriptions of the revolutionary hero (or anti-hero, depending on one's ethical stance) in this information war in cyberspace, or as Slavoj Zizek phrased it in an essay, "a struggle between WikiLeaks and the U.S. empire."[20]

One could be forgiven for being confused as to WikiLeaks' present circumstances, as the embattled whistleblowing Web site announced in October 2011 that it had suspended its publishing activities so as to fight a financial blockade and raise funds.[21] Yet as late as Dec 1, 2011 the site still posted a blog entry under the title "WikiLeaks: The Spy Files" announcing the release of a database of hundreds of documents from as many as 160 intelligence contractors in the mass surveillance industry."[22] Even more interestingly, Assange's service also said that it was working on this particular release with "Bugged Planet and Privacy International, as well as media organizations from six countries – ARD in Germany, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism in the UK, The Hindu in India, L'Espresso in Italy, OWNI in France and the Washington Post in the U.S" - evidence that the interest in creative and diversified partnerships is alive and well. The blog entry also stipulated that "WikiLeaks has released 287 documents today, but the Spy Files project is ongoing and further information will be released this week and into next year," giving a link to the torrent archive from which all the released files can be downloaded.

In any case, the official suspension of operations, coupled with the series of legal cases that WikiLeaks is facing in the UK, Australia, Denmark and Iceland, as well as Assange's fight against extradition from the UK to Sweden to answer allegations of sexual misconduct are somehow all contributing to conjure up not only a nebulous but also martyr-like profile of the news agency and its founder. It might not be completely surprising then, that even in the news business itself, one will find staunch supporters of the service, whose self-assigned mission of saving free speech no matter what they describe in messianic terms.[23]

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[20] Slavoj Zizek, "Tact in the Age of WikiLeaks," *Harpers' Magazine,* April 2011, 13; also published in the January 20 issue of the *London Review of Books*).

[21] For the original source at http://www.wikileaks.org/. Accessed April 16, 2012; Also Esther Addley and Jason Deans, "WikiLeaks suspends publishing to fight financial blockade," *The Guardian*, Oct. 24, 2011, guardian.co.uk. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[22] See http://www.wikileaks.org/. Accessed April 20, 2012.

[23] For an example of such supporters among the news media, one may want to check *The Nation*, which describes itself as "a magazine that champions free speech, (...) defends the rights of leaders and media organizations to disclose secrets that advance a public interest without fear of retribution - or murder." It thus considers that WikiLeaks "has come to embrace the ethics that guide traditional news organizations' disclosure of secrets, and it should be afforded the same protections." 'In Defense of WikiLeaks," Editorial, *The Nation*, Dec 27, 2010, http://www.thenation.com/blog/157106/journalists-begin-finally-stand-defense-wikileaks-and-freedom-information. Accessed Dec. 4, 2010.

Dilemma Number 1: WikiLeaks = Good or Evil?

The tangible tensions that emanate from this simple profile and perceptions of Assange's creation that I just described in the preceding section inevitably lead to a more pressing question: Are Assange's endeavors with regards to WikiLeaks noble and spell the future of news and democracy - or are they unethical and counterproductive?

The angst with which the media, society, government and the diplomatic world have tried to answer that question and general confusion as to Assange' intentions are palpable even in the most innocuous responses and descriptions of the project.

Such angst can be found raw in *Technology Review* Editor Jason Pontin's suggestively entitled piece "Is WikiLeaks a Good Thing?"[24] in which he admits that even though personally he "distrust(s) transparency and believe(s) in privacy rights" and the need for secrecy in many social and management affairs, still, "At the same time, *of course* I am conflicted. As a journalist, I am committed professionally to truth-telling. Often that means revealing the secrets of the powerful, who, understandably, resist public embarrassment and would prosecute the publication of leaks as treason or theft if they could. Therefore, I cling to the formal protections that let me publish such secrets without risk," he explained.
Pontin captures in his conclusion the ethical dilemmas at the heart of WikiLeaks' *raison d' etre*, setting us to a challenging task: "Just as we balance equality and freedom, we must balance the conflicting goods of secretiveness and transparency. I don't like Julian Assange's goals and methods, but corrective reformers are mostly unlikable weirdos."

Kelly McBride, an ethics specialist at the Poynter Institute[25], sounds even more confused in her attempts at defining the emergence of the WikiLeaks project. In an essay entitled "What Is WikiLeaks? That's the Wrong Question,"[26] she writes that "The very nature of WikiLeaks is hard to pin down for someone like me who came through a conventional newsroom." Then, she admits that initially, when the secret-document-leaking Web site first emerged on the world map, she and her colleagues who studied or worked in the field of journalism then "dismissed it as a well-intentioned but overly trusting idea," and quite unhelpfully, finally concludes that "WikiLeaks has become the icon both for all that's holy and all that's profane."

Robert Scheer of AlterNet, in pointing out another confusing response to Assange's activities and stated goal, asks an excellent question regarding the seemingly unquestioned embrace by the mass media of all that WikiLeaks revealed. "There is a craven disconnect between the eagerness of leading editors to exploit the important news revealed by WikiLeaks and their efforts to distance themselves from both the courageous website and Bradley Manning, the alleged source of documents posted

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[24] Jason Pontin, "Is WikiLeaks a Good Thing?" *Technology Review*, March/April 2011, http://www.technologyreview.com/communications/32421/. Accessed April 16, 2012.
[25] She is a senior faculty member at The Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida.
[26] Kelly McBride, "What Is WikiLeaks? That's the Wrong Question," "Page One - Inside The New York Times and the Future of Journalism," Edited by David Folkenflik, *PublicAffairs*, 2011, 36-37).

there,"[27] he wrote.

Although it is not my purpose in this thesis to go into the details of the new charges that Private First Class Manning was facing at the time, Scheer is right in wondering "Why are mainstream news outlets so quick to publish news unearthed by WikiLeaks, but wary of reporting the truth about Manning?" One may quite safely surmise here that the media has been handed WikiLeaks' data 'on a silver plate' so to speak, while investigating and reporting the Manning story would have cost them much more in both time and money.

This apparent blind belief in the pronouncements and purposes of Assange's project and in the validity of the thousands of cables that were released to the public is a point I investigate below, as part of my recommendations for appropriate responses in the face of such media novelties as WikiLeaks.

Adding to the confusion and less than crystal-clear background and backstage dealings of the sensitive news service, the events and developments surrounding WikiLeaks, especially after it was targeted by the U.S. government in response to its data dumps, have led to even stranger news phenomena. The plans and projects of WikiLeaks' former staff, for example, such as Daniel Domscheit-Berg's OpenLeaks initiative, promises "to be an alternative Web site for leaks to be governed by what they characterize as a revised vision of radical transparency," according to a *New York Times* report.[28] Given that WikiLeaks itself is already quite 'strong' on transparency, to put it nicely, one can only wonder what this new brand of openness will look like and what ethical code it will follow.

But the controversial news service has been disruptive of journalism's professional, established ways in two other areas that are worth mentioning,[29] creating rifts within the ranks of the profession, its observers and its audiences.

One such divisive issue related to media ethics is free speech - in this case the First Amendment-protected right of anyone who might want to publish or otherwise disseminate sensitive unauthorized information *after* it has been leaked.[30] WikiLeaks' own publication of unlawfully leaked information has planted such fear and ire in the U.S. government that, with a view of protecting high-risk sources and the public, the 'Shield bill' was introduced in both houses of Congress early this year as part of a intensified crackdown on Assange's operations.

As said, opinions on how best to guarantee both the needs for secrecy and the right to

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[27] Robert Scheer, "All the WikiLeaks Fit to Print: The Media's Desire to Exploit WikiLeaks While Distancing Itself from Bradley Manning," AlterNet, April 27, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/story/150760/all_the_wikileaks_fit_to_print%3A_the_media's_desire_to_exploit_wikileaks_while_distancing_itself_from_bradley_manning/. Accessed April 27, 2011.

[28] Ravi Somaiya, "Former WikiLeaks Colleagues Forming New Web Site, OpenLeaks," *The New York Times*, Feb 7, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/world/07openleaks.html?ref=europe. Accessed Feb. 6, 2011.

[29] This selection of two key problem areas is obviously not by any means extensive, but represents two of the most often debated journalistic concerns tied to WikiLeaks' publications.

[30] See Kirtley et al.

disseminate information to the public have been dichotomous. *The Nation*'s viewpoint, which I presented above, unilaterally condemns secrecy guarantees, which it says cover and foster antidemocratic actions. It should be noted here that an important development in the world of intelligence and classified information is the marked and steady increase in what gets to be designated as 'secret' in the course of the previous and present administrations.[31]

New York Times Op-Ed commentator Geoffrey R. Stone offers a more nuanced stance, calling for more precise legislation so as to define more fully and accurately what constitutes classified information that poses "a clear and imminent danger of grave harm to the nation" - a legitimate cause for punishment.[32] The "clear and present danger standard" has been a central part of the First Amendment jurisprudence, he writes, but as the government has demonstrated its willingness to overstate its needs for secrecy, especially in times of national emergency, "a strict clear and present danger standard - rather than an unwieldy and unpredictable case-by-case balancing of harm against benefit - establishes a high bar to protect us against this danger," he writes.

Here it is worth citing estimates from *The Christian Science Monitor*, according to which "the US is producing some 560 million pages of classified information a year. By way of comparison, the Library of Congress and other big document depositories such as Harvard's library system each add about 60 million pages a year to their holdings."[33] "WikiLeaks' trove is a mere drop in ocean of US classified documents," wrote *Christian Science Monitor* reporter Peter Grier.[34]

The weak spot of information and communications-related norms, and especially cyber-legislation is that they still fail in being comprehensive and detailed enough to cover the new and unpredictable developments of digital media, such as the one in this case study.

The public and (some of) the news media's outrage over the perceived attack on expression rights, which materialized in various forms of activism[35], are certainly a positive response to the growing pains of online media ethics that the WikiLeaks case has exacerbated.

Another area of contention about the professional merits of Assange's travails is what some have called the erroneous comparison with the case of the Pentagon Papers. As has now been widely acknowledged and as David Michael Green wrote in *Z*

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[31] The exponential growth of classified data has been reported on by major publications in recent years, but I have deliberately not covered it extensively in the thesis in order to remain on topic.

[32] Geoffrey R. Stone, "A Clear Danger to Free Speech," *The New York Times*, Jan 4, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/04/opinion/04stone.html. Accessed Jan. 3, 2011.

[33] See http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/The+Library+of+Congress. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[34] See http://www.csmonitor.com/About/Contact/Staff-Writers/Peter-Grier. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[35] For one example of such activism, read about the efforts of Anonymous, an online protest group defending free speech online - Ida Hartmann, "Twitter Is Hero as Feds Attempt to Trample WikiLeaks's Free Speech," AlterNet, Jan 15, 2011, www.alternet.org/story/149545. Accessed Jan. 15, 2011.

Magazine[36], the WikiLeaks' 'revelations' in effect have not revealed anything significant and/or new, with their apparent recurring focus on the social trivia of foreign policy exchanges, rather than on any matters of significant public importance. In contrast, Green wrote, "Daniel Ellsberg's revelations were hugely significant, but not because they were government secrets revealed to the public. Rather, they were important because of the gap in government pronouncements they exposed…. The gap that was so wide in the case of the Pentagon Papers, is in the case of WikiLeaks, rather small," he wrote. "The WikiLeaks trove does not, so far, expose massive disconnects between what the government has been telling us and what it actually believes. This is not Vietnam and the endless lies about that war."

Although this is a very legitimate point, it is of course only one side of the story. To cite just one flagrant example of deception about the role of the United States in the field operations and deaths in Iraq: the video published by WikiLeaks that shows a 2007 incident in Baghdad in which a U.S. military helicopter fires upon and kills a group of civilians, including two Reuters journalists[37] is powerful evidence of a cover-up - and by extension, of the benefits of Assange's service in bringing this video to light.

This inevitably leads us to wonder about the double standards regarding morality and media ethics that have permeated the debate about WikiLeaks in the aftermath of the WikiDump. "And for what reason should Assange be murdered?" (to quote Green, but also to use one of the most extreme forms of punishment voiced among his critics).

Since the organization has not yet actually released any evidence of serious major lies, what then could justify the over-reaction on the right? - Green reasons. His comparative study of the kinds of applied ethics that the media world engaged in after the peak of the leaks is interesting:

"Assange was asked by *Time Magazine* what his 'moral calculus' was to justify publishing the leaks," he wrote. Don't you love that? No one asked George Bush or Dick Cheney that question. No one would dare ask the liars of the century about their moral calculus, even today, as they run around the world hawking their books and making millions off of 'memoirs' riddled with new lies covering up the old ones. No one even asks Barack Obama where he gets off tripling the forces in Afghanistan in support of a regime that—thanks to WikiLeaks—we now know that he knows is thoroughly corrupt and utterly undemocratic. But Assange, whose great crime is exposing truth, gets the dubious morality treatment from *Time*, that great bastion of hard-hitting independent journalism."

What some are already calling the 'Cablegate'[38] affair has not only ignited a debate about government, international relations and security, but also one about ethics and

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[36] David Michael Green, "What WikiLeaks Really Reveals," *Z Magazine,* January 2011, Volume 24, Number 1, http://www.zcommunications.org/what-wikileaks-really-reveals-by-david-michael-green. Accessed 4/14/2012.

[37] Source: "Spill – WiliLeaks," *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, "Year in Review," Dec 20, 2010 - Jan 2, 2011, 58.

[38] My own actual first encounter with the term 'Cablegate' comes from an email sent by CMS Communications Manager Andrew Whitacre May 31, 2011 regarding a call for papers on 'WikiLeaks: Journalism, Politics and Ethics' by the Cyborg Subjects project; www.cyborgsubjects.org.

the fate of morality in the future of online journalism.

But before we start examining more closely the new forms of media partnerships in the digital age and how they are affecting online media ethics it is worth keeping in mind some of the research questions and themes for possible contributions that Cyborg Subjects[39], a new media online community site, suggested for one of its new projects on WikiLeaks and its impact on the boundaries of digital journalism and news-reporting. In an email sent to CMS on May 26, 2011, the project leaders asked:

. What are the main legal and ethical issues raised by WikiLeaks?
. Is WikiLeaks a journalistic organization?
. How does WikiLeaks challenge traditional journalistic standards?
. What does the collaboration between WikiLeaks and traditional newspapers have to say about the future of mass media technologies?
. How do researchers (ethically) deal with data published by WikiLeaks?

The Cyborg Subjects managers cite many other interesting questions, but I have singled out those most relevant for new media partnerships in digital news.
And thus, as we go into the next sections for a closer, more critical look at these intriguing media collaborations, I urge my readers to keep these questions at the back of their mind.

The Perils of Partnering (on the Net & Beyond)

Partnering is not simple. As online journalist and media ethics expert Jane B. Singer explains in an essay on the ethical risks of what she calls "cross-platform journalism,"[40] the numerous types of creative ownership models that have sprung up over the past few years have produced a plethora of potential new ethical pitfalls.[41]
In fact, even in the best conditions, in 'normal,' crystal-clear collaborations, with familiar faces, and all the technical and ideological details agreed upon, there are still plenty of possible question marks and unpredictable predicaments of an editorial nature that may occur.[42]

Singer defines the new, recent forms of convergence in the news media industry as activities ranging "from newspaper and television journalists in partnered organizations cross-promoting each others' stories to reporters producing content for print, on-air, and online distribution. In general, such cross-platform journalism or 'convergence' refers to a combination of news staffs, technologies, products, or geography from previously distinct print, television, and online media."[43] This is a

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[39] For more on Cyborg Subjects, see http://journal.cyborgsubjects.org/about-2/. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[40] Jane B. Singer, "Cross-Platform Journalism, Partnering, and Cross-Ownership," in Cecilia Friend and Jane B. Singer, *Online Journalism Ethics - Traditions and Transitions*, (Armonk NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007) 198-199 and 204-205.

[41] Of course, there is plenty to say about the benefits of collaboration and both one-time and long-term partnerships. (See Singer, "The Power of Convergence" Friend and Singer, 201). But since my thesis is on ethical dilemmas, the real and potential problems of these new forms of collaborations in online news are what will be holding my attention in this section and beyond.

[42] This is my own theory, not Singer's.

[43] Singer, 198.

good definition to use later on to measure WikiLeak's own partnered dealings. According to Singer, by 2006, "news organizations in about seventy-five U.S. markets were engaged in what the American Press Institute describes as some form of 'convergence activity'."[44]

The risks to ethical integrity and disagreements among the participants in such diverse, multifarious, still ill-defined and unlimitedly expandable cooperative enterprises are evident.[45] "The overarching ethical issue related to cross-platform journalism is whether it enhances or detracts from the journalist's commitment to public service," Singer says. Here I suppose that one may safely assume that the new media and technology enthusiasts will say 'yes' to the first suggestion, and the skeptics will support the second statement.
Singer reasons that "If the purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing, then an ethical approach to convergence must consider whether combining resources helps journalists fulfill that responsibility."[46] "Converged or partnered news organizations can provide more comprehensive and multifaceted coverage of important stories," Singer says, "but they can also curtail the number of voices a community hears."[47] While these are certainly both very valid points, it is hard to argue against an ethical approach to all things, news media coverage included. And it is the one I unflinchingly support throughout this thesis and apply to the situation in my case study.

But what is clear is that no matter what form it takes, cross-platform journalism is a challenge, and mostly of an ethical nature.[48] The major roadblock seems to be the lack of consistent consensus on how to address this challenge. "For individual journalists in converged organizations, overcoming ingrained newsroom cultures can be difficult. Though all journalists share broad ethical principles, they can also vary in the way they put those principles into practice," Singer says.[49]
Among her chapter-long treatments of ethical issues that can become apparent in challenged news environments, one will find "the translation of ethical standards across media platforms" - since it is well-known that print journalists cover stories in different ways and use different techniques than say broadcast or strictly electronic news professionals. "What happens when news judgment and professional approaches to a story conflict?" Singer asks.[50]
She also says that convergence can pose issues "related to an organization's ethical obligations to the journalists who work for it." Indeed, it is not just the ethics of journalists' professional responsibilities to the public that can become problematic in merged news environments, but also that of employers towards their employed

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[44] Singer, 198.

[45] For evidence of risks to journalists' integrity and other journalistic values posed by today's hybrid models of Web-based journalism, see Chapter 3 and 4; as well as Robert I. Berkman and Christopher A. Shumway, *Digital Dilemmas - Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals* (Ames IA: Iowa State Press, 2003) Part III, 219-306.

[46] Singer, 198.

[47] Singer, 198.

[48] For more on the new challenges posed by convergence journalism, see the last three sections of Part II of Chapter 4; . Berkman and Shumway, 219-306.

[49] Singer, 199.

[50] Singer, 199.

journalists: What ethical responsibilities do they have? Singer asks.[51] "Journalists in many converged newsrooms are being asked to serve as sources for other media partners," such as when they are interviewed on television about their beat, or take part in online discussions about an evolving story they are covering. "What are the ethical issues when a journalist becomes an 'expert'?" And most importantly for us to ask in this section, "Is this any different in a converged environment than it is in a decade-old cable news environment in which journalists frequently appear as commentators on talk or news shows?"[52]

And "Where are the ethical pressure points when journalists are asked to do multiple tasks," she finally asks, which are even more likely in a multi-platform news environment?[53]

If these cited observations on convergence media remind one of the traditional newswire services, it should be stressed that the stance of my thesis does not in any way equate WikiLeaks with the professional wire services, such as Reuters and Bloomberg News for example, (nor what WikiLeaks does as journalism for that matter[54]). The traditional wires operated - and still do - on a clear, open, and well-established economic and professional model that relies on clients and that has been standardized to meet international business and legal norms. WikiLeaks, with its closed management and staff system and murky origins[55] is a far cry from these news organizations. On the other hand, it is true that the Web site is in a way 'more open' in the sense that it provides both the source *and* the news coverage - which is far more than what the wire agencies do.

Evidently, the ethics of convergence, even at the most basic, non-technological level of operations in news organizations, is a complex and little-debated emerging area of the new news media.

While these ethical questions and challenges are fresh in our mind, I will tentatively venture the assumption that it does not seem, at first sight, that these critical questions have hindered the deals that Wikileaks struck with its media partners or hampered their implementation. At least, in no media reports mentioning the partnerships do I recall reading that these issues have been addressed.

Should WikiLeaks be regarded simply as a source, such introspective scrutiny may not be needed, but if WikiLeaks defines itself as performing journalism (which I think it does - *only not ethically*), then these questions ought to have been asked.

This qualification does not mean that the preceding discussion is not relevant for

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[51] Singer, 199.

[52] Singer, 204-205.

[53] Singer, 204.

[54] Of course this does not absolve WikiLeaks from ethical standards, and critique for failing to meet them - my stance being that the service *should* apply ethical foresight to its activities and potential consequences. There are professional rules regulating the use of sources, privacy and other related issues in journalism and the information industry. This is why I am holding WikiLeaks to professional ethical standards.

[55] Although it is beyond the scope of my argument to delve into the history of WikiLeaks' and Assange's own background, both have been widely reported by the mainstream media to be less than transparent, with conflicting reports and 'gaps in the story,' such as the lack of published articles by Assange, a journalist, on the Internet, or the lack of details on his education and previous work experience.

WikiLeaks. Only, based on what the journalists participating in the publication of the cables have said[56], it does not appear that an appropriate discussion on online media ethics has taken place among the organizations' management and staff prior to joining- and during the project.

What is also clear is that the collaborative production and management of creative news projects are already challenging enough to implement with acquaintances of long-date and people with whom we have a lot in common. Tensions can arise when decisions have to be made fast, especially in the course of unexpected developments in an evolving story.
One can only imagine how even more complex and unpredictable collaborating with strangers must be: the possibilities for exciting but also unchartered cooperative formulas are endless along with the potential for new ethical difficulties.

It is in such times that a set of shared values and agreed-upon behaviors and actions would come in handy to handle situations harmoniously and most of all, ethically. While we can safely assume that traditional newswire companies and other professional news organizations have at present a system of shared standards and values (albeit one which I argue in this thesis to be lacking in meeting the new needs of digital media), since I do not consider WikiLeaks a professional news service, the fears of ethical risks mentioned above still apply to Assange's Web service.

To sum up, one could say that WikiLeaks is the emblematic product of the revolutionized and still evolving new journalistic system of our digital era. The legacy news services clearly do have and still use an established code of ethics. But the digital turn has introduced new factors that sometimes do away with ethics and codes, which is where WikiLeaks' weakness lies.
One only has to add the vagaries of digital media to these already very real concerns to see how the perils of partnering can easily and unforeseeably be multiplied.

Who Is Helping You?

"Who's helping The Times gather the news?" asks *New York Times* Public Editor Arthur S. Brisbane in a piece trying to make sense of *The Times'* recent partnership with WikiLeaks, about which many unanswered questions remain.[57]
In other words, where does its news content come from, how is it being gathered, utilizing what methods, and most importantly of all, from what sources? These questions, important enough in the simple traditional model of the press, become crucial in the context of multi-partner, collaborative journalism.

And if we factor in the "increasingly eclectic set of news providers (who) perform daily in print and online" both in the wide world of news out there, and within *The New York Times* itself, then it becomes even harder to detect the origins and quality of the sources of the information we consume - both in any outlet of our digital media, and inside *The New York Times* - to take this latter case as a subject of study - which

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[56] See, among others, *Page One - Inside the New York Times and the Future of Journalism*, Edited by David Folkenflik (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011).
[57] Arthur S. Brisbane, "The Ringmaster's Guest Performers," "The Public Editor," *The New York Times*, Feb 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/opinion/06pubed.html. Accessed Feb. 5, 2011.

might be collaborating with some or many of them.

As Brisbane notes, we all know what a *New York Times* byline stands for, whether it is that of a staff or freelance writer: quality, integrity, professionalism. Similarly, readers know what it means when they see an Associated Press tag on a news story; they know that it is a professional wire service that has provided the content, as the traditional wires have done reliably for decades.[58]
But what about the content that the paper has obtained by pooling other resources? "There are other content providers whose provenance is more challenging to understand," he writes. "From the cheap seats it is sometimes hard to tell who's who and what's what out there in dusty rings where feats of reporting, analysis and commentary unfold continuously."

Zeroing in on the heart of the matter, the *Times*' partnership with WikiLeaks, Brisbane says that *The New York Times* went to great lengths to make sure the public knew that "WikiLeaks was not a content partner; rather, it was a source of raw information and The Times itself produced the stories." Still, readers realize that these are not AP-produced stories and that *The New York Times* did research its stories and did not simply 'buy' them from news services.

But of course, WikiLeaks is not the only partner of the prestigious paper. *The Times* has at any given time a series of ongoing partnerships to work on stories, with some news companies providing the much-needed but time-consuming investigative part of news-reporting, such as the already well-respected Pro-Publica and the Center for Public Integrity. Despite *The Times*' efforts to identify its participating content providers for its readers, many of them, such as Footnoted.com, The Bay Citizen and The Texas Tribune and the Chicago News Cooperative are little known. "Readers are less familiar with them and question them."

To highlight the ethical implications that poorly considered partnerships can entail, one can add that the pitfalls of such collaborations with little-known or less well-established partners are plenty. The newspaper once received criticism over its coverage produced jointly with Reuters BreakingNews, a program that regularly offers opinionated interpretations of business news because readers were familiar with Reuters only as a newswire service delivering just the raw, objective facts, Bribane wrote. One could, however, argue with Brisbane that in a sense, WikiLeaks does this much better, by simply providing the documents on which the 'facts' are based.
In another instance of news-reporting that attracted negative appraisal, one reader complained about the discrepancy in styles between *The New York Times*-produced content and a column written by ProPublica published in the paper, Brisbane wrote. There seems to be no easy solution to such apparent 'flaws.' Inconsistent writing and presentation styles will erode a publication's image and reputation while surely, just as one does not tamper with a source's quotes, an author's words and writings should

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[58] Of course, inside knowledge on the origins and workings of all media organizations cannot be expected of the general public and readership. But on the whole, the organizations' specific standing on the professional scale is no secret from the average citizen. To take the example of United Press International (UPI), its long decline and questionable current ownership are openly documented and easily accessible on the Net (see for example http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UPI. Accessed April 16, 2012).

not be edited just for the sake of making them fit the style of the rest of the paper or magazine (This of course, applies to both the print and online editions).

These apparently minor errors and misinterpretations may not seem at first to have dramatic implications for media ethics. But if repeated, they do affect readers' perceptions of the facts and of the journalists' capacity for truth and accuracy, and eventually, they do gnaw at the publication's integrity and credibility - key tenets of principled journalism.

It is true that these are only story producers, and *The New York Times* does not claim to be taking stories from WikiLeaks - only the documents on which these stories are based on. But the relevance for our concern with media ethics and news organizations' adherence to high professional standards lies in the fact that by publishing news stories (as opposed to opinion pieces) from other news providers in one's own publication, service or Web site, one gives tacit support to that news provider - and by doing so, shows agreement with- and support for its ethical and professional standards (or lack thereof). In other words, one should heed to whom one gives a voice and space on one's organization's online and offline space, as it reflects on one's own personal ethical compass. And this goes for *The Times* too.

In our digital media world and community-mad era, in which 'sharing' has become the latest mantra, *The New York Times*' adopting the participatory and partnering ways of its competitors in online journalism makes sense at all levels. "The Times' inclusion of the new providers, though, makes sense journalistically and economically," writes Brisbane. "Attracting an audience, in print and in the expanding digital universe, requires ever more content and at a manageable cost."

However, "managing this expansion carries risks," he adds.

"It is a double-edged sword," he cites Alan D. Mutter, a media consultant who writes the blog Reflections of a Newsosaur, as saying. "On the one hand, third-party content can be more diverse than that which is produced inside the institution. Not to take anything away from The Times, but they can't be everywhere all the time. It is reasonable to assume that other people can be looking into matters that would be of great interest to readers of The New York Times. Having said all that, we just don't know who those people are and what their motivations are."

According to Brisbane, *Times* Executive Editor Bill Keller is well aware of the risks and says that "The Times takes pains to manage them."

"The material has to measure up to NYT standards, and we don't want to be outsourcing work that is part of The Times' core mission; it should not be supplanting work that we ought to be doing ourselves. Those thoughts are very much on our minds as we explore new ventures. They influence the choices of viable partners, the way we handle outside material and the way we package and label it," he is reported as saying in an email interview.

Referring to the quite crowded ranks of past, current and potential contributors that *The New York Times* (and I assume, by extension any digital news outlet today) works with, Brisbane concludes that "There's a lot of action in the ring, to be sure." But are readers given sufficient opportunity to know who all these performers really are — who, for example, are their owners and key staff members, and who finances them?" he asks as part of the critical thinking he recommends readers to engage in.

"The Times typically provides an explanatory box in print and a link online, but it could do more," he suggests.

Brisbane concludes his piece with some good recommendations from experts in the field on how precisely *The Times* could do more to secure more professional and reliable collaborations with its partners.

"When you are using third-party journalistic content," he quotes 'Newsonomics' author Ken Doctor as saying, "it is so important to be clear with your readers that this is from a partner. Talk to readers, tell them, 'This is a third-party partner, we think it is a good partner, but it is not Times-produced content.'"

Alan Mutter suggested what Brisbane thinks would be a good step for *The New York Times*: "Create a Times Topics page on NYTimes.com for each content provider, then refer to that page in print and link to it on the Web every time one of its articles runs. The page could include a detailed description of the organization with links to more information, like ownership and donor lists."

Time and patient testing will tell whether this- and other proposed steps will increase the functionality and ethical standards of these new and otherwise very promising collaborative digital partnerships.

For now one thing is sure: it is quite complex to partner, period.

But this brief overview of *The New York Times*' internal management of its collaborations and sources of information gives us an interesting insight into its own perspective on its relationship with WikiLeaks, which we will examine more fully and from various viewpoints in the section that follows.

Peeping into WikiLeaks' Partnerships

Seen from the outside, the collaborative arrangements of WikiLeaks with its selected global media partners - the four major print and electronic newspapers *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *El Pais* and *Le Monde*, and the German magazine *Der Spiegel* (to cite the key partners during the period that interests us, the 'mega-leak' of over 250,000 U.S. diplomatic cables and documents in late November 2010) - may understandably seem tumultuous. And even more so if we look at how they evolved from the initial agreements, much of which actually remains unclear to the public and even the rest of the media world to this day.

Indeed, after working with these partners to publish carefully selected and redacted controversial cables in December 2010, the American and foreign news outlets then criticized WikiLeaks' decision "to publish the full archive of 251,000 un-redacted documents in early September."[59]

In a way, one could say that these representatives of the traditional press have come full circle in their experimentation with collaborative new media: having bypassed established norms for news-gathering and in an unprecedented move allowed the little-known WikiLeaks to be their news provider, they encapsulate the growing pains

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[59] Among many other news reports, The Guardian is the main source for these specific dates and data. See http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/oct/24/wikileaks-suspends-publishing, Oct 24, 2011. Accessed April 17, 2012.
For the exact publication date, see James Ball, "WikiLeaks publishes full cache of unredacted cables," Sept. 2, 2011,
http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/sep/02/wikileaks-publishes-cache-unredacted-cables?INTCMP=SRCH. Accessed April 17, 2012.

of the legacy press online.

Asked to give his thoughts on the matter and on new media partnerships in general for this thesis, *Wall Street Journal* columnist Jamin Brophy-Warren, who is also president and editor-in-chief of Kill Screen Magazine, said: "I think there are some basic standards that should be established. When I was at the Wall Street Journal, the motto was 'no surprises.' That is, nothing should be written about a company or a source, with the exception of established fact (an actor's name for example) without contacting said subject. The speed and immediacy of the web makes this a bit ungainly, but it's just a common courtesy and can eliminate mistakes and misunderstandings. Although this may be up for debate too, right? Julian Assange's complaint is now that the NYT checked with the federal government which, in his mind, allowed them to control what information was ultimately released by the paper." While Assange's service has claimed that the US government had several months' notice regarding the release of the documents and that it was asked to edit any sensitive information it might have found, the United States refused and is reported to have said that the data should be returned to them. Even though it is hard to establish with certainty what each side said to the other and actually did as there have been conflicting reports with Assange eventually refusing to be interviewed by *The Times* in late 2010[60], Times top editor Bill Keller did stress in a speech at Harvard University that "We went to government agencies. Let them raise any objections. Obviously, we did not offer them the right to decide. We heard them out respectfully. I describe it as professional and grown-up. A lot of times, they wanted us to omit things that were just embarrassing. We said, 'Sorry.'"[61]

Scott Shane, a reporter covering national security issues in the Washington bureau of *The New York Times* who helped lead the coverage when *The Times* gained access to the cables, wrote quite candidly about the emotional tensions surrounding the WikiLeaks project. It was on October 1, 2010 that he and his colleagues at The New York Times "had just begun perusing the State Department cables obtained by WikiLeaks," he wrote in an essay for *Page one - Inside The New York Times and The Future of Journalism*[62].

"After WikiLeaks became a household name, and the diplomatic cables it made public reverberated clamorously through world politics and helped fuel the Arab revolutions, it seemed odd to recall how secretive we had been when the project started a few months earlier. But when Dean Baquet, The New York Times Washington bureau chief, gathered a few reporters in his office in September 2010 for a speakerphone chat with Bill Keller, the paper's executive editor in New York, we

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[60] "Attempts by The New York Times to interview Mr. Assange in recent days were unsuccessful," write John F. Burns and Ravi Somaiya in "Under 'High-Tech House Arrest,' WikiLeaks Founder Takes the Offensive," *The New York Times*, Dec 23, 2010, A11.

[61] Chris Daly, "Keller on WikiLeaks," Prof. Chris Daly's Blog, Dec 16, 2010, http://journalismprofessor.com/2010/12/16/keller-on-wikileaks/. Accessed Dec. 16, 2010.

[62] Scott Shane, "The Designated Redactor" in*Page one - Inside The New York Times and The Future of Journalism*, Edited by David Folkenflik, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011) 23-26.

were all a little paranoid."[63]

Among the many conflicts and disagreements, Shane says that Assange "had taken offense at *The New York Times'* coverage of his personal problems, including accusations from two Swedish women of sexual improprieties, and decided to shut *The Times* out of the group's next big scoop, the diplomatic cables. But *The Guardian's* top editors, with whom we had cooperated in publishing Afghan an Iraq war reports, wanted to keep us in the mix. They ignored Mr. Assange and passed the collection to New York anyway, opening for us, too, an unprecedented window on American diplomacy."

The resulting turmoil and conflicting emotions affected virtually all levels of the relations between the collaborating partners, from *The Times*' own staff to that of the other participating news organizations, and in various ways.
"We felt especially protective of The Guardian, our partner in earlier stories based on field reports from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that had been passed to us by WikiLeaks," Shane wrote. But later on, relations within *The Times* itself became sour: "Those of us sifting through the cables were vague when our colleagues asked about what we were up to - a challenge when your colleagues are professional snoops."[64]

These cracks in the trust and transparency that should be reigning over the offices of one of the leading American newspapers are only one symptom in a much larger pool of problems that the paper experienced in its editorial operations.

But for all their troubles even Keller himself recognized that the partners-supported publication of sensitive 'disclosures' did not reveal any world-shaking news, unsuspected doings or deep perfidy in the higher echelons of government. "They provided only 'texture, nuance, and drama'," *The Wilson Quarterly* quoted him as saying.[65]

It is interesting to note here that *The Wilson Quarterly* is one of few media outlets that tend to see WikiLeaks as a victim rather than as the captain of its own ship and circumstances. Its stance is interesting in that it sees Assange's service as being driven by forces seemingly outside of its sphere of influence. It's as if the initial logic on which Assange and his colleagues relied - "WikiLeaks would post leaked information on the Internet and rely on the public to interpret it, become outraged, and demand reform - had caught up with them and turned against them," the author, Alasdair Roberts, wrote.[66] "WikiLeaks was forced to collaborate with traditional news organizations that could make sense of its revelations for the public. The Web, it discovered, is not an information utopia."[67]

Roberts attributes this passive attitude to the fact that the 2010 disclosures, especially the release of the more than 75,000 U.S. military documents related to the Afghan conflict in July of that year, proved too much to handle for the anti-secrecy Web site.

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[63] Shane, 25.
[64] Shane, 26.
[65] Alasdair Roberts, "The WikiLeaks Illusion," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Summer 2011, 21.
[66] Roberts, 18.
[67] Roberts, 19.

It gave WikiLeaks "further evidence of its own limitations," Roberts wrote. Despite the service's own 'workforce' - estimated at "perhaps 800 volunteer technologists, activists and lawyers around the world"[68] - Roberts cite *The Guardian'*s David Leigh and Luke Harding as saying that "The trove of documents was vast, confusing, and impossible to navigate, an impossible forest of military jargon. Furthermore, the logs contained the names of many individuals who had cooperated with the American military and whose lives could be threatened by disclosure."[69] It is these difficulties, according to Roberts that 'drove' WikiLeaks "to seek its partnerships with news media organizations."[70]

Roberts also notes that working with its partners changed WikiLeaks' concept of its own functions: "By the end of 2010, it was clear that WikiLeaks's modus operandi had fundamentally changed. It had begun with an ambiguous conception of its role as a receiver and distributor of leaked information. At year's end, it was performing a different function: It still hoped to serve as a trusted receiver of leaks, but it was now working with mainstream news media to decide how - or if - leaked information ought to be published."
But this did not in any way make WikiLeaks more in control over the processes it had started. "For WikiLeaks this involved difficult concessions. We were no longer in control of the process," Roberts cites former WikiLeaks employee Daniel Domscheit-Berg as saying. "The outflow of leaked information was now constrained by the newspapers' willingness to invest money and time in sifting through more documents."[71]

Regardless of Roberts' 'softer,' less accusatory stance towards WikiLeaks, the journal's writer still decides to question Assange's claims that what his service provides is 'journalism.' He supports his doubts by quoting British journalist John Lancaster, who observed that "WikiLeaks' release of information is unprecedented. But this is not journalism. The data need to be interpreted, studied, made into a story."[72]

The Economist, on the other hand, not only is ready to consider WikiLeaks' activities as journalistic endeavors, it even goes as far as suggesting that in the new digital conditions of our news media, it has *replaced* journalism. Its observations on what has changed recall my own in Chapter 3: "In the past the press was the main channel for leaks and editors judged whether to publish sensitive information. Now those at WikiLeaks also take on that role, but without having to worry about libel and other laws."[73]

Assange Vs. Guardian

To capture the essence of what ails Assange's endeavors - and by extension a significant segment of our news media industry that support them unconditionally - it is worth taking a closer look at one of the deepest controversies within the WikiLeaks

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[68] "Wiki Gaga," The Economist staff , *The Economist*, June 12, 2010, 67.
[69] Roberts, 18.
[70] Roberts, 18.
[71] Roberts, 19.
[72] Roberts, 18.
[73] "Wiki Gaga," 67.

phenomenon.

AlterNet writer Sarah Seltzer captures the dilemma in all its twists and turns: "What happens when WikiLeaks itself is breached, leading to a leak of leaked material?" she asks, perfectly summarizing what happened between the partners:

"A bittorrent user made all 251,000 cables obtained by WikiLeaks available online in unredactive form--a move that was drastic and unapproved by WikiLeaks itself, which has been slowly leaking the cables to news outlets. Since then, there's a war of words heating up between the organization and The Guardian, one of the newspapers which received information from WikiLeaks," she explained.[74]

According to Sarah Ellison of *Vanity Fair*, the partnership between WikiLeaks and *The Guardian* was doomed to fail. The reason: irreconcilable differences. And at the heart of the dispute: journalistic standards:

"The partnership between *The Guardian* and WikiLeaks brought together two desperately ambitious organizations that happen to be diametric opposites in their approach to reporting the news. One of the oldest newspapers in the world, with strict and established journalistic standards, joined up with one of the newest in a breed of online muckrakers, with no standards at all except fealty to an ideal of 'transparency'—that is, dumping raw material into the public square for people to pick over as they will," she writes. "It is very likely that neither Alan Rusbridger (the editor of The Guardian) nor Julian Assange fully understood the nature of the other's organization when they joined forces. *The Guardian,* like other media outlets, would come to see Assange as someone to be handled with kid gloves, or perhaps latex ones—too alluring to ignore, too tainted to unequivocally embrace."[75]

To be fair, Ellison overstates the case a little, since it must be said in favor of WikiLeaks that it chose its publishing venues very carefully and selected only publications with high reputations for quality and credibility. Thus, until the leak of their password, they certainly did not "dump it in the public square for people to pick over."

Ellison ends up calling the unlikely marriage between the 200-year-old British newspaper and Assange's until recently unknown information Web site "a clash of civilizations - and ambitions."

She then goes to the heart of the unprecedented and at best 'twisted' dispute, reporting that Assange threatened to sue *The Guardian* because he was upset that the newspaper secured an unauthorized copy of one leak 'package' from a WikiLeaks volunteer and was breaking the embargo - effectively, making WikiLeaks ready to sue *The Guardian* over a leak, because Assange believed he owned the content which had been leaked to him.[76] "Enraged that he had lost control, Assange unleashed his threat,

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[74] Sarah Seltzer, "It's Assange Vs. Guardian Over Accidental WikiLeak Leak of 251,000 Cables," AlterNet, Sept 1, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/660062/it's_assange_vs._guardian_over _accidental_wikileak_leak_of_251,000_cables/. Accessed Sept. 1, 2011.
[75] Sarah Ellison, "The Man Who Spilled the Secrets," *Vanity Fair*, February 2011, http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2011/02/the-guardian-201102. Accessed April 16, 2012.
[76] Information based on several press reports, such as from this link - http://boingboing.net/2011/01/05/vanity-fair-profiles.html. Accessed April 16, 2012.

arguing that he owned the information and had a financial interest in how and when it was released," Ellison writes.

Judgment Day

Opinions on Assange and his WikiLeaks project range from dedications to Sainthood to irreversible condemnations, and it would be impossible to cite all the key ideas and little thoughts and nuances in-between. Among the most extreme or interesting views[77], those of Andrew Exum, a fellow at the Center for a New American Security writing in *The New York Times*, stand out for their willingness to excuse WikiLeaks' media partners: "The Times, The Guardian and Der Spiegel did nothing wrong in looking over the WikiLeaks documents and excerpting them. Despite the occasional protest from the right wing, most of the press in the United States and in allied nations takes care not to publish information that might result in soldiers' deaths. But WikiLeaks itself is another matter," he writes in an Op-Ed article.[78]

And he does not mince his words when it comes to assessing Assange and WikiLeaks' own performance and guiding values (or lack thereof): "Mr. Assange says he is a journalist, but he is not. He is an activist, and to what end it is not clear. (...) If his desire is to promote peace, Mr. Assange and his brand of activism are not as helpful as he imagines. By muddying the waters between journalism and activism, and by throwing his organization into the debate on Afghanistan with little apparent regard for the hard moral choices and dearth of good policy options facing decision-makers, he is being as reckless and destructive as the contemptible soldier or soldiers who leaked the documents in the first place," he wrote.[79]

Of course, a hint of bias behind this defense of the media partners' position is quite possible, since it was published by one of them - *The New York Times*.
But Exum does seem a little too ready to grant the collaborating publications an exemption from scrutiny, simply on the grounds that 'WikiLeaks is different.' However, it does take two to tango, and surely, the 'difference' or even uniqueness of this case does not give the papers the green light to do away with their codes of ethics and professional values, nor does it absolve them from their responsibility to weigh the nature and ethical consequences of their work with Assange *before* they get into it, as well as to have a good look at the partner in question.

On the other side of the spectrum, among the bluntest negative assessments and verdicts on the print and electronic partners of WikiLeaks is– that of Democracy Now! host Amy Goodman who asks : "If WikiLeaks is a criminal organization, what of its media partners, like The New York Times?"[80]

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[77] For one of the staunchest defences of WikiLeaks, see Glenn Greenwald, "The media's authoritarianism and WikiLeaks," Salon.com, Dec 10, 2010, http://www.salon.com/2010/12/10/wikileaks_media/. Accessed Dec. 10, 2010.

[78] Andrew Exum, "Getting Lost in the Fog of War," *The New York Times*, July 27, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/27/opinion/27exum.html. Accessed July 26, 2010.

[79] Exum.

[80] Amy Goodman, "Pundits Openly Calling for Wikileaks Founder's Death Have Crossed a Very Dangerous Line," AlterNet, Dec 15, 2010,

On this thorny ethical question of whether the global media publications have 'committed a crime' in partnering with Assange, First Amendment attorney Floyd Abrams offers a softer approach than Goodman's:

"The law is too broad a brush to try to draw a distinction between WikiLeaks' indiscriminate posting of the cables (...) and the more careful vetting evidenced by The New York *Times*," Abrams is quoted as telling *Time* magazine. "How do you draft a law that targets WikiLeaks but leaves intact our system of press freedoms? It's very difficult to do. Besides, the courts have never required responsibility as a prerequisite to press freedom. That's never been the legal standard."

Keller on WikiLeaks

Since (in his own words), the issue of *The New York Times*' partnership with WikiLeaks "has produced a higher pitch of 'indignation' than publishing secrets," *Times* Executive Editor Bill Keller has taken great pains to explain to the public the nature of this agreement with Assange's service and the role his newspaper played in the Web site's release of classified government secrets.

Among his most notable efforts at redressing the somewhat tarnished standing of *The Times* in the eyes of many among the public and the media world, I should cite his Introduction in *The Times*' book, *Open Secrets: WikiLeaks, War and American Diplomacy: Complete and Updated Coverage from The New York Times*, which was published in electronic format Jan 31, 2011, and was branded as "A Historic E-Book." In what I assume can be perceived as a marketing tool, Keller's Introduction was adapted into an essay published as a cover story in *The New York Times Magazine* that same week.[81] A teaser for the article claims that *The Times*' dealings with Assange "reveal a different story" than the one that has portrayed him as "the great puppet master of the news media."

In any case, the piece does reveal some interesting insights into unexpected aspects of the collaboration, such as Keller defining his work with the journalists from other organizations as non-competitive.. "Journalists are characteristically competitive, but the group worked well together," Keller says of his team's work with David Leigh, *The Guardian*'s investigations editor; Nick Davies, an investigative reporter for the paper; and Goetz, of *Der Spiegel*, to organize and sort the material. "With help from two of The Times' best computer minds — Andrew Lehren and Aron Pilhofer — they figured out how to assemble the material into a conveniently searchable and secure database. They brainstormed topics to explore and exchanged search results. Der Spiegel offered to check the logs against incident reports submitted by the German Army to its Parliament — partly as story research, partly as an additional check on authenticity."[82]

And on a less technical but even more important level, it is reassuring to see that Keller and his partner-colleagues were acutely aware of their professional responsibilities as journalists: "The law aside, we felt an enormous moral and ethical obligation to use the material responsibly," he wrote, adding that even though they

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http://www.alternet.org/media/149217/pundits_openly_calling_for_wikileaks_founder's_death_have_crossed_a_very_dangerous_line/?page=2. Accessed Dec. 15, 2010.
[81] Bill Keller, "The Boy Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest - Dealing With Assange and the WikiLeaks Secrets," *The New York Times Magazine,* Jan 30, 2011, 33-47.
[82] Keller, 34.

assumed they had little power to influence WikiLeaks' decisions, let alone to limit the dissemination of this material were it to find its way to the wider Internet, "that did not free us from the need to exercise care in our own journalism. From the beginning, we agreed that in our articles and in any documents we published from the secret archive, we would excise material that could put lives at risk."

Despite these laudable actions and intentions, another effort by Keller to set the records straight with regards to *The Times*' involvement with Assange reveals a plethora of ethical problems and difficult decisions.
In an hour-long speech at a conference at the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard last December entitled "From Watergate to WikiLeaks: Secrecy and Journalism in the New Media Age,[83]" Keller noted, in reference to *The Times*' decision to go ahead with publishing the classified information despite government requests to withhold it, that "there is 'real confusion' as to why a newspaper editor should be allowed to disagree with the president in matters of national security."
He also admitted that "by dealing with WikiLeaks, the *Times* had compromised its impartiality." As for the risks of collaboration with WikiLeaks, Keller said, "They are real." Earlier, in the disclosures of the Iraq and Afghan war documents, WikiLeak named many names. With the diplo-cables, he said WikiLeaks did a better job. But he added that it is beyond his power to influence WikiLeaks. "I can only answer for the Times," he said.

Perhaps most interesting of all for the journalistic scrutiny of this case is Keller's declaration that, as journalism professor Chris Daly wrote on his Blog[84], *The Times*' top editor "did not seem ready to grant him[Assange] the status of a full-fledged journalist and partner."

"We regard Julian Assange as a source. I will not say a source pure and simple, because sources are rarely pure or simple. You don't always agree with them. Your obligation is to verify, to supply context, and to make sense of it. That is what we attempted to do, as we would do with any documents that came into our possession," Keller said.
And to drive the point home, he reiterated later on "They were a source, not a partner" – a claim which could understandably throw many media observers and the public off balance, given that we have come to see and even define the agreements WikiLeaks had with these global news players as official partnerships - official, even if unprecedented.

Among the other journalistic dilemmas the newspaper's staff faced, Keller cited the thorny question of how "to reconcile the urge to inform people with the need to protect legitimate secrets. Sometimes it's easy. Our reporters in Iraq and Afghanistan take care not to divulge operational intelligence. In handling the WikiLeaks documents, we excised names," he said. Often, though, he added, it's not easy. "There

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[83] For a report on the conference and Keller's citations, see Chris Daly, "Keller on WikiLeaks," Prof. Chris Daly's Blog, Dec 16, 2010, http://journalismprofessor.com/2010/12/16/keller-on-wikileaks/. Accessed Dec. 16, 2010. All quoted material in this section can be found in this report.
[84] Chris Daly, "Keller on WikiLeaks," Prof. Chris Daly's Blog, Dec 16, 2010, http://journalismprofessor.com/2010/12/16/keller-on-wikileaks/. Accessed Dc. 16, 2010.

is no neat metric. We make our best considered judgment." In future, Keller said, "editors will continue to have to decide on a case-by-case basis."

By the time the worst of the publishing storm was behind them, after the 'Cablegate' revelations, not only had relations between *The New York Times* and its 'partner-on-paper,' WikiLeaks, considerably cooled off, but likewise had Keller's opinion of Assange and his entire project.
"We agreed to continue the redaction process, and we agreed we would all urge WikiLeaks to do the same. But this period of intense collaboration, and of regular contact with our source, was coming to a close," Keller wrote in his Introduction to *Open Secrets*.

Surely, the renowned, vastly experienced newspaper must have at least had an idea of what it was getting into in signing on a collaborative project with Assange and must have considered it to be a journalistic endeavor from their partners' side, at least on some level at the beginning.
Yet later on, after the worst of the releases, when asked at Harvard if he considers WikiLeaks to be a journalistic organization. Keller replied "I am humble about who gets to be called a journalist. There are two things I would say: I don't regard Julian Assange as a kindred spirit. If he's a journalist, he is not the kind of journalist I am." Similarly, in his Introduction to *Open Secrets*, Keller wrote "I would hesitate to describe what WikiLeaks does as journalism."[85]
And even on the larger question of whether the WikiLeaks controversy has indeed had the impact on news and journalism that has been so swiftly recorded, defined as 'revolutionary' and archived for posterity by many media analysts, the post-WikiLeaks Keller is much more muted and modest in his appraisal:

"Whether the arrival of WikiLeaks has fundamentally changed the way journalism is made, I will leave to others and to history. Frankly, I think the impact of WikiLeaks on the culture has probably been overblown. Long before WikiLeaks was born, the Internet transformed the landscape of journalism, creating a wide-open and global market with easier access to audiences and sources, a quicker metabolism, a new infrastructure for sharing and vetting information and a diminished respect for notions of privacy and secrecy," Keller wrote in his Introduction.

"Nor is it clear to me that WikiLeaks represents some kind of cosmic triumph of transparency," he added, noting that "If the official allegations are to be believed, most of WikiLeaks's great revelations came from a single anguished Army private — anguished enough to risk many years in prison. It's possible that the creation of online information brokers like WikiLeaks and OpenLeaks, a breakaway site announced in December by a former Assange colleague named Daniel Domscheit-Berg, will be a lure for whistle-blowers and malcontents who fear being caught consorting directly with a news organization like mine," he added. "But I suspect we have not reached a state of information anarchy. At least not yet."

Whatever hopes and beliefs Keller (and by extension *The New York Times*) initially had about their little-known Australian partner before they entered into a collaboration with him, it seems clear that once working in close partnership with

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[85] Bill Keller, "Introduction," *Open Secrets: WikiLeaks, War and American Diplomacy* (New York, Grove Press, 2011) 47.

him, some serious re-thinking of plans and principles took place, not to speak of a U-turn in previously-held assumptions.

But what is even more striking is that despite being apparently acutely aware of the potential difficulties in working with Assange, there seems to have been scant newsroom-wide discussion of the ethical and professional risks inherent in the partnership. In fact, there doesn't seem to have been debate on the obvious issues of the deal and the possible consequences of the revelations among the journalists at any of the participating publications until well after they were all deep into the project. Keller's remarks at Harvard on these weighty issues and his rather introspective reflections in his Introduction to *Open Secrets* are perfect in their reasoning and conclusions - if only all that personal and collaborative reflection had taken place *before* striking the agreement with Assange and entering the WikiLeaks project. Clearly, *The New York Times* (and I assume most other publications and media outlets) did not have a system in place for such in-house and external collaborative debate on media ethics.

Another burning question remains: did anyone at *The Times* (or the other participating media partners) think of dusting off their Code of Ethics and consulting it with their staff and management, *before* entering the partnership with Assange?

References to a *The New York Times*' Code of Ethics have been most conspicuously absent from Keller's post-event explanations and from the entire WikiLeaks affair and its aftermath.

Perhaps instances of ethical violations on the part of *The New York Times* are not ostensibly evident. But since in this thesis I am looking at the ethics of collaboration in digital news, let this be clear: whom you associate with and their level of adherence to ethical conduct matter and reflect on your ethical standards. If WikiLeaks has committed an ethical and professional lapse by not taking the necessary measures to respect its sources' privacy and safety, this is also *The New York Times*' problem, since by partnering with WikiLeaks *The Times* by definition tacitly approves its partner's ways. In any case, this is how the public will perceive such a partnership. If deep down *The Times*' editors and management *did not* approve of such methods, then the paper is in ethical conflict with itself.

Of course, such complex developments in relatively new cyber collaborations are not yet covered by current codes of ethics - hence my proposal for a revised and enhanced form (see Chapter 7).

The World on WikiLeaks

If the participating journalists in Assange's massive anti-secrecy project were perhaps too close to the action to keep a cool head and think critically about the ethical implications of their decisions and actions, what can we say about the rest of the world - and the news media world in particular - who were watching this unfold? Predictably, Assange "and his conspirators" as some have called his media partners'[86] dealings have unleashed a torrent of criticisms, accusations and soul-searching questions on the present state and future of journalism.

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[86] See Keith Yost, "The Nihilism of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange Compromises U.S. Security," *The Tech*, Dec 3, 2010, 6.

If the three publications[87] that decided to publish the most controversial leaked documents as of July 2010, the Afghan War Diary, were "unanimous in their belief that there is a justified public interest in the material"[88] and that they were ultimately making the right decision, the rest of the world was not so sure.

Jeff Jarvis writing for The Huffington Post beatifies WikiLeaks for having "punctured" the power of those in high places who hold secrets and for having opened the door to transparency.[89]
James Moore, also contributing an Opinion piece to The Huffington Post, judiciously notes the pre-existing environment of "inadequate journalism" that did nothing to encourage a more ethical approach to Assange and his partners' unprecedented publications.[90]
And Larry Womack, a former associate editor at the same online news site, even more vehemently denounces WikiLeaks' "indiscriminate dissemination of state secrets" and "the sea of pro-Assange solidarity" that followed the act, to eventually condemn "the show of support for a man who has consistently shown himself to have no ethical standards as a journalist, blogger, or human being."[91]
Meanwhile, Julianne Escobedo Shepherd and Tana Ganeva of AlterNet proceed to debunk the "smears and misconceptions about WikiLeaks spread by the media," from "denying that WikiLeaks is a journalistic enterprise" to "minimizing the significance of the cables."[92]
 The Economist and the alternative e-newspaper The Exile, among others in the Western press, report on observers of the WikiLeaks affair smelling a Zionist plot, a US-led plan to achieve greater dominance over Internet content, the hand of the CIA and Mossad, and other Western machinations.[93]

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[87] *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *Der Spiegel*. See Guardian footnote on page 19 of this chapter; and http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/oct/24/wikileaks-suspends-publishing, Oct 24, 2011. Accessed April 17, 2012.
[88] Yost, 6.
[89] Jeff Jarvis, "Transparency: The New Source of Power,"The Huffington Post, Dec 12, 2010, http://www.themediabriefing.com/article/2010-12-05/jeff-jarvis-transparency-the-new-source-of-power. Accessed May 12, 2010.
[90] James Moore, "WikiLeaks and the Myth of Journalistic Objectivity," The Huffington Post, Dec 3, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-moore/wikileaks-and-the-myth-of_b_791740.html. Accessed Dec. 3, 2010.
[91] Larry Womack, "WikiLeaks Rips the Blogger-Reporter Ethics Gap Wide Open," The Huffington Post, Dec 12, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mobileweb/2010/12/04/wikileaks-splits-the-blog_n_791963.html. Accessed Dec. 4, 2010.
[92] Julianne Escobedo Shepherd and Tana Ganeva , "8 Smears and Misconceptions About WikiLeaks Spread By the Media," AlterNet, Dec 31, 2010, http://www.alternet.org/story/149369/8_smears_and_misconceptions_about_wikileaks_spread_by_the_media/. Accessed Dec. 31, 2010.
[93] see "What WikiLeaks revealed - From soporic to sizzling," *The Economist*, Dec 4, 2010, 35; Ramon Glazov, "WIKILEAKS FOUNDER JULIAN ASSANGE DROPS WIKI-BOMB ON AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER KEVIN RUDD…OR DOES HE?" *The Exile*, Dec 6, 2010, http://exiledonline.com/wikileaks-founder-julian-assange-drops-wiki-bomb-on-australias-foreign-minister-kevin-rudd-or-did-he/. Accessed Dec. 6, 2010; James Zogby, "Israel: Using WikiLeaks to Build a Straw Man," The Huffington Post,

And David Carr of *The New York Times* inconclusively writes "Has WikiLeaks changed journalism forever? Perhaps. Or maybe it was the other way around."[94]

Evidently, there have been a lot of knee-jerk and varied reactions among bloggers, journalists and commentators on the Net in the wake of the documents dumps. While readers, the public at large, students of journalism and professional journalists themselves may well be confused as to how best assess Assange's deeds and motives, and predict what they will mean for the future of online journalism, each and every one of these opinions counts and adds to the richness of the debate. The cacophony of conflicting ideas may be confusing, but we certainly have to thank the Internet and the new media practices it has spurred for broadcasting numerous alternative voices.
In contrast, the way the mainstream Western (and especially U.S.) media has covered WikiLeaks seems less reliable as a guiding light to understand these events.

Uncovering the News Coverage

Indeed what is perhaps even more intriguing than the chaotic interpretations by media experts, independent journalists and informed audiences is the kind of news coverage that the mass media has devoted to the Wikileaks developments, and in particular the partnerships with the foreign media.
What this means for both industry insiders and the public is that we have to apply careful critical thinking to what we hear about WikiLeaks, including to what we read about it in the established press and on the Net.
The overriding question we should all be asking is: are WikiLeaks and Assange what they say they are?
Of course, such a question could be theoretically asked of any news organization or entity but given the lack of transparency and controversy surrounding WikiLeaks and its founder, perhaps the question is not misplaced.

If we look closely at that coverage, new questions arise about Assange's collaborations because one soon realizes that much of what the world has heard about Assange and WikiLeaks has come precisely from these partnering print and online publications - most of all, *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*.
For a fast and convenient perusal of the most prominent sources of information on the WikiLeaks case in the American mainstream media, it is worth consulting the national media watch group FAIR's list of selected commentaries from what it calls "the U.S. elite media" on the main revelations of the WikiLeaks diplomatic cables.[95] It is not so much FAIR's claim that the "Media paint [a] flattering picture of U.S. diplomacy" that should hold our attention on the list's Web page, but rather the question of how we can assess the independence and objectivity of the sources of the information and commentaries on the released cables, since about a third of them come from *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*.
Similarly, Fred Branfman of AlterNet quotes extensively from press reports on WikiLeaks to make his own points on whether to support the service or not. But again

Dec 4, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-zogby/israel-using-wikileaks-to_b_792009.html. Accessed Dec. 2010.
[94] David Carr, "WikiLeaks Taps Power Of the Press," *The New York Times*, Dec 13, 2010, B1.
[95] "What We Learn From WikiLeaks," Fair [Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting] Dec 16, 2010, http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=4215. Accessed Dec. 16, 2010.

the media outlets he cites the most are *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* (*The Washington Post* is cited once).[96] In many instances, Branfman gives his opinion on that very coverage, citing *The Times*' headlines and stories and analyzing them critically - which is fair enough. But my point is that those headlines from these major media outlets, most of them participating in the relationships under scrutiny, are virtually the only major voices we have heard on this still-developing WikiLeaks story.

All this is not to say that there have not been detailed accounts on the WikiLeaks case by the non-elite, alternative press - there have been a huge number of reports in Web-based publications in particular - but perhaps due to time and resource constraints, such smaller media outlets do not have the means to have their own investigative reporters and conduct their own original reporting, and many of them had only the major media to fall back on and use as original sources of information to report on WikiLeaks. As a result, the level of aggregation and linking to the major sources (such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*) by the smaller online press has been quite significant in the reporting of this particular WikiLeaks story.[97]

In any case, one may surmise that Assange, despite the relative obscurity of his WikiLeaks Web site, must have had quite good relations with these major Western media organizations to succeed in enticing them with such apparent ease to join him in his journalistically questionable endeavors.
To this effect, a commentator on an article on the alternative news Web site *The Exile* noted too that "WikiLeaks has unusual super good access to corporate media, NY Times and UK Guardian."[98] He also observed certain questionable ties with other major U.S. media, such as the fact that "One of Julian Assange's lawyers is also lawyer for the US Associated Press" - which brings the issue of conflict of interest and independence into the equation.

Whether these reports and rumors on WikiLeaks' background and relations are to be trusted or not, the debate and events surrounding the information service and its collaborations with American and international media can certainly be murky at times and hard to decipher for both the public and media watchers, but should not be ignored.

Finally, what appears to be a laudable effort on the mainstream media's part to inform the public, turned out, upon closer scrutiny, to be a rather disappointing repetition of déjà-vu news.
Indeed, readers of CNN.com were treated to more of the same when they logged on to the site on Dec 3, 2010 to read CNN's 'coverage' of the latest developments of the

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[96] Fred Branfman, "WikiLeaks' Most Terrifying Revelation: Just How Much Our Government Lies to Us," AlterNet, Jan 3, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/world/149393/wikileaks'_most_terrifying_revelation%3A_just_how_much_our_government_lies_to_us/. Accessed Jan. 3, 2011.
[97] This conclusion is mostly based on my own observations of the U.S. media coverage of WikiLeaks in the course of over a year of research. But for concrete evidence of this trend, readers will see from the citations and footnotes in this thesis that I too had to rely on major media such as *The New York Times* for 'the facts' on WikiLeaks.
[98] Glazov.

WikiLeaks affair. In a 'story' headlined "Assange responds to readers online" and carrying the byline "By the CNN Wire Staff," CNN wrote at the top of the page:

"The following is taken from the website of The Guardian newspaper in Britain, which solicited reader questions Friday for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and later posted Assange's replies. The Guardian is one of five news organizations which was given advanced access to the diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks. The questions begin with the username of the reader who submitted each question. All questions and answers are as they appeared online."[99]

This introductory note was followed by the apparently non-copy-edited question of a certain 'Fwoggie' on Assange's plans for a possible return to Australia.

The presence of such material on CNN World's main pages leads us to ask: What is the point of this exercise? Why didn't CNN conduct its own interview of Assange, by its own journalists, with its own questions - or even better, now thanks to Web technologies, organize its own Q&A with readers asking Assange questions via the Net or other real-time platform? Why indeed is CNN regurgitating the same old material and stance that we have already read and heard through the mainstream media coverage of WikiLeaks and Assange? Why give even more exposure to the same limited number of voices? Also, if CNN is too pressed for time or resources to arrange its own interviews, and if it cannot resist the temptation to engage in aggregating and re-purposing, why can't the network at least take material and news reports from the alternative press instead of giving even more prominence to one of the major news outlet, whose own coverage of the WikiLeaks case is compromised by its own involvement as a partner in the affair?

These questions, and by extension a larger debate on these issues, have been largely absent from much of the news coverage by the U.S. and Western mass media and the surrounding commentary by non-professionals and the public.
Again, one wonders if this might be partly due to the fact there is no convenient common place to go to online to discuss these questions and consider alternative points of view. And it is tempting to at least advance the proposition that such a digital space for online media ethics discussions would, if not prevent such one-sided coverage by the mainstream media, at least provide an alternative place for the editors and journalists of independent news ventures and their audiences to discuss and hopefully counterbalance it.

Instead of such a wider and critical conversation, we find below *The Guardian*'s Q&A re-published on CNN, the readers dutifully posting comments - as the framework of most news Web sites (CNN's included) now expects them to - with virtually all entries commenting on the WikiLeaks case itself and/or Assange, and not one of them questioning the larger format and context of the re-published piece and the role that these mega media players have in the perception of the case.

What does this all mean for us, media observers, practicing journalists and consuming or participating public? While we have all been busy commenting, writing, blogging,

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[99] CNN Wire Staff, "Assange responds to readers online," CNN World, Deac 3, 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-12-03/world/wikileaks.assange.qanda_1_julian-assange-bradley-manning-wikileaks?_s=PM:WORLD. Accessed Dec. 1, 2010.

professionally or not, on this information mostly issued by the subjects under scrutiny, there has been little debate and questioning of these sources. Instead, these reports have been taken at face value, without questioning the motives of the sources. Questions that need to be posed include: Why leak this particular document and not another? Why a document on this topic, issue or country, and not on another? What has been left out, and why? Who has been behind these decisions?

One may also want to wonder whether an online platform in which people could discuss the news they are consuming, participating in or producing as original reports wouldn't offer some form of monitoring or regulatory standards, so that not only do such questionable media partnerships and sources of information become more transparent to all, but also the news coverage about them - and other news in general. Evidently, the WikiLeaks affair has been quite obscure even to media insiders (right down to the very partners in the deal), and has suffered from a lack of transparency and openness on several fronts.
Being more 'media aware' and asking those hard, critical questions that I raised here should be part of the journalistic enquiry of any professionals covering the WikiLeaks case (and any future similar cases) because they throw the Web site's partnerships into a new light, one that goes beyond the 'Yes, these collaborations are a little unclear and not quite ethical, but still they are so cool because they are brand new, it's the future of journalism!'
The future of journalism will be better served by critical enquiry.

In a piece explaining his reasons for supporting Assange and posting bail to help him out of jail late last year, documentary-journalist Michael Moore writes that "the mainstream media has failed to live up to its responsibility. The corporate owners have decimated newsrooms, making it impossible for good journalists to do their job. There's no time or money anymore for investigative journalism."[100]

Whether this slackening in professional responsibilities is also to blame for the lazy forms of journalism that we find in the mainstream media's coverage of WikiLeaks is an issue that the limits of this case study (and thesis) have not permitted. One must also factor in that reductions in newsrooms' budgets have been pervasive in recent years and emblematic of a trend. But providing evidence of biases and other possible motivations behind CNN's (and other major networks' and media organizations') treatment of WikiLeaks and its partnerships with the press would require much deeper investigation into the workings of American and global media in relation to intelligence and cyber laws regulating classified information - which falls well beyond the confines of this thesis.

But given the ethically questionable editorial decisions on the part of the mass media examined in this section, not to speak of the high recurrence of the terms "reportedly" and "allegedly" in the mainstream news coverage of the various releases of the controversial data[101], one can conclude that both professional journalists (attached to

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[100] Michael Moore, "Michael Moore: Why I Posted Bail for Julian Assange," AlterNet, Dec 14, 2010, http://www.alternet.org/world/149194/michael_moore%3A_why_i_posted_bail_for_j ulian_assange/?page=entire. Accessed Dec. 14, 2010.
[101] To cite just one example of a news report from the mainstream U.S. media making extensive use of allegedly reported information: see Ashley Fantz, "Assange's 'poison

institutions or independent) and their audiences have not been particularly helped by current Web technologies or collective new media practices to make sense of the deluge of conflicting information on Assange and see through the opaque mechanisms and ethical values of WikiLeaks and its media partners.

An online tool that could be used collectively to ferret out such signs of ethical failings would be welcome - if not "to fix" such lapses in ethical judgment, then at least to raise awareness and stimulate debate about the risks they pose to the profession.

How to Fix WikiLeaks [& the Like]

From the above, it is clear that a regulatory system of commonly shared values with Web-based tools to deliberate how best to produce collectively more professional, original news stories would be highly desirable.

And it is not only for professional journalists that I would propose such a system, but also for present and future collaborative journalistic initiatives, such as the still faulty but nonetheless ground-breaking WikiLeaks' partnership with major media organizations.

It is such emerging and future collaborations that I have in mind, when I propose here below a few strategies and solutions for improving online media ethics in journalists' daily news-reporting tasks and our news media in general, before advancing some more conclusive thoughts and proposals in my final chapter.

Fortunately, my research has helped me discover other independent journalists who are echoing my concerns for the health of future collaborative journalism, starting with the type that we witnessed in Assange's endeavors. And according to them, there *will* be more such creative enterprises.

As Sarah Ellison wrote in *Vanity Fair* about *The Guardian* partnership, which was "the first of its kind" between a mainstream media organization and WikiLeaks, "the future of such collaborations remains very much in doubt."[102]

WikiLeaks, she says, is now "torn by staff defections, technical problems, and a crippling shortage of money, and has been both battered and rejuvenated by the events of the past several months." But whatever the fate of WikiLeaks itself, "the nature of the Internet guarantees that others will continue to step into its shoes," she writes. She then cites Kristinn Hrafnsson, a close associate of Assange's and a WikiLeaks spokesman, as saying that "The WikiLeaks concept will bring about other organizations and I wish them well, even as Assange insists that WikiLeaks is 'functioning fully' without him."

It is such predictions, as well as the pains of "*The Guardian* editors and their

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pill' file impossible to stop, expert says," CNN U.S., Dec 9, 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-12-08/us/wikileaks.poison.pill_1_julian-assange-wikileaks-key-encryption?_s=PM:US. Accessed Dec. 8, 2010 - "Often described as suspicious and even paranoid, Assange reportedly refused on Tuesday to be photographed or fingerprinted or have a swab of his DNA taken, all standard procedures for British arrests." (...); "Ben Laurie, a London-based computer security expert who has reportedly advised WikiLeaks in the past, said Assange is nothing if not exacting."

[102] Sarah Ellison, "The Man Who Spilled the Secrets," *Vanity Fair*, February 2011, http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2011/02/the-guardian-201102. Accessed April 16, 2012.

colleagues at *The New York Times* and other media outlets [as they] struggled to corral a whistle-blowing stampede amid growing distrust and anger" - as Ellison wrote - that have inspired me to call for more ethical awareness in our news media and for a user-friendly system to foster it.

Hopefully, such a system of standardized recommendations for collaborative news production would bring much needed clarity and transparency to a field in which even the professional practitioners are increasingly confused by the changes that are constantly re-shaping their craft. And if journalists need guidance, what can we say about their audiences? As security expert Andrew Exum's Opinion piece in *The New York Times* suggests[103], we need to educate the public too about these digital changes and the new kind of ties they create among the varied participants in our media landscape. The WikiLeaks case offers a perfect starting point. "Many experts on the war, both in the military and the press, have long been struggling to come to grips with the conflict's complexity and nuances. What is the public going to make of this haphazard cache of documents, many written during combat by officers with little sense of how their observations fit into the fuller scope of the war?" he asks. Hopefully, my own suggestions here below can be a first step towards fostering more clarity and accountability at all levels of the production and consumption chain in our digital information landscape.

Tips for Ethical Partnerships

Here it is worth reiterating the distinction between the two periods and different issues pertaining to WikiLeaks - those of the service's collaboration with the established press, and those of the unfiltered release of the classified material to the public. Although the 'tips for ethical partnerships' and recommendations I make in this section relate essentially to WikiLeaks' partnerships with its selected news organizations, the basic principles of ethical journalism such as integrity and responsibility in handling classified information apply to both cases.

One way of achieving more transparency in news-reporting is to be extra vigilant when it comes to evaluating sources and treating sources. This is at the heart of applied ethics in journalism.
The WikiLeaks controversy has shown us how knowing and protecting the rights of our sources, especially their rights to privacy, can be vitally important,which explains the government and public outrage at WikiLeaks' releasing the names of confidential sources, since it could potentially endanger their lives. Knowing how to use anonymity in one's news stories, when, to whom and how to grant it, and what the implications are for all three parties: the sources, the reporters-journalists, and their news organizations, is a skill that is more important than ever in news-reporting performed on the Internet.
Thus, as the case study on WikiLeaks demonstrates, respecting privacy rights by granting anonymity can be essential and should be preserved as a key principle in the ethically conscious journalist's code of conduct.[104]

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[103] Andrew Exum, "Getting Lost in the Fog of War," *The New York Times*, July 27, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/27/opinion/27exum.html. Accessed July 26, 2010.
[104] I am not referring here to any particular code of ethics but am writing in the abstract sense.

Of course, this does not absolve the press from its obligations to freely and as fully as possible inform the public, especially about material that the government and other entities in positions of power would rather keep secret. At a time when there is increased secrecy in high places, this obligation is greater than ever.

How to balance protecting privacy with the need for open, transparent expression and for fully informing the public is the dilemma at the core of media ethics. Even media experts commenting on WikiLeaks often cannot decide which principle should prevail in case of conflict.

One should not forget that not only is anonymity a right, it is also an instrument of free speech. As cyber law expert Mike Godwin wrote in *Cyber Rights*, "It's less commonly recognized that freedom of speech also means freedom to choose *how* you communicate what you want to say. The U.S. Supreme Court has held on more than one occasion, for example, that your right to speak anonymously - that is, without any requirement to identify yourself - is an important component of American's speech rights under the First Amendment."[105]

Developing Trust through Appropriate Sourcing

Judging by the woes and labors of one of the top newspapers in the nation in relation to sourcing, it would appear that readers of print and online news have an eye for the quality of the information they consume.

Indeed, *The Washington Post s*eems to have had protracted problems with naming its sources, and - as a corollary - with the trust of its readership. The latter has been slipping away ever since readers stared noticing what they described as "the excessive use of anonymous sources" in the paper's news coverage.[106]

The story that appears to have triggered the readership's criticism is a front-page article related to the 2009 Virginia Gubernatorial election, in which *The Pos*t quoted unnamed White House officials criticizing Democratic candidate R. Creigh Deeds:

"'Senior administration officials' said they were frustrated with how Deeds was handling his campaign. A 'senior administration official' said Deeds had 'badly erred on several fronts.' And 'administration officials' predicted he would lose on Tuesday," the report said.

"It seems that nearly every article in The Post these days attributes information to 'unnamed sources' or 'senior officials' or whoever 'spoke on condition of anonymity. While it is sometimes needed, I believe it is not appropriate to hide the names of sources to the extent that The Post does," an angered reader wrote.

Washington Post Ombudsman Andrew Alexander himself concurs that too many anonymous sources appear in *The Post*'s news stories, admitting that "Readers write

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[105] Mike Godwin, *Cyber Rights - Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 143.

[106] For all quotes cited in this section, see Andrew Alexander, Ombudsman, "Still falling short on anonymous sources," *The Washington Post*, Nov 8, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/06/AR2009110603076.html. Accessed Nov. 8, 2009; Andrew Alexander, Ombudsman, "Post's problems with anonymous source rules get worse online," *The Washington Post,* Dec 17, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/17/AR2010121707344.html. Accessed Dec. 9, 2010..

me constantly to complain about the overuse of anonymous sources. Some are troubled that they appear at all." But, he adds, "They're often essential. Without them, readers would be deprived of important disclosures about official corruption, misconduct, high-level policy debates or diplomatic disputes."

But Alexander says there is another problem: When anonymous sources must be used, *The Washington Post* does a poor job of explaining to readers why that is the case. According to the paper's internal policies: "We must strive to tell our readers as much as we can about why our unnamed sources deserve our confidence." That means offering enough description so readers can evaluate the quality of the source. Did they actually see or hear what took place? Do they have first-hand knowledge?"
But according to a review of anonymous-source usage over the past month, readers often got only bare-bones attribution, Alexander writes. "Of roughly 100 Post news stories using unnamed sources, fully a third provided no meaningful description. Typically, they referred vaguely to 'sources,' 'officials,' a 'State Department official' or a 'Democratic official.' But who qualifies as a 'senior' official?" he asks. "The Post has no internal definitions to guide its reporters."
Sometimes, he adds, the status is obvious from an official's title or whether they sit in on senior-staff meetings. But for readers who don't know that, confidence could be enhanced if stories briefly explained why an unnamed senior official is being quoted," he recommended.

This sorry state of affairs regarding precise attribution and decision-making on sourcing at *The Washington Post* does not stop here. According to its Ombudsman, *The Post* is struggling to enforce its own rules on the use of sources and anonymity:
"A few months ago in this space, I criticized The Post for routinely ignoring its strict rules on anonymous sources. Many staffers confessed they hadn't read them in years. And about two-thirds of the nearly 30 reporters I questioned said editors never or rarely demanded to know the identity of an anonymous source, which is required under Post policies," Alexander writes.
Despite a memo from *Post* editor Peter Perl urging his staff to adhere more strictly to the rules, it would appear that the newspaper's very tools for defining and applying its agreed-upon guidelines are somewhat defective - if only at the enforcement level. Perhaps some serious introspection is in order so that the management can find out how to encourage its staff to embrace these rules - ideally, without prompting. Alexander argues that at least explaining to readers why certain sources have been granted anonymity and what still makes them credible sources of information would "help strengthen the bond of trust with readers." Again, it would be well worth investigating whether a new system of guidelines that would encourage ongoing use and discussion among both the publication and its readers wouldn't facilitate a more careful approach to sourcing, as well as a form of self-regulation that doesn't depend so much on a finger-shaking management.

As I noted in Chapter 3, the Internet has had a tendency to exacerbate existing problems. And this particular ethical difficulty that *The Washington Post* (along with many other news outlets) has been experiencing at the editorial level has not too unexpectedly presented itself with full force in the electronic news-coverage by the paper's staff bloggers.

In a follow-up article[107], Alexander wrote that "Post readers constantly complain about the excessive use of anonymous sources in the newspaper. But the problem is even worse online. Staff-written news blogs are replete with violations of The Post's long-established and laudable standards governing confidential sources. These unnamed sources often are cited without providing readers with even a hint of their reliability or why they were granted anonymity."

In the first two weeks of December of 2010, Alexander noted that *Post* news blogs included "more than 20 unnamed sources without any explanation of their quality or why they warranted confidentiality. Many blogs referred only to 'sources' or 'those close to' a subject or situation."
This is "at odds with *The Post*'s 'Standards and Ethics' policies," Alexander points out, which instruct reporters "to tell readers 'as much as we can about why our unnamed sources deserve our confidence.' They forbid attribution solely to 'sources.' And they note that it 'is nearly always possible to provide some useful information about a confidential source,' such as whether the source has firsthand knowledge of the topic being written about."

Given that news blogs often differ quite significantly from news articles in print editions, as they tend to be more personal, more controversial and attract more specific audiences, the tricky ethical question that arises, Alexander says, is "Should sourcing policies be the same for print and online?"
Since most of the complaints he receives about anonymous sources tend to relate to articles in the print edition of the newspaper, Alexander speculates that the audience for blogs might be more tolerant of the use of unnamed sources. Perhaps this is due to the fact that bloggers often have their own 'followers' who tend to be more trusting than the general readership of print publications, and thus more prone to believe the authors' posts without further evidence, Alexander surmises. But surely, this does not absolve *The Post*'s slice of the blogosphere from ethical monitoring, on a par with editorial rules for the print edition.

On this issue of equal regulation (on sources and other issues) for online news, there tend to be two schools of thought. One that acknowledges the inherently more trusting nature of the blogosphere and thinks that it should be encouraged without relying on further regulation; and there are those media experts who, like Stephen J. A. Ward of the Center for Journalism Ethics at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, think that "Good journalism outlets should apply the same [sourcing] standards . . . regardless of media platform. To do otherwise is to not only violate central principles of responsible journalism but to further blur the already blurry distinction, in the public's mind, between rumor-mongering Web sites and credible journalism."[108]

Apparently, the question of whether a double standard is being applied at *The*

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[107] Andrew Alexander, Ombudsman, "Post's problems with anonymous source rules get worse online," *The Washington Post*, Dec 17, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/17/AR2010121707344.html. Accessed 4/15/2012.
[108] Stephen J.A. Ward quoted in Andrew Alexander, Ombudsman, "Post's problems with anonymous source rules get worse online," *The Washington Post*, Dec 17, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/17/AR2010121707344.html. Accessed 4/15/2012.

Washington Post (and I reckon other news publications) when it comes to online vs. print content goes beyond the issue of sourcing, according to Alexander. He quotes Kelly McBride, an ethics expert at the Poynter Institute, as saying that "among professional newsrooms, the general standards for editing, verification and other quality control measurers are looser online than in the legacy platform, such as the newspaper."

McBride's point seems to corroborate the argument that I initiated in Chapter 4, on how Internet technologies and practices have been challenging professional journalists from traditional media in new and sometimes quite detrimental ways. It also echoes Berkman and Shumway's warning about the Internet representing a temptation for journalists to engage in 'lazy' news-gathering practices online, fishing information right and left and skipping the multiple verification steps that should be part of a professional's job.[109]

Among possible ways of improving the chances of journalists' (and their organizations') making better decisions regarding attribution and anonymity in their online reporting, Alexander cited *Washington Post* director of polling Jon Cohen as urging "a broader newsroom discussion about 'what Washington Post journalism means' online and whether time-honored print standards should be altered for some news delivered digitally." Alexander added that he would support such a plan, "but not for anonymous sources, which already are out of control. One standard should apply. Enforcement, sorely lacking, should be strict," he concluded. [110]

Those recommendations are not only useful but timely as we approach the final, defining parts of this case study and my own conclusions and propositions for improvement of online collaborative reporting.
Cohen's call for a newsroom-wide discussion on these issues certainly falls in line with my own thoughts for increased online media ethics awareness. If we think in the context of collaborative journalism and multiple-partner projects such as the one WikiLeaks launched with its global media outlets, then a cross-newsroom or -organizations discussion is in order – rather than one confined in-house.
And as my proposed reform suggests, I also support Cohen's idea of altering present traditional standards to meet the demands of the new ethical dilemmas and do not agree with Alexander about making the traditional standards for the use of anonymous sources (and other decisions on attribution) untouchable, unique and uniform. Alexander's concern about tampering with long-established core values of the institution of the American press or discarding them altogether is absolutely understandable. But as I show through my Open Park Code of Ethics adapted for digital journalism in the final chapter and Appendix A, I argue for a more flexible, 'living' approach to ethics for media professionals working in the Internet age.

My formula for avoiding ethical pitfalls in online news-reporting would be: Keep the

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[109] See especially Chapter 8 – "Sources and Searches: Does the Internet Make Journalists Lazy?," Berkman and Shumway, 245-268.
[110] Andrew Alexander, Ombudsman, "Post's problems with anonymous source rules get worse online," *The Washington Post*, Dec 17, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/17/AR2010121707344.html. Accessed 4/15/2012.

'old' standards and double the efforts - that is, be extra vigilant about where and how you find your information on the Net and proceed with news-gathering, fact-check and double-check your sources (the informational ones), talk in person to your sources (the human ones), find out their reasons and motivations for speaking to the press, their reasons for requesting anonymity, investigate the consequences of granting - or not granting it. In a nutshell, the digital spells more work.

The possible motivations and special interests behind an anonymity request should be subject to special scrutiny because decisions on anonymity will eventually reveal the veracity and moral value of the article and, in the long term, the credibility of the publication.[111] As the excellent comment from a reader of *The Washington Post*'s report on R. Creigh Deeds noted:[112]

"It's one thing to use anonymous sources to reveal 'important disclosures about official corruption, misconduct, high-level policy debates or diplomatic disputes.' However, those reasons seem to be rare. This story allowed senior officials to badmouth Mr. Deeds without any accountability. Was it worth giving anonymity for this information? I don't see why.
The majority of anonymous sources seem to have their own agenda, whether it be to advance their own interest, or to damage a political opponent. Reporters, for the sake of a story, grant them anonymity. While anonymity is worthwhile to protect those without power, routinely letting 'senior administration officials' settle grudges without revealing who they are is cowardly, both of the officials and the reporters and newspapers who enable them." One must not lose sight of the key conceptual difference between WikiLeaks and the issue of anonymous sources. In the case of WikiLeaks the source clearly provided the documents, and *The New York Times*' and other participating media's stories were based on the documents. In the case of the use of anonymous sources, there is no further corroborating evidence, only the words of the source. This makes the source's position, status and motives very important, and we might want to explore the motives of the WikiLeaks organization and its media partners.

In any case, it is clear from the *Washington Post*'s case that the newspaper's problems with accurate and respectful[113] sourcing originated at the level of in-house editorial regulation and lack of application and enforcement of its code of ethics for its staff.

And just as the media partners of WikiLeaks and Assange's own staff launched themselves into the collaborative release of the classified cables without a prior internal and cross-organization debate on the potential consequences for the safety of the sources involved and the larger implications for the credibility and reputation of the participating publications, it appears that *The Washington Post* did not discuss with its staff reporters and editors the paper's rules on using anonymous sources. Based on *The Post*'s editors' reactions to readers' comments and the remarks by Jon

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[111] See also Jim Naureckas, "Newsweek and the Real Rules of Journalism," Fairness in Accuracy & Reporting, July/August 2005, http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2626. Accessed April 16, 2012.
[112] The comment was posted by a reader using the nickname 'hgillette' on Nov 7, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/06/AR2009110603076.html. Accessed April 16, 2012.
[113] 'Respectful' here means conscious of privacy rights.

Cohen cited above, I would even venture to guess that save for presenting its staff with *The Post*'s Code of Ethics upon their joining the paper, the management does not hold regular open discussions about such ethical and other sensitive editorial issues with its news and production staff. This paucity of media ethics awareness and application in daily news-reporting online could at least be partly remedied if journalists, editors and their management had at their disposal a convenient online tool to help them discuss these decisions on sourcing, anonymity and other key aspects of collaborative news-gathering.

As a final note in this section, I should point out that *The Washington Post* is not the only news organization struggling with in-house regulation on these issues. To cite just one of the most prominent and puzzling examples of questionable sourcing in recent American news coverage , *The Boston Sunday Globe* published a *New York Times* report on what unnamed sources said were joint American and Israeli efforts to disrupt Iran's nuclear plans, using the Stuxnet computer worm as part of cyber war activities being tested in Israel's Dimona Complex.[114]

Despite the obviously secret nature of the operations in "Israel's never-acknowledged nuclear arms program" (to cite the terms used by *The Times'* reporters), the entire article written by William J. Broad, John Markoff and David E. Sanger is based on information and citations from "specialists" and "officials" whom we are told to believe are "familiar with (the) operations" of the Complex:

"Over the past two years, *according to intelligence and military specialists familiar with its operations*, Dimona has taken on a new, equally secret role — as a critical testing ground in a joint American and Israeli effort to undermine Iran's efforts to make a bomb of its own," The Times reporters wrote.

"*By the accounts of a number of computer scientists, nuclear enrichment specialists, and former officials*, the covert race to create Stuxnet was a joint project between the Americans and the Israelis, with some help, knowing or unknowing, from the Germans and the British," they continued.

"President Obama, first briefed on the program even before taking office, sped it up, *according to officials familiar with the administration's Iran strategy*. So did the Israelis, other officials said."

The destructive Stuxnet program "now *appears* to have wiped out roughly a fifth of Iran's nuclear centrifuges and helped delay, though not destroy, Tehran's ability to make its first nuclear arms," according to "*an American specialist on nuclear intelligence*."

(emphasis added)

In an interview with *Times* writer John Markoff for his "On Point" program on NPR, Tom Ashbrook himself observed[115]: "There is at the end of the day still the issue here that... there is a lot of faith from us taking this from you, there's a lot of unnamed

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[114] William J. Broad, John Markoff and David E. Sanger, "In Israeli desert, computer virus targeting Iran was born," *The New York Times* - republished in *The Boston Globe*, p. A7, and Boston.com, Jan 16, 2011, http://articles.boston.com/2011-01-16/news/29335958_1_computer-worm-stuxnet-iranian-scientists. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[115] "New Dirt on the Stuxnet Worm & Cyber War," "On Point with Tom Ashbrook," NPR, Jan 19, 2011, http://onpoint.wbur.org/2011/01/19/stuxnet-worm-cyber. Accessed Jan. 19, 2011.

sources, it's not a super high level of evidence that you are offering, but you put your whole faith and credibility on the line here. Tell us the story as The New York Times understands it of what happened here."

Markoff replied that he agreed with Ashbrook, and then proceeded to tell about the various "versions of the program." But he admitted, "There are many, many unanswered questions yet. This is a puzzle within a puzzle, and many puzzles within a puzzle."

Puzzling indeed. Increasingly, it would appear that online audiences of even the best of our professional journalism are expected to 'just believe' what they read.
In view of this, one can see the benefits of engaging the readership in active scrutiny of online news and in a participatory debate *with* journalists in a Web-based forum.

Perfect Partnerships: Proposals

These early conclusions on WikiLeaks' media collaborations and the multimedia, multi-partnered news content on the Internet indicate that accurate research and sourcing during news-gathering and -writing are crucial elements for increasing the transparency and credibility of the news that is being produced and consumed, as well as, in the process, the level of trust among the collaborating parties. Thus, both the producers and the participatory or passive public benefit from increased transparency and what Bruns calls an "open news" system.[116] But what else could be done to help improve the quality of the digital news content produced collaboratively?

For *Time*'s media critic James Poniewozik, the formula of future partnerships will require that we put aside the strictly traditional models and give free rein to our creative brain cells, even if that means ending up with what might at first appear as ethically bizarre concoctions. I cited earlier the new kinds of editorial-business partnerships involving Starbucks and McDonald's that Poniewozik analyzed. He concluded:

"The media of the future may be a combination of all this, plus old-school outlets that survive. They could produce good journalism. (After all, traditional news outlets aren't without potential conflict either; I review HBO series even though HBO's owner owns TIME.) But they may include funding models far different from the old church-and-state separation of content-making and money-raising."[117]

Should we indeed accept such bold, hybrid and field-defining forms of journalistic production, we may well want to raise our media ethics awareness and scrutiny of digital news even further than what I have so far argued for. Indeed, while my support for a voluntary form of enforcement still applies, the rules and standards for such unchartered territory of news production published on the Internet should be thought out and designed with even greater care than if they were meant simply for the

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[116] See Axel Bruns, *Gatewatching - Collaborative Online News Production* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005) for more on open news, which is also described in earlier chapters.
[117] James Poniewozik, "What Price Journalism? What Would *You* Pay?" *Time*, July 27, 2009, 21, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1910972,00.html. Accessed July 27, 2009.

electronic editions of individual newspapers, Web-zines and news networks.
Such critical thinking and rules-drafting cannot take place in a vacuum. It is also unlikely to 'just happen by itself,' even if a few concerned souls launch a debate or concerted action around one particular issue or project. Rather, this effort should be prompted or pre-planned, first by initiating a structured framework for debate within- and across newsrooms. Then, by designing applications around case studies, which can be used as precedents for future difficult ethical decisions as the need arises during collaborative reporting.

While a large-scale and complex endeavor falls beyond the scope of this thesis,, perhaps the case of the WikiLeaks media partnerships could be used as a starting point of discussion by news companies seeking to initiate similar collective publishing projects. It could serve to help them avoid the ethical failures of Assange's project, while the best of what did function well in the WikiLeaks collaborations could be retained.
More on such a proposal in the chapter that follows.

Shared Rules and Individual Scrutiny

As I argued earlier in this case study, the benefits of open and transparent news-reporting practices are many and instrumental to productive, ethical collaborations. There seems to be few counter-arguments against such a philosophy for journalism in the digital age (especially since the success of the open-source movement).

However, it should be clear by now that the WikiLeaks model of full disclosure, and generally, Assange's concept of journalism as serving exclusively and, I will add, blindly free speech to the detriment of everything else, including sources' privacy rights, are faulty and naive at best, and– dangerous, at worst.
Indeed, the ethical dilemma at the heart of the WikiLeaks controversy is that just as the service devotes itself body and soul to the defense of absolute transparency in government and the public's right to know, it simultaneously tramples on other, equally important human rights and values, such as privacy, individual safety and national security, not to speak of foreign policy and intelligence issues. And just as Assange's service fights against unaccountable and abusive power in high places, it shows irresponsibility towards other core moral values and principles of professional journalism. However, we must not ignore the other key ethical struggle of this case: that between the public's universal right to know and a state's more narrow, pragmatic (and often strategic) right to suppress information.

By adopting a black-and-white, all-or-nothing attitude towards what it insists is 'journalism,' WikiLeaks leaves no room for nuances and does not take into account other critical ethical factors. Yet, a nuanced, multi-sided approach is key for fair, balanced news-reporting, as well as for solving ethical dilemmas. And by turning its back on the necessity to recognize the importance of the conflicting values from another side or perspective - in this case, the need to honor privacy rights - Assange is denying that there is an ethical dilemma in the first place.
We need to distinguish the service's status as a source that provides documents, which in itself is *not* a journalistic act, from its interpretation of them, which *is* an act of journalism.
It is worthwhile, however, to keep in mind that being a source does not absolve one from adopting correct ethical conduct and certain standards, and that sources as well

as journalists have rights and duties in the media equation.[118]

An open debate with all participating news producers in advance of any collaborative project should also be the first step towards elaborating guidelines for that particular project, or for a broader, more long-term application within a company or collective.

One of the best ways to jumpstart such a pre- collaborative news-reporting discussion is for journalists to ask themselves 'research questions' based on earlier cases of collaboratively produced and/or published information. The WikiLeaks case could be used, for example, by asking: How should the participating news publications such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* have responded to Assange's offer? Should they have accepted it? How could individual journalists have prepared for the work ahead? How could they have anticipated the ethical questions that arose with regards to preserving the anonymity of their sources, as well as the government and public backlash that followed the release of the cables? How does dealing with WikiLeaks affect the partnering publications' impartiality? How could they have better evaluated the documents released - since one of the main criticisms has been that these were of dubious value? How could they evaluate the chances for the disclosures to put lives at risk? How much and what kind of communication should have taken place among the journalists from all five publications before and during the period of their collaboration?
And most pertinently of all, in the context of this thesis, would new rules or commonly shared guidelines have facilitated the collaboration, or helped avoid the ethical questions that arose after the controversial release of classified data? Do we need new ethical procedures to regulate the treatment of sources?

Taken out of context, these questions may sound simplistic, naive even. Yet, if we are to believe the key players among WikiLeaks' media partners, it appears that even the basics had not been fully worked out.
When speaking in a Q&A on the Harvard campus about the role of his newspaper in the WikiLeaks release of classified government secrets, *New York Times* Editor Bill Keller responded to the question "What is the schedule for publishing the other 99 percent?" with: "There's no schedule. The first two dumps (Iraq and afg war logs), WikiLeaks posted, after we had time. Essentially, it was an embargo. (a familiar if loathed practice)
The embassy cables were more complicated. The range was so broad, the volume so enormous. The different interests of different news organizations were large."[119]

These questions represent only a small sample of all the themes and issues that ought to be given consideration prior to working collaboratively with colleagues or professionals from outside one's company, but they are certain to be good starting points for such a debate, and a good shield against ethically risky situations.
Perhaps the most important question of all for our purpose in this thesis is whether a new (i.e. adapted) form of regulation and standards would be helpful in facilitating

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[118] For more on the relationship between reporters and their sources, see Chapter 13 of Melvin Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1997) 326-322.

[119] For a report on the conference and Keller's citations, see Chris Daly, "Keller on WikiLeaks," Prof Chris Daly's Blog, Dec 16, 2010, http://journalismprofessor.com/2010/12/16/keller-on-wikileaks/. Accessed 4/15/2012.

ethical online collaboration in journalism. Do we need new rules? Some of the experts I interviewed give their views on this in the next Chapter.

No Alternative to Original Reporting

The need for more original reporting by journalists and less re-publication of others' work directly relates to the critical open debate that I have introduced and started to describe above.

It is not enough to contact one's sources directly, in person. Thinking critically and asking the hard questions about the information that one finds on the Internet, or hears from certain, unverified sources is crucial for the accuracy and credibility of the finished piece.

Such healthy skepticism and meticulous scrutiny should be switched on at the outset, when encountering the information for the first time, and the posing the questions cited above should be part of the professional journalist's initial tasks.

With this in mind, and taking the example of the WikiLeaks case, *The Times*' top editor, Bill Keller, observed: "No one has yet come forward (to dispute authenticity of these cables)."[120]

This remark hits the core of my argument for original reporting - namely, checking and double-checking individually and directly the source behind the information one gathers in the course of reporting. Of course, this process is often not fully possible when it comes to secret data, as in the case of the U.S. cables and other documents released by WikiLeaks. But the fact still remains that the journalists from the participating media organizations do not seem to have double-checked the leaked information.

Understandably, one may wonder, 'how could they?' when we are dealing with classified information, and the fact that United States demanded to have the documents back may be a good indicator of its veracity.

However, there is *always* something a reporter can do to double-check or at least give the public more information on information from anonymous or controversial sources. There are indeed news-reporting techniques that a journalist can use to verify such data of unclear nature.[121] When, for any reason, it is not possible to contact a source or receive from him/her the information that one seeks: first, explain this to the readers in your article (what you did and what happened - the source did not return calls and requests for an interview, etc); then, seek out sources that are close to the issue(s) and its players and try to talk to them directly; finally, if these too are hard to reach or will not talk, then contact independent experts on the topic or issue you are writing about, and ask their opinions of it - as many as possible - as well as their possible explanations for the key sources to refrain from commenting to the press (in some cases, of course, this is obvious). In this manner, you at least give the public as much information as possible surrounding the key sources and the issue(s) in question, and with an array of independent, specialized views at its disposal, the public is better able to judge the situation and make decisions on it.

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[120] Daly, "Keller on WikiLeaks."

[121] This is what Journalism schools and programs are for - and what many of the 'new journalists,' bloggers, citizen reporters and other self-appointed news writers on the Net are missing (although these reporting strategies can also be learned through contact and practice with professionals, as in the traditional news model).

As far as I have been able to determine, the participating media in the WikiLeaks partnership have not documented taking any of the above steps. And the German publication saying that it had "checked what it could find" leaves us a little short-changed, compared to the level of news-reporting I just described.

In fact, to my knowledge and as Keller said, no one in the American (and it seems international) mainstream media seems to have questioned and/or attempted to fact-check the veracity of the released statements and data. Save for a few alternative voices, nearly all mass media (U.S. and Western) took the data at face value, without questioning the possible motivations behind the public release of this information. As a result, most media observers and the pubic did so too, without questioning   the original motivations behind the publication. And even before this question, one may want to question the truth and accuracy of the reports-- not just in the WikiLeaks case and other collaborative news projects, but with any news or information found online and used as part of one's news-gathering (for journalists), or information gathering (for the public and media critics).

Such strict scrutiny of the reported facts might have thrown some light on some of the most controversial aspects of the diplomatic cables' release.
Among the lone voices in the alternative (and sometimes mainstream) media that I mentioned one will find a few who question some apparent coincidences or inconsistencies in the released foreign policy and military data.
Alexander Cockburn of *The Nation*, for example, wonders why "The New York Times cherry-picks Wiki-originating cables to exaggerate the supposed Arab eagerness for Israel to bomb Iran." He also notices how "CNN's Wolf Blitzer implores the government to bury its secrets even deeper."[122]
Meanwhile, *The Wall Street Journal* too, noticed that "Among activities detailed in the documents was the extensive, and increasingly successful, push by the U.S. for an international consensus to confront Iran's nuclear program. Five newspapers obtained early access to the documents, which had been gathered by the website WikiLeaks. The cables showed how some Arab leaders were largely in sync with Israel to support greater financial penalties, if not military operations, against Iran unless it abandons its nuclear ambitions," the *WSJ* writers said.[123]

Accuracy, objectivity and fair play are key components of The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics.[124]
And according to Journalism 101 course book *News Reporting and Writing* author Melvin Mencher: "Reporters rely on hunches, and feelings as well as rational, disciplined thinking. (...) Hunches lead reporters to seek relationships among apparently unrelated facts, events and ideas. The patterns the reporter discovers help readers move closer to the truth of events. (...) But hunches and feelings can distort

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[122] Alexander Cockburn, "Lessons From WikiLeaks," *The Nation*, Dec 27, 2010, 9, http://www.thenation.com/article/156992/lessons-wikileaks. Accessed Dec. 9, 2010..
[123] Jay Solomon, Adam Entous and Julian E. Barnes, "Vast Leak Discloses Diplomatic Secrets," *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov 29, 2010, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704700204575642812775841790.html. Accessed Nov. 29, 2010
[124] *The Journalist's Moral Compass - Basic Principles*, Edited by Steven R. Knowlton and Patrick R. Parsons (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1994) 6-7.

reporting, as can a reporter's stereotypes."[125]

"Attitudes, fears, assumptions, biases and stereotypes are part of the baggage we carry with us from an early age," Mencher adds. "All these influence the way we think and how we see and hear. And the way we think, see and hear affects the accuracy of our journalism. (...) The journalist sees much of the world though lenses tinted by others. The maker of images and stereotypes, the journalist is also their victim,"[126]

Thinking of the released material I just cited and the publication by Wikileaks of a 250,000 sensitive diplomatic cables that exposed years of U.S. maneuvering that could prove embarrassing to the United States and its allies[127], these remarks on ethical, principled journalism resonate even further.

The screamingly obvious question, then, that even first-year journalism students would be aware of, and that journalists from all five participating publications should have asked themselves upfront is: why do the majority of the released documents deal with abuses committed by the current[128] U.S. government? Why is WikiLeaks not going after China or North Korea, for example?
Assuming we can put our trust in Assange's words (admittedly, a big leap of faith) we are told that WikiLeaks did not go out and steal data, that it received it, and that they received U.S. data because it was poorly secured. This, however, does not answer the question of why they did not receive data from on other nations or confirm that these nations' data security systems were better.

Some aspects and 'requirements' of the publishing collaboration conceived by Assange do raise some uneasy questions and offer some clues as to where the collaborating journalists should have directed their critical eye. As *The Wall Street Journal* observed:

"The New York Times, the U.K.'s Guardian, Germany's Der Spiegel, El Pais of Spain and France's Le Monde gained access to the documents well ahead of their release and wrote extensive reports about them. Some of the cables—largely from 2007 through last February, many but not all classified—were attached to those organizations' websites. Though commonly called cables in the diplomatic world, they were encrypted emails sent by special devices."[129]

Here the question is: what professional journalist would not take a second look at those "encrypted emails sent by 'special devices'"? The care that should be taken in analyzing the sources of the information acquired during news-gathering as well as the means for acquiring it should have been at the top of these journalists' list of tasks.

Last but not least, *The Wall Street Journal* reveals some questionable aspects of the media organizations' agreement with Assange: certain 'preconditions' - which to my knowledge remain to this day a mystery to the public: "The Wall Street Journal had declined to accept a set of preconditions related to disclosure of WikiLeaks

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[125] Mencher,378.
[126] Mencher, 386.
[127] Information based on various press reports, but mostly Solomon et al.
[128] Not exclusively, but mostly the present government of Barack Obama.
[129] Solomon et al.

documents, said a spokeswoman for Dow Jones, the News Corp. unit that publishes the Journal."[130]

If this 'set of preconditions' did not raise alarm bells for the participating journalists and spur them to submit the documents to some strict journalistic ethical scrutiny, I am not sure what would.

As Cockburn of *The Nation* concluded about the "specific content of the cables - carefully filtered by WikiLeaks and the five collaborating news organizations," "The world has been getting a fine education in just how carefully diplomats and news organizations and journalists and academics connive at this secrecy."[131]

While it would probably be impossible for news media professionals (both those involved in the WikiLeaks case and those occupied in- or observing the industry) and the media consumers to investigate and see through every unclear aspect of the collaboration, the points I made earlier in this section about thinking critically about the motives behind the selection and publication of the documents and about the need for newsrooms to hold a pre-collaboration debate about them resonate even more after these last comments.

Save for the rare critical voices mentioned above, there seems to have been very little, if any, discussion or even acknowledgement of the apparent biases described here.

New Rules for Cyber Collaborations?

Here the haunting key question of whether new rules would somehow help journalists in these critical, investigative journalistic tasks that are even more complex than they appear[132] is back with full force. But answering it seems even harder than when initially working from the outside of the WikiLeaks case, from the perspective of those not directly involved in it. Based on the confusion attested to by the quoted players, including Keller, one can safely assume that even the participating newspapers and magazine were in the dark about certain aspects of their work.

Current norms regulating the issues at the heart of the WikiLeaks controversy are falling short of addressing the new realities of privacy and information rights in the digital age and are even compounding the problems.

A CNN report on the "anarchy that WikiLeaks has stirred online" acknowledges that after the "avalanche of U.S. State Department cables had just hit the Internet," even the administration was at a loss as to how to handle the situation with current legal tools.

Referring to the prolific spread of the cables to countless other sites and the 'cyberwar' it unleashed between the supporters and detractors of Assange's service, the report said: "With cyberspace still a new battleground, the administration is struggling with rules to govern such warfare, especially against an unconventional enemy. (...) Cyber experts warn the anarchy spawned by WikiLeaks could mark the beginning of uncharted waters online. With the lack of regulations on the Internet, this popular

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[130] Solomon et al.

[131] Cockburn.

[132] I am referring to the possible biases and other motivations underlying the information that one finds online, and specifically that of the WikiLeaks case.

rebellion of tech-savvy activists is hard to trace and even harder to stop."[133]

In a Special Report on Managing Information, *The Economist* documents the various tensions, pushes for innovation and resulting difficulties that are shaking online communications.

With citizens and non-governmental organizations the world over now "pressing to get access to public data at the national, state and municipal level—and sometimes government officials enthusiastically support[ing] them," the report observes that "even in America access to some government information is restricted by financial barriers."[134]

In an article calling for "new rules for big data," *The Economist* acknowledges that "Privacy is one of the biggest worries," creating "tension between individuals' interest in protecting their privacy and companies' interest in exploiting (that) personal information." This, the British magazine reckons, "could be resolved by giving people more control. They could be given the right to see and correct the information about them that an organisation holds, and to be told how it was used and with whom it was shared.
Today's privacy rules aspire to this, but fall short because of technical difficulties which the industry likes to exaggerate."[135]
The Economist notes another tension that is directly relevant to the WikiLeaks case: "Current rules on digital records state that data should never be stored for longer than necessary because they might be misused or inadvertently released. But Viktor Mayer-Schönberger of the National University of Singapore worries that the increasing power and decreasing price of computers will make it too easy to hold on to everything. In his recent book *Delete* he argues in favour of technical systems that 'forget': digital files that have expiry dates or slowly degrade over time. Yet regulation is pushing in the opposite direction. 'There is a social and political expectation that records will be kept,' says Peter Allen of CSC, a technology provider."[136]

On the plus side, *The Economist* notes that in an age of more open information, there have been in recent years "moves towards more transparency in government [that] have become one of the most vibrant and promising areas of public policy." The publication's editorial staff also point to "an important shift, new transparency requirements are now being used by government—and by the public—to hold the

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[133] Jill Dougherty and Elise Labott, "The Sweep: WikiLeaks stirs anarchy online," CNN Politics, Dec 15, 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-12-15/politics/sweep.wikileaks_1_cables-diplomats-afghan-leader/5?_s=PM:POLITICS. Accessed Dec. 15, 2010..

[134] The Economist staff, "The Open Society - Governments are letting in the light," "Special Report: Managing Information," *The Economist,* Feb 27, 2010, 11-12, http://www.economist.com/node/15557477. Accessed Feb. 25, 2010.

[135] The Economist staff, "New rules for big data - Regulators are having to rethink their brief, " "Special Report: Managing Information," *The Economist*, Feb 27, 2010, 16, http://www.economist.com/node/15557487. Accessed Feb. 25, 2010.

[136]The Economist staff, "New rules for big data - Regulators are having to rethink their brief, " "Special Report: Managing Information," *The Economist*, Feb 27, 2010, 16, http://www.economist.com/node/15557487. Accessed Feb. 25, 2010.

private sector to account." And they make the interesting suggestion that "providing information opens up new forms of collaboration between the public and the private sectors," which certainly sounds encouraging for similar potential applications in the field of news media.[137]

Such a plan for open collaboration in the digital sphere was already envisioned a decade ago by one of collaboration's early supporters, legal scholar Lawrence Lessig, who notably also argues for *regulated* collaboration on the Net. In his 1999 book *Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace*, "which warned that an unfettered digital marketplace would be anathema to our freedoms," according to *Reason* magazine[138], Lessig predicted that "Left to itself, cyberspace will become a perfect tool of control….Control, that is, by corporate forces hellbent on dictating the course of commerce and culture. Lessig argued that collective action was needed to counter these forces," Adam Thierer of *Reason* wrote.

From all this, it follows that while the laws (in the broadest sense) of 'cybercollectivism' are being defined and the larger sphere of cyberlegislation and other norms for Internet communications are finding their way in the digital age, one might be tempted to take things into one's own hands, and experiment with *The Economist*'s idea of "giving people more control" - only, in a model adapted for news media professionals. Just as I argue more comprehensively in the next chapter for self-regulation in newsrooms, this model would encourage journalists to make their own rules to meet the needs of a particular collaborative project or news organization. But of course, this does not mean that the established standards and principles of professional journalism should be discarded. Rather, as I argue with my proposed code of ethics, these could be adapted to the new realities of cooperation online.

Still, the ranks of those who believe in the benefits of new or adapted guidelines for journalism on the Internet are thin but not to be ignored, as their arguments can be solid additions to my own for a revised journalistic code of ethics.

Upon hearing about my plans for my proposed 'solutions' for the new ethical dilemmas faced by online journalists, Jamin Brophy-Warren of *The Wall Street Journal* said "a communal set of standards would be a good project. I think there are many people who unknowing wander into the world of journalism and simply don't know what types of behaviors are customary. I think disclosure is by far the biggest need out there," he added.[139]

Another ardent proponent of new rules for media ethics is e-magazine Gawker blogger Hamilton Nolan, who in a Blog post last year argued that "it's clear that the time has come for journalism's ethical guidelines to be updated, in the spirit of common sense.

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[137] The Economist staff, "The Open Society - Governments are letting in the light," "Special Report: Managing Information," *The Economist*, Feb 27, 2010, 12, http://www.economist.com/node/15557477. Accessed Feb. 25, 2010.
[138] Adam Thierer, "The Rise of Cybercollectivism," Reason.com, March 2011, http://reason.com/archives/2011/02/11/the-rise-of-cybercollectivism. Accessed April 16, 2012.
[139] The interview took place on July 29, 2010.

Let's try!," he exhorted.[140]

Although commenting on the very specific and controversial suspension by MSNBC of Keith Olberman following the disclosure that he had made financial donations to three Democratic politicians[141], Nolan concurs with Brophy-Warren on the broader needs for disclosure and transparency in our new media environment. In a special entry on disclosure, he writes: "Disclose! Let your readers know where you're coming from, so they can make informed judgments about how much weight to give to your proclamations and reports. Disclose your political and civic affiliations. Disclose a bit of your background. Do not feel compelled to neuter your standard bio. The more the better! Allow journalists to be full citizens of this great republic. Just make them tell everybody about it."[142]

While the issue of opinionated - and in Olberman's case - questionably affiliated journalists goes to the heart of media ethics, and most journalists trained in the traditional values of their profession will not hear of any deviations from media impartiality, one must admit that Nolan does make some interesting, field-defining propositions with a view to redefining journalism ethics for the digital media. If we are serious about taking the field further and finding solutions to the new dilemmas we are facing, we should perhaps give consideration to initially uncomfortable propositions and unpopular ideas, weigh them carefully, and see how they might be adapted to a more ethically acceptable formula. More on such a proposition in my own 'Proposals' section in Chapter 7.

Meanwhile, we have - at least WikiLeaks wants us to think we do - what Assange's service calls "principled leaking," a formula it says it has been following for its own work.[143] The service's Web site fails to offer an ethically more complete concept of 'principled leaking' than the position the company has kept repeating throughout the controversy: that it supports full disclosure and "relies on the power of overt fact" to uncover abuses and empower citizens, while in effect having no regard for other rights and principles attached to the people involved in the information being gathered and released. Still, the yet-unfulfilled idea of a more ethically aware form of disclosure is certainly a worthy effort, and one that should inspire my own attempts at designing principles better adapted to today's information needs.

The 'New Old'

And for the less adventurous - but who feel inclined to support the principles of ethical professional journalism on which the proposals in this thesis rest, there is the

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[140] Nolan Hamilton, "New Rules for Media Ethics," Gawker, Nov 11, 2010, http://gawker.com/5687490/new-rules-for-media-ethics. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[141] On this particular point, Nolan says he supports disclosure too: "He's clearly a vocal, partisan liberal. One could argue that a ban on political donations is a farce given his open opinion-mongering each and every night. Such bans make sense for ostensibly objective reporters, but not for people like Olbermann," he wrote in a Blog post- http://gawker.com/5682700/msnbc-suspends-keith-olbermann-for-political-donations. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[142] Nolan Hamilton, "New Rules for Media Ethics," Gawker, Nov 11, 2010, http://gawker.com/5687490/new-rules-for-media-ethics. Accessed April 16, 2012.

[143] See WikiLeaks' Web site at http://www.wikileaks.org/About.html. Accessed April 16, 2012.

theory that bold endeavors such as WikiLeaks or the plethora of new creative partnerships among professionals and alternative press members *can* adapt their emerging, still evolving practices to the best of value-based traditional journalism. The Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) is one organization that believes not only in the feasibility, but also the benefits, of such a groundbreaking model.

In a piece prophetically entitled "WikiLeaks Sheds Light on Journalism's Evolution," RTDNA Media Editor Ryan G. Murphy calls for making the best of the digital changes that I described in Chapter 3, and also of the experiments and lessons that have emerged from Wikileaks: "The Internet, while fundamentally changing the way news is produced and consumed is not the death sentence for broadcasters and newspapers that some like to forecast. In fact, it's quite the opposite," he writes.[144]
"WikiLeaks' collaboration with traditional media outlets on the cables' release demonstrates that powerful forms of new media are willing to - and need to - rely on good, old-fashioned journalists to tell a complex story accurately, ethically and compellingly.
The stories resulting from this collaboration not only gave the public a chance to understand the information in a way it never could had it been required to sort through the data itself, but also gave some very capable and knowledgeable reporters the opportunity to present the information with greater historical and diplomatic context. The result? A better informed audience, armed with the details required to become a better-informed electorate."

For the RTDNA, increased collaboration among news media professionals not only adds to the transparency that the public needs to make informed decisions, but also to innovations in the field and new models that mix the best of 'old' and 'new' practices, and that may lead to increased awareness of ethics in Internet-based news-reporting. "Very rarely does the public get such a lucid view of the media's ability to create and facilitate this democratic transparency and, in this specific case, see firsthand how traditional media outlets are increasingly and successfully using and collaborating with non-traditional news sources to evolve their business models and storytelling techniques," Murphy writes.[145]

Based on the ethical principles of professional journalism, this is, in my opinion, the most hopeful model for our times. It is also one that I recommend to keep in mind when reading Chapters 6 and 7, as it is at the basis of my proposed tools and solutions for the field, as well as overall argument for a revised code of ethics.

Conclusions

The very first thing that we can say is that as of today, many questions remain. In a general profile on WikiLeaks published late last year, CNN remarked after Assange's site said it had published part of a cache of more than a quarter-million U.S. diplomatic cables, that "It's unclear who is behind the latest batch of leaks from WikiLeaks. It's unclear now what the fallout may be, but WikiLeaks is promising that

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[144] Ryan G. Murphy, "WikiLeaks Sheds Light on Journalism's Evolution," RTDNA, Dec 4, 2010, http://www.rtnda.org/pages/posts/wikileaks-sheds-light-on-journalisms-evolution1164.php. Accessed April 16, 2012.
[145] Murphy.

it will release more cables in the coming weeks and months. During all of WikiLeaks' history, there has been only one person charged in relation to a leak that appeared on the site."[146]

What is clear, however, is that, as the title of the CNN report insinuates ("WikiLeaks' growing impact") and despite the site's current financial and management woes, Assange's service is here to stay. The deep rifts and waves it has created in the previously relatively straightforward media landscape - new vs. old; professional vs. amateur; print vs. Web-based; using an Ethics Code or none, etc - are also unlikely to disappear, but rather to deepen and lead to, hopefully, more ethical and professional models of information systems as professional journalists seek to replicate the ideals of Assange while also honoring other, equally important journalistic values.[147] Indeed, finding the right balance between informing the public and protecting sources' rights will be key.

In any case, if there is a sobering conclusion for all laudable but a little too ethically lax idealists out there, it is that Assange's formula for "radical transparency," to cite the term *Time* used in its Person of the Year article[148], is simply unrealistic.
The whole point behind defending the importance of media ethics and holding open debates about it in newsrooms is that the practice of journalism is by definition replete with nuances and conflicting values. It is the balancing act between all these values and various interests at the center of a news story that constitutes the beauty of the profession and helps make it ethical. Assange's proclaimed mission of complete transparency and full information disclosure to the public is Utopian and simplistic at best, infantile and dangerous at worst.
Chapters 6 and 7 will offer some ideas on how to achieve this ideal balance.

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[146] CNN Staff (Ashley Frantz), "WikiLeaks' growing impact," CNN This just In, Nov 29, 2010, http://news.blogs.cnn.com/2010/11/29/what-is-wikileaks-2/?iref=allsearch. Accessed Nov. 29, 2010.
[147] These are described at length in Chapter 2.
[148] Gellman, 90.

Chapter 6: Initial (Case Study) Conclusions

Introduction

As Chapters 3 and 4, and especially the case study of Chapter 5 have demonstrated, despite the ethical risks and unknowns, bold creativity and field-defining entrepreneurship have not been lacking among those media professionals intrigued by the possibilities of collaborative journalism on the Internet.

And it is not just the younger generation of digital natives and leaders of alternative news models who have been experimenting, but well-established members of the professional press and networks have also taken the plunge, not only into digitizing their own operations, but also into doing so with partners of varied skills, ilk and credentials, from both within and outside the industry.

Even within the narrow range of my research for this thesis - online collaborations among mostly professional journalists and news organizations[1] - the variety of ideas and opinions on how best to conduct such cooperative initiatives is vast, but there is still very little certainty, let alone consensus, on how to conduct such innovative projects in a professional, effective and ethical-lapse-proof manner.

Efforts to standardize collaborative ventures have been rare and shaky, with companies, internally or with a small circle of selected partners, doing their best to apply common sense and other basic approaches in lieu of using resourcefully adapted versions of their codes of ethics, and to meet the demands of the moment as they go and on an individual basis. To my knowledge, there is no record of their decision-making and other decisions and actions to solve ethically new and challenging editorial situations. In any case, I have not encountered in the course of my research any individual journalist or any news company archiving these responses as precedents to be learned from and improved upon for the emerging models and media partnerships of the future.

The Verdict on WikiLeaks[2]

Even the WikiLeaks case has been much observed and commented upon by the media world and the public, but has yielded few conclusive answers from either participants or observers.

And although media critics are predicting some replications or modified versions of Assange's partnership with the traditional press in the near future, it is not clear how such partnerships would come about or in what way they will differ or improve on Assange's model.

And if professional mass media organizations decide to experiment with these

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[1] 'Mostly' because our global news media today have become too hybrid at all levels for some overlapping between the skills and affiliations not to occur. Thus, professional journalists inevitably come into contact with content produced by non-professionals, may use it in their own news-gathering efforts, and even collaborate with these amateur publishers.

[2] A sub-title chosen more for stylistic reasons than for literal accuracy - given my recognition in the section that follows that there are still many conflicting opinions on the project and the viability of its partnership model.

innovative practices of cooperation, they may well do so internally, at their management level, and not necessarily share their processes and results with their colleagues in the field, let alone their competitors, in the open-source manner that I encourage in this thesis.

Much of what is now known about the internal workings of WikiLeaks' arrangements with *The New York Times, The Guardian, El Pais, Der Spigel* and *Le Monde* after WikiLeaks provided them with Bradley Manning[3]'s 250,000 diplomatic cables for publication in their pages, came out into the open only *after* conflict arose with *The Guardian* over the availability of a decryption key that gave access to the material to those who knew where to look.[4] *Der Spiegel* then reported a story revealing errors on both sides of the partnership[5]; while *The New York Times* came forth with many an explanation for its involvement and decisions in the course of its dealings with Assange's service, most of which were encapsulated in its book, *Page One*.[6]

But must things go sour for information about methods and operations to be made open and transparent?

Not that WikiLeaks' experiment in electronic publishing cooperation has not brought any benefits to journalism. As David Carr explains in a column for *The New York Times*, when WikiLeaks began in the summer of 2010 what amounted to a partnership with mainstream media organizations, including *The Times*, by affording them an early look at the "Afghanistan War Logs," the strategy "resulted in extensive reporting on the implications of the secret documents."[7]

Then, when in November[8] WikiLeaks shared (inadvertently, to be precise) the main lode of 250,000 diplomatic cables with *Le Monde, El Pais, The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* (*The Guardian* sharing the documents with *The New York Times*), "the result was huge," Carr wrote. He adds that "many articles have come out since, many of them deep dives into the implications of the trove of documents," and draws attention to the fact that "with each successive release, WikiLeaks has become more strategic and has been rewarded with deeper, more extensive coverage of its revelations. It's a long walk from WikiLeaks's origins as a user-edited site held in common to something more akin to a traditional model of publishing, but seems to be in keeping with its manifesto to deliver documents with 'maximum possible impact.'"

As Carr concludes, WikiLeaks has successfully tapped the power of the press because its leaders understood that "the art of the data dump drives coverage of events."[9]

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[3] The young American soldier is said to have downloaded the more than 250,000 cables from a supposedly secure U.S. government network, essentially government emails. For more see, among others, "Unpluggable" by *The Economist* staff, Briefing WikiLeaks, *The Economist*, Dec 4, 2010, 33.

[4] For more on the dispute and other conflicts within WikiLeaks' own ranks and its partners, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WikiLeaks. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[5] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WikiLeaks. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[6] *Page One - Inside The New York Times and the Future of Journalism*, Edited by David Folkenflik (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011).

[7] David Carr, "WikiLeaks Taps Power Of the Press," *The New York Times*, Dec 13, 2010, B1, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/13/business/media/13carr.html?partner=rss&emc=rss. Accessed Dec. 12, 2010.

[8] The print edition of the newspaper has 'Then in October," an apparent factual error, which seems to have been corrected in the online edition.

[9] David Carr, "WikiLeaks Taps Power Of the Press."

But all of this increased and deeper coverage - while admittedly great for the public - has done little to make such collaborations more in line with professional practice and ethical norms, nor is it helping to standardize them.

As Carr said, WikiLeaks and its selected partners have different principles and purposes: "WikiLeaks may be willing to play ball with newspapers for now, but the organization does not share the same values or objectives. Mr. Assange and the site's supporters see transparency as the ultimate objective, believing that sunshine and openness will deprive bad actors of the secrecy they require to be successful. Mainstream media may spend a lot of time trying to ferret information out of official hands, but they largely operate in the belief that the state is legitimate and entitled to at least some of its secrets."[10]

WikiLeaks, as Carr observed, has undeniably learned and matured in the process, and it is encouraging to see such evolution. But this does not make the anti-secrecy service a professional news organization on par with the established media. Selecting and working with the best media companies in the industry may have lent the partnership an air of respectability and credibility. Moreover, "By shading his radicalism and collaborating with mainstream outlets, Mr. Assange created a comfort zone for his partners in journalism. They could do their jobs and he could do his," Carr wrote.

But for those who can see through the veneer, this does not decrease WikiLeaks' irresponsibility in endangering the lives of its sources and ignoring other rights and values. According to Carr, Assange has said that should WikiLeaks' existence be threatened, his organization "would be willing to spill all the documents in its possession out into the public domain, ignoring the potentially mortal consequences." According to *The Times*, Assange's lawyers told ABC News that "they expect he will be indicted on espionage charges in the United States. The newspaper then quotes a *New Yorker* writer, George Packer, as saying that "such an act is something no journalistic organization would ever do, or threaten to do."[11]

To be fair and accurate, the responsibility for the disclosures lies to some extent on both sides, since the United States not only failed to keep the sensitive information secret and protect its sources from life-threatening situations, but also declined Assange's offer to redact the documents for such risks. Assange had indeed proposed to the White House to vet any harmful documents, but the latter's response was to demand the return of all the material, placing Assange himself in admittedly a tricky ethical dilemma.[12]

But all in all, one has to concur with Carr's final assessment that, in addition to Assange being "a complicated partner" in view of Sweden's request for his extradition, WikiLeaks represents "a fruitful collaboration, a new form of hybrid journalism emerging in the space between so-called hacktivists and mainstream media outlets," but still, "the relationship is an unstable one."[13]

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[10] David Carr, "WikiLeaks Taps Power Of the Press."

[11] David Carr, "WikiLeaks Taps Power Of the Press."

[12] For more on the events surrounding Assange's offer to the US government, see "Reactions to the United States diplomatic cables leak," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reactions_to_the_United_States_diplomatic_cables_leak . Accessed April 18, 2012; and Glenn Greenwald, "Why won't the Pentagon help WikiLeaks redact documents?" Salon.com, Aug 20, 2010, http://www.salon.com/2010/08/20/wikileaks_5/. Accessed Aug. 20, 2010.

[13] Even though I cite extensively Carr of *The New York Times*, these are very much

On the plus side, however, WikiLeaks' foray into information partnerships in cyberspace has undeniably brought change to digital journalism.
For one thing, reaching out to competitors represented a ground-breaking gesture. As Emily Bell, Director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia Journalism School, told *The New York Times*, WikiLeaks has "already changed the rules by creating a situation where competitive news organizations were now cooperating to share a scoop."[14]

Scott Shane, also of *The Times*, documents similar transformations in the larger world of media and policy directly resulting from WikiLeaks' experiments[15]:
"There's been a change. Traditional watchdog journalism, which has long accepted leaked information in dribs and drabs, has been joined by a new counterculture of information vigilantism that now promises disclosures by the terabyte. A bureaucrat can hide a library's worth of documents on a key fob, and scatter them over the Internet to a dozen countries during a cigarette break. That accounts for how, in the three big WikiLeaks document dumps since July, the usual trickle of leaks became a torrent," he writes. "Even two decades ago, in the days of kilobytes and floppy discs, such an ocean of data would have been far more difficult to capture and carry away," he said of the data that Pfc. Bradley Manning allegedly smuggled out of a military intelligence office.
The pace at which all this is happening is yet another area of change: "Consider the speed at which news travels," Shane wrote. "During the Iran-contra affair, American arms sales to Iran were first reported by a Beirut weekly, Al Shiraa, in November 1986; it was a few days before the American press picked up the story. 'Now it would take a few minutes,'" he quoted Steven Aftergood of the Project on Government Secrecy as saying.

But just as I emphasized the importance of keeping notes of the successes and failures of these collaborative news experiments - a task which to my knowledge is not being performed by leaders of new collaborative initiatives - Carr questions the sustainability of cooperative projects like WikiLeaks. He cites Steve Coll, president of the New America Foundation, as saying that the durability of the WikiLeaks model remained an open question. "I'm skeptical about whether a release of this size is ever going to take place again, in part because established interests and the rule of law tend to come down pretty hard on incipient movements," he said. "Right now, media outlets are treating this as a transaction with a legitimate journalistic organization. But at some point, they are going to have to evolve into an organization that has an address and identity or the clock will run out on that level of collaboration."[16]

And of course, the most crucial question at the center of this thesis - whether an adapted code of ethics or some form of new rules, or a shared system of guidelines and recommended behaviors to adopt in ethically ambivalent situations would help

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my own thoughts and stance too on the ethical standing of WikiLeaks, and these citations can be seen as supportive of my argument.
[14] David Carr, "WikiLeaks Taps Power Of the Press."
[15] Scott Shane, "Keeping Secrets WikiSafe," *The New York Times*, Dec 12, 2010, Week in Review, 1,
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/12/weekinreview/12shane.html?pagewanted=all.
Accessed Dec. 11, 2010.
[16] David Carr, "WikiLeaks Taps Power Of the Press."

journalists and those partnerships - is still mired in mixed feelings and indecision. Experts and media critics voice elaborate opinions on the theme and issues related to innovative media collaborations, including WikiLeaks, but few in the end offer conclusive solutions or workable and fully ethical[17] alternatives to the WikiLeaks model and the other novel news initiatives that still suffer from a paucity of direction in terms of standards and ethical conduct in their digital operations.[18]

Chapter 6 in a Nutshell

Thus, readers should not expect any definite, once-for-all, fixed solutions for ethics-focused collaboration in news-reporting nor any other industry-shaking revelations. Rather, this chapter presents a summary of my research, namely an overview of my own- and the industry's overall opinions on collaborative journalism in the digital age and the new ethical risks of working on the Internet - of which WikiLeaks has been one of the most representative illustrations among many still undocumented cases - as well as conclusions—my own and others'-- on an ideal model for such news-production partnerships.

Not wanting to limit the scope of possibilities, I have given space and unedited expression to all my interviewed sources, even if I did not always agree with their proposed methods or reluctance about adapting our codes of ethics to the new realities - thus leaving my readers not only to sample the range of views in today's media landscape, but also to think critically and draw their own conclusions.

With these steps, I hope that my readers will be inspired to think and debate about the missing parts of my Code and how we can continuously bring more sense of ethics into our news, whether collaboratively produced or not.
Most of all, the thesis will have fulfilled its ultimate goals of raising awareness about media ethics online and of launching a debate about possible and ideal models for ethical media partnerships.

The main goal of this last chapter then is sparking a debate on the need for higher ethical awareness for online news production, especially of the collaborative kind.

Case Study Findings and Conclusions

The philosophy behind "Open, Participatory, Multiperspectival News" taken together with the new positive approach and terminology I promote at the end of my 'Proposals' section are shaping a new way of thinking about news, a different stance on traditionally competitive endeavors, which calls for seeing the possibility of non-

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[17] The difficulty with this, of course, is that only applied ethics, implemented in a particular project on a long term basis, will yield models that we can then assess as valid and ethical and therefore desirable for future replication and standardization. It is a little bit a case of a vicious circle, or of knowing what should come first, the chicken or the egg. There cannot be efficient standardization without a series of successful and media ethics-conscious models to start with.
[18] Newspapers trying to manage their staff's use of Twitter and other online social networks furnish an example of the traditional media's difficulty in trying to harness new trends.

competitiveness in the media business.

Similarly, the Open Park Code of Ethics, if used in combination with the Global Media Ethics Forum on any given online news platform can create the 'toolbox' for journalists that I referred to above.

Thus all four proposals serve each other and have very concrete applications, which I detail below.

Journalists need to take ethics and the quality of what they produce into their hands and not let them randomly evolve in cyberspace without guidance; they need to make a conscious effort to be more ethical in their digital news productions. My proposed technologies and practices aim at giving these journalists the means to adopt this optimal response to media change.

It goes without saying that many of my ideas for these proposed tools have sprung from my examination of the WikiLeaks case study, and have resulted either as a direct or contradictory response to it.

Similarly, it is important to note here that experts' opinions have to a large extent shaped my own views and propositions, which one way or another, then either fall in line with them, or question them by suggesting a contrary model or idea. My observations on what could be retained from these opinions have been useful for my Open Park Code and would also serve anyone drawing new regulations for the media.

Last but not least, although steeped in controversy and unprecedented developments, the WikiLeaks case offers excellent starting points for thinking about what we want - and do not want - in a professional and ethics-abiding news model for collaborative journalism. For a start, the case reminded us that there should be no disregarding or downplaying of certain journalistic principles, moral values or rights to the advantage of another (or others). Rather, a concerted debate should take place among all participants in a news project on how to balance the conflicting values in sensitive editorial decisions. This is the essence of applied media ethics.

In the case of WikiLeaks, those difficult decisions for the participating newspapers and magazine entailed the highly complex issues of electronic communications privacy, the First Amendment in cyberspace, and other anonymity and free speech issues in the electronic realm, such as unauthorized access to stored data[19]. The way these legal issues with a moral dimension play out in cyberspace have proven to often be beyond the competence of the best lawyers in the field and have perplexed many a media critic. Journalists and the public have had the hardest time assessing the moral and journalistic make-up of Assange's service and personal motivations and drawing conclusions on the desirability of the model of publishing partnership that he struck with leading members of the press.

Since the dust has somewhat settled on the anti-secrecy Web site affair many media analysts and practitioners have speedily and often erroneously adjusted their moral barometer to meet what on the surface might have appeared to them as some new paradigm for 'the media ethics of the future' - usually to the detriment of their own organizations' best practices, or personal code of professional conduct. Indeed this 'adjustment' has often meant a lowering of standards to meet the new, laxer realities of ethics online.

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[19] For more on the laws of communications in cyberspace, see Edward A. Cavazos and Gavino Morin's *Cyberspace and the Law: Your rights and Duties in the Online World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995).

Given enough time for responses and new practices to emerge after the media and world at large have digested the implications of the WikiLeaks information war, we are sure to find among the staunch supporters of WikiLeaks, whom I cited in Chapter 5, evidence of such adjustments in their own news initiatives.

Still, the ethical issues that arose in the WikiLeaks case and the importance for journalists of having at their disposal a code of ethics or some form of professional rules or guidelines remain the same.

This observation can be considered a preliminary conclusion of this thesis, which my readers will find in a more elaborated form in the second section of this chapter.

The need for an ethics code in digital newsrooms is as crucial as ever, its active and regular use by all staff and management should be encouraged, and reaffirming the core principles of professional, traditional journalism should be a top priority for media practitioners and educators of new media.

Perhaps, this also amounts to a glimpse at the 'new' element in this thesis, that is, its contribution to the field of new media, which calls for mixing the best traditional principles of the profession with the emerging online publishing practices and tailoring the result(s)[20] for work on the Internet and other technologies.

Experts' Opinions

In Chapter 4, we saw how media commentator Steve Buttry called for more and better verification of sources' material on the part of journalists, even suggesting that amendments should be made to the SPJ Code of Ethics[21] to make it very clear that journalists—not sources-- are responsible for the accuracy of the information they gather from their sources and publish.[22]

Now that we are addressing more directly the question of whether new or adapted regulation is needed, it is worth checking Buttry's full argument, which strongly tilts in favor of reforming our current codes.

While he chooses to focus on the Code of the Society of Professional Journalists, we can reasonably assume that he intends his remarks to apply to other codes and guidelines in use in newsrooms today.

Thus, when Buttry asks in a Blog post on the subject, "Should the Society of Professional Journalists update its Code of Ethics?" he does not omit to ask also more

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[20] Please note the plural form at the end of 'result': indeed, it can be presumed that while we may eventually end up with one dominant model, there might be more than one model emerging from these experiments in collaborative digital news.

[21] And it is likely that he means, by extension, to other media codes currently in use.

[22] This brings up another worthwhile question: if a source is mistaken in his/her judgment or knowledge and states factually incorrect ideas and opinions as part of his/her commentary, is it the responsibility of the journalist to correct this misinformation in his/her article? Or should the sacro-sanctity of a source's quotes not be violated and reporters respect professional journalistic principles that say that quoted material should be reproduced literally or with absolute minimal, unavoidable alterations? Which approach should prevail? This is a grey area little addressed in present-day journalism discussions.

generally: "Journalists' Code of Ethics: Time for an update?"[23]

Updating the SPJ Code

In support of his argument that the SPJ Code could do with an update for the age of digital news, Buttry answered in a Twitter chat on journalism ethics in social media the question, posed by SPJ magazine *The Quill* Editor Scott Leadingham, of what exactly he would update.
In response, Buttry said that "The code's basic principles – seek truth and report it; minimize harm; act independently; be accountable – remain the heart of good journalism ethics. But the explanations following those principles are rooted in an age of print and television. SPJ's website explains that the society borrowed the code of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1926. SPJ developed its own code in 1973 and revised it in 1984, 1987 and most recently in 1996, when digital journalism was in its infancy. It's odd that the longest gap between revisions since SPJ wrote its own code would come during a time of such profound change for journalism," he remarked. "The code should reflect the challenges, realities and values of good digital journalism."

Buttry, who is the Director of Community Engagement & Social Media for Journal Register Co.[24], added that he does not believe in "long ethics policies for newsrooms. Too many of them exist mostly to document reasons to fire people. Too many of them are mostly lists of do's and don'ts (usually more don'ts), rather than helpful guides to making ethical decisions in situations that aren't as simple as the policies sometimes make them." For organizations, he said he prefers statements of basic principles, such as The Australian Broadcasting Corp.'s social media policy, or Huffington Post Social News Editor Mandy Jenkins's Social media guidelines, which are some of the in-house policy documents of news organizations or the personal credos and tips of independent journalists that target specific uses of media.[25]

Still, he says that when it comes to individual journalists, he believes they need even more "detailed guidance in making ethical decisions."
Buttry said he recommends Bob Steele's "Guiding Principles for the Journalist," which are quite similar to the SPJ code, and his "10 Questions to guide ethical decisions." These tools are very useful, he says, "because good ethics rest more in good decision-making than in rules."
In favor of the SPJ Code, Buttry says he prefers it above all others "because it combines simplicity with detailed guidance. The four basic principles are clear and direct. Then the code elaborates in a way that is helpful for journalists trying to make

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[23] Steve Buttry, "Journalists' Code of Ethics: Time for an Update?" The Buttry Diary Blog, Nov 7, 2010, http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2010/11/07/journalists-code-of-ethics-time-for-an-update/. Accessed Nov. 7, 2010. All cited material in this section, including principles from the SPJ's Code of Ethics, originate from this Blog post.
[24] See http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/about/. Accessed Nov. 7, 2010.
[25] See http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/abcpols.htm Accessed Nov. 10, 2010; and http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/documents/201111/useOfSocialMedia.pdf. Accessed Nov. 10, 2010 ; Mandy Jenkins' informal recommendations for online journalists can be found at http://zombiejournalism.com/2011/03/channeling-the-news-brand-on-twitter-and-facebook/ and http://onlinejournalism.onmason.com/tag/mandy-jenkins/. Accessed April 8, 2011.

decisions in a variety of situations."

Buttry's key reason for wanting to reform the SPJ Code is based on his argument -
which very much echoes my own on the rise of new ethical dilemmas - that
"Technology and media innovation have presented some new decisions," and
therefore, "detailed guidance could use an update." In addition, he writes,
"controversies over more traditional matters such as confidential sources and opinion,
merit new discussions and possibly updating."

In terms of the concrete amendments and additions that Buttry proposes, several
pertain to sourcing in the context of online social media (such as Facebook and
community forums). To the SPJ Code's exhortation "Tell the story of the diversity and
magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so,"
Buttry says he would add: "When using social media to connect with sources, be
aware of the groups who might be unrepresented or underrepresented because they
use social media less." This is especially pertinent to our purpose, since not only so
much of Internet interaction is community-based, but also, collaborative journalism,
as I am promoting in this thesis, is by definition deeply involved in the exchange of
information among various groups of media producers and new communities of
sources.[26]

Buttry also recommends tapping into the powers of technology and the Internet to
increase openness and transparency in journalists' work.
To the SPJ clause "Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business
is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection,"
I would add: When reporting information from public documents, journalists should
link to them or publish them online in pdf or other formats, so users can examine the
documents themselves.

On the much larger imperative of how to treat ones' sources in the most ethical
manner possible when gathering information online, Buttry found the SPJ's
recommendation, under "Minimize Harm" - "Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects
and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect" - a little lacking for the digital
age. Journalists should be aware that in cyberspace, anything they disclose about their
sources, both during news-gathering and post-publication, can spread like fire and
have dire implications for the sources should they be 'sensitive' ones, such as crime
victims, perpetrators and their families. For this reason, Buttry urges news-reporters
and editors to "Understand that digital content remains available to search engines
long after it was newsworthy. Journalists should consider this in deciding whether and
how to identify juveniles and how to archive information, particularly about minor
offenses," he wrote, adding that this too, should be added as a remark to the original
SPJ entry.

Similarly, when addressing the principles of "Accountability" and related issues,
Buttry said that journalists must be aware that mistakes in news-reporting too can
multiply uncontrollably on the Net and "errors can spread swiftly on digital channels."
He advises journalists who have published or promoted an erroneous story on
multiple platforms to make at least similar efforts to spread the correction. "For

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[26] 'New communities of sources': if we think for example of the crowds of Twitter
users, who now form a new source of information for journalists.

instance, if a story was promoted twice on the organizational Twitter account and by several staff members on personal accounts, the correction should be noted twice on the organizational account, as well as on the personal accounts," he said.

Still under the same SPJ Code tenet calling for "Journalists (to be) accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other," Buttry observes the new demands and questions that pop up when using online social media as part of the news-gathering process, such as how to navigate the public and private spaces of the Net ethically. These issues in the new context of digital media, he says, are so far not being addressed by new media regulatory norms and practices, or even brought up in social media ethics discussions for news professionals. Should news-reporters and bloggers who use Twitter and similar networks "maintain private and public accounts?" for example, he asks. In today's much-less-well-defined and clearly compartmentalized digital working spaces, Buttry insists that "With rare exceptions, journalists should identify themselves fully in social media profiles and in direct contact with sources." He adds that the SPJ Code "should allow flexibility on this issue. But it should admonish journalists to identify themselves (and their organization, unless they are freelancers) in any accounts they might use professionally. And a reminder might be in order that personal accounts should not be used in a way that compromises their professional integrity."

On the subject of independence, a pillar of professional journalism according to which "Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know," social media similarly presents new ethical quandaries.
For example, with so much of the Internet being shaped by and for online communities, Buttry pointedly asks whether the SPJ Code should be updated to offer guidance on new boundaries between independence and community involvement. Traditionally, developing ties in one's local communities and focus of coverage has been instrumental to journalists' work. But how does this play out online? And do the general principles of independence as currently stipulated in the SPJ's and most journalism codes suffice to cover the new kinds of relationships that journalists develop with their sources on the Net? The "SPJ also should address the question of whether some journalists have taken independence to the point of aloofness, and whether that goes too far," he says.

Opinion and subjectivity form another new minefield in the world of online media ethics and principled, independent journalism.
Recognizing that "opinions have long been an important part of journalism," Buttry is also aware that "opinions are controversial in journalism ethics" and more so now in online spaces. While he does not offer specific ideas for amendments to the SPJ Code, he raises some pertinent questions for online communications that media regulators and code-drafters may well want to consider. "Should SPJ give guidance on whether journalists should express opinions among themselves," for example, is all the more relevant today given the increased contact (both formal and informal[27]) journalists

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[27] Quantifying, as well as correctly evaluating the quality and/or level of 'officialdom' of these interactions among professional journalists, bloggers, Twitterers, and their sources in various online communities and discussion blogs and groups is still, at the time of writing, an endeavor that lies well beyond available media researchers' capacities, as data and studies on such statistics are, to my knowledge, still non-existent or very limited.

have with their sources in online forums and other communities.

Buttry says he appreciates the fact that "the code doesn't try to dictate right and wrong on an issue where journalists are so divided" - a point that we may well want to nod in agreement with since I am arguing in this thesis for mostly a self-regulatory model of media ethics. Such aspects "should at least be discussed if you're updating the code," he says.

Still on the importance of preserving one's independence as a member of the online press and (broadcast) networks, but from a larger perspective, Buttry say that there is a thin line between remaining "free of associations and activities that may compromise journalistic integrity or damage credibility" and remaining open to experimenting with new forms of collaborative associations and partnerships online. As the industry is scrambling to come up with new business models that would save the best of journalistic practices in cyberspace, this is a larger issue with yet very relevant ethical ramifications.

Here is how he would express this fine point in an amendment to the present SPJ Code: "As entrepreneurial journalists and innovative organizations seek new business models for news, journalists should discuss ways to protect the integrity of editorial content and should be transparent about revenue streams and relationships with revenue sources. The ethical need to remain free of advertiser influence should not hinder journalists from working to develop healthy business models to support and sustain independent journalism."

Perhaps a little unexpectedly, Buttry deems it unnecessary for journalists to apply heightened scrutiny to material found in online social media such as Twitter and the Internet at large. As he explains: "I know many might feel an urge here to say that journalists should be especially skeptical of tweets and other information from social media. I don't think that's necessary. Journalists should be just as skeptical of information from social media as they are of information from other channels, such as conversation, phone calls, other media and documents. No need to update, no need to single out social media. This passage holds up well with time."

This does not mean that Buttry is too permissive when it comes to working in the Internet medium and is ready to close his eyes on questionable content and the laxer practices they sometime engender.

For instance, while he says that "journalists should not stereotype Twitter users" and seems to be protective of all online media endeavors, he stresses that journalists should take extra care to fact-check their sources' comments, and seek the original source of the information they found on the Net: "Credit sources by name, not by vague descriptions such as 'press reports,' 'a blog,' or by indirect references such as 'was reported' or 'reportedly.' When crediting sources online, link to the original source. Be diligent in identifying source of information clearly in notes, whether digital or paper." Buttry said that these recommendations for better sourcing in online news should be added to the SPJ Code's simple "Never plagiarize" clause, whose "direct simplicity" is no longer enough in digital journalism.

Perhaps most useful of all his recommendations for additions and improvements to the SPJ Code is Buttry's proposal for using a specific tool to help journalists verify facts - in fact not unlike my own proposal for practical solutions in the form of an adapted ethics code. Observing that fellow journalist Craig Silverman advocates checklists for journalists, which he says have been proven "to reduce errors in crucial

professions such as surgery and pilots," Buttry asks "If we want to uphold the truth as a core principle, why shouldn't we advocate a proven system to improve accuracy?; Should SPJ advocate that journalists use a checklist?"

These are certainly questions and ideas that inspired me when compiling my 'wish list' for my adapted Open Park Code of Ethics.. I would encourage all media code-drafters to consider them as well.

Although I do not systematically include all of Buttry's points in my own proposed code, I still recognize their value.

In a final note, Buttry acknowledges that his notes and suggestions to improve the code might be too lengthy or simply impractical to insert into the current code - "I've probably said more than the ethics code should in some areas that I raised," he admits. He also suspects that he may have omitted some issues or areas that could be improved or amended for digital news. This is of course a very likely scenario for my own proposed amendments to existing regulation, since the very nature of our hybrid news environment is that capturing it with 100 percent accuracy and predictability remains an elusive goal.

Having recognized the limits of such proposed corrections, Buttry hopes that if they prove impractical to add and implement, at least the SPJ could use the medium of a debate to update journalists on the changes in our media landscape and how best to respond to them ethically, and "how this code can guide us." He pertinently notes, "I don't hear it cited very often in today's debates."

In addition to putting the SPJ Code and other core ethical instruments back on the table for some technology-minded scrutiny and possible adaptation to digital news, Buttry's analysis of how one of the most used ethics codes in American journalism could be altered for the digital era has been helpful in formulating my proposals. I would urge my readers to keep his recommendations and suggestions in mind as we proceed to other opinions from media experts and working journalists and when reading the Open Park Code of Ethics.

More Options from the Pros

In addition to Buttry's call for media codes reform, what else is the industry proposing to help its players, especially the traditional press but also the 'digital natives,' transit to collaborative forms of journalism on digital platforms in the most ethical manner? What is missing in their knowledge or toolbox from their points of view?

There are various levels of belief in the need for some form of regulation and of confidence in its potential benefits and successful implementation. We find very mixed feelings, ranging from deep doubts to full faith.

In order to draw a clearer picture of this slice of opinions, which I have selected to be as representative as possible[28], I have decided to categorize them into certain denominations, although I must stress that these qualifiers serve primarily a stylistic and logistical purpose in the structure of this section and are not meant to be restrictive or deterministic in their connotations. As will soon be clear, there is plenty

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[28] These seven sources are in fact the last group of my interviewees, whose comments, despite some openly expressed hesitations, I found to be the most conclusive - hence my inclusion of them in this final chapter. Their views are not meant to be bound by the stylistic qualifiers of their categories.

of overlap among the feelings and ideas expressed.

The Skeptics

The people I have categorized as 'skeptics' actually express some very real and reasonable concerns about the introduction of new rules or a different code of ethics into our present-day professional news environment. They point to concrete roadblocks, such as the problems of implementation and the impracticability of imposing a common body of rules on independent bloggers and freelance journalists, and the 'conversations' that go on in online networks for example, concerns that media reform enthusiasts may dismiss as simple fear of the unknown and thus unfounded. They do not deny their wish to stay on the safe side and most express satisfaction with present codes. In fact, the SPJ Code gets quite high marks from them and may even appear as 'untouchable' in the eyes of some of these appraisers.

Generally this cautious approach and hesitation about embracing new codes blindly can act as a useful reminder of the realistic limits of journalists' daily work. One of my interviewees reminds us that news organizations' codes of ethics are rarely read and consulted by employees. Others are aware that current standards are lacking in their ability to cover the complexities of online news but are not sure what exactly is missing, and for that reason fear tampering with current codes.

The following two interviews with selected sources express some of these sobering views.

Presented with the pivotal question in my thesis: 'Should - or *can* - today's digital news media and its hybrid forms of collaborative professional-amateur content production be regulated, and if so, how and by whom?'; and its derivative question 'Do we need an individual code of ethics or professional standards for each type of new media practitioners [bloggers, Twitterers, etc.]?', J-Lab Executive Director **Jan Schaffer** had this to say[29]: "Much in the blogging and twittering world is individual observation or conversation. As such it seems unrealistic that anyone could require a code of ethics on someone's conversation. For those who have a news site or a blog platform that aspires to offer news and information on community happenings or public meetings, they should look at the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics.[30] I think it more than suffices for setting some good rules of the road and there is no need to re-invent the wheel," she recommended.

Schaffer's assessment of the Blogo- and Twitterspheres brings home the logistical constraints and obstacles to consistent monitoring of these "conversations" and information exchanges surrounding news events and coverage. The self-regulation she proposes is unquestionably a laudable goal, but offers little in terms of concrete factors that would motivate the players in digital news to submit their productions to such traditional standards and scrutiny.

As for an alternative to this traditional model of regulation, no one is speaking of 're-inventing the wheel from scratch but rather of a succession of inspired developments. Schaffer, sadly, is not considering working on existing guidelines, improving and adapting them as needed. My question "What should a new code contain?" remains

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[29] Her position is Executive Director of J-Lab of The Institute for Interactive Journalism in Washington D.C.; The interview took place on July 15, 2010.

[30] Schaffer gave the following link - http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp.

visibly unanswered,[31] and one should be content with her yet somewhat equivocal conclusion, "I think the SPJ code is good."

This 'good enough' approach may understandably fall short of the higher expectations of some in the media world. But on the other hand, Schaffer points out certain changes and new ethical difficulties that have appeared in the new forms of online community journalism that no apparent regulatory system could easily solve: "I think there are some ethical dilemmas arising in the community news arena where ordinary citizens are trying to provide news and information to fellow residents but occasionally come across police blotter information (teenage drinking arrests, domestic violence incidents) that are out of their comfort zone to broadcast to the entire community," she explained.

More questionably, Schaffer expresses doubts on the value of American journalism's core principles in the new digital environment: "I'm not sure all the 'professional standards' are necessarily securing good journalism, as I have outlined in my speeches online, and I'm not sure they should all be maintained," she wrote in an email.
As my readers will see from my own proposed models in the following section, such doubts are at odds with my own vision of a future regulatory system, but they are certainly part of the kaleidoscope of opinions on the subject.
But for all the lingering uncertainties, Schaffer may well be right in her predictions that a variety of innovative ideas and models will emerge: "I don't think there is one business model that fits all. I think we will see hybrid models of support that combine ad, event, sponsorship, donor, consulting revenue and possible grants," she concluded.

When it comes to her recalcitrance towards radical media reform or even simple standards designed for digital news, Schaffer will find a kindred spirit in Northeastern University Journalism Professor **Dan Kennedy**[32]. Indeed, the latter recoils from such regulatory efforts. Asked his thoughts on whether today's digital news media could be regulated or standardized in some way, he replied: "No. God help us."

If we recall the specter of overbearing, restrictive rules and oversight that some governments and top-down informational systems impose on their participants' speech and expression rights, such reactionary fears as Kennedy's are understandable.

Not that Kennedy is not up-to-date on the latest propositions and innovations, he is. Only, by his own admission, he is skeptical of their efficacy.
Referring to one of the latest and most popular trends in bottom-up self-regulatory models[33], he said: "The audience imposes ethical standards every day by choosing what to read and what to believe. It might be useful to come up with some sort of model code of ethics that bloggers and citizen journalists could place on their websites and vow to follow. I've heard such suggestions discussed in the past. But I'm skeptical of that being effective as well. All you need are a few prominent, reasonably

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[31] The interview was carried out by email.

[32] Kennedy's position at Northeastern University is Assistant Professor in the School of Journalism; The interviews were conducted July 18 and 19, 2010.

[33] The so-called 'user-generated,' open-source movements that I described in Chapters 1 and 2 have in some cases sparked audience-initiated oversight of- and engagement with the news that the public consumes online. I would say, however, that we are still short of audience-generated norms - at least on an official, institutionalized level.

well-respected bloggers announcing that they're not going to be bound by rules set by outside forces, and that would be pretty much the end of it, I suspect."

It is clear from these comments that Kennedy acknowledges the power of media audiences and the way they could influence the public. But I am personally skeptical about the degree of official and society-wide institutionalization of anything 'the crowds' have so far come up with. Their creations and ideas about rules and conduct in online news communities are visible all over the Internet, but only disparately and fittingly observed and still, essentially, non-normative. Rather, they appear in random forms.

Thus, while I am aware that many trends in the course of media history have been sparked by audiences, I doubt that mature ethical standards are being 'imposed by audiences' as Kennedy suggests. I am tempted to presume that Kennedy is subconsciously expressing a desired outcome, rather than a reality.

In line with his cautious-traditionalist stance, Kennedy expressed his trust in the primary regulatory tool of the nation's working professionals, the SPJ Code of Ethics, as sufficient to cover the ethical intricacies of digital news. All that is needed is increased use in newsrooms. And if needed, it - or any other traditional tool - could be adapted by the users, he says. This goes for specific types of users, such as bloggers and Twitterers, thus discarding in his views the possible need for designing codes specifically for these groups and activities - as we presently have codes for broadcast news practitioners, photojournalists, etc.[34]

"Any codes of ethics for journalists (would do)," he says. "The Society of Professional Journalists' code is quite good, for instance, and I especially like the nine points that open Kovach and Rosenstiel's 'The Elements of Journalism.' Any good code for journalists could either be adopted fully or adapted by bloggers and citizen journalists."

When prompted, he admits though that existing codes of ethics are not quite effective: "Not really," he says, but he questions the need for any additional tool or guidance to address the changes in the media world. "Coming up with a new code won't make a difference. In my experience, professional journalists know a few big things: don't plagiarize, don't make things up and try to avoid conflicts of interest with respect to the people or institutions you cover. Beyond that, codes of ethics are not something people ever read or spend much time thinking about," he said, pointing to the eternal problems of engagement and implementation.

Perhaps one reason for Kennedy's restraint in embracing revised regulation for today's news is that he seems to downplay the implications of the new difficulties that the Internet presents journalists with. "Ethics are ethics. I think the ethical considerations posed *only* by digital/new media are very few," he says - which does not change the fact that no matter how few the new editorial problems are, there still isn't, as of today, a practical and broadly shared system for addressing and solving them collaboratively.

Kennedy's view that the changes and new practices we need to adapt to are minimal is a useful point to take into account for our final conclusion later in this chapter: since

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[34] For more on these codes of ethics for specific segments of news publishers, see the SPJ's *Doing Ethics in Journalism - A Handbook with Case Studies*, by Jay Black, Bob Steele, and Ralph Barney (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995) 8-12.

the core principles of journalism still hold in our digital landscape, there should be question only of amending and complementing present codes to reflect those changes.

But on the whole I would say it is not so much the 'quantity' we should be concerned with but the impact of the unprecedented situations news-reporters and editors have to navigate as professionally as possible. We need to consider how far-ranging their consequences will be and for how long.

Kennedy also cites, however, some of the prominently problematic areas for journalists that are directly related to news production on the Internet.

One of them, which online news publishers big and small have all experienced by now, is how to treat ethically the comments that are being posted under online news articles, some of which the stories' authors and professional journalists from outside contribute to. When the electronic publications' own online code of conduct allows for anonymous comments, this adds an extra layer of complication to an area that has already been exacerbated in cyberspace.
"One thing that stands out in my mind is that news organizations are having a difficult time figuring out how to handle comments," he says. "There have been several cases I know of involving newspapers revealing the identity of pseudonymous commenters because it turned out they were politicians engaged in unethical behavior. I found this to be a troubling development, as the newspapers used information (IP addresses) available only to them and had at least implicitly promised to protect their commenters' identity."

Another perennial problem for online journalists is how to ensure accuracy in news-reporting. This is especially true for the new forms of on-location, 'witness' reports from citizens capturing news events with their own means and through their own ethical lenses. Such news content is now competing for space and attention on the same level as professional news, and professional journalists simply cannot ignore it, Kennedy says. "Whenever there is a major international breaking-news development, be it the Haitian earthquake or unrest in Iran, news professionals have struggled to ascertain whether the on-the-ground citizen media they start following is accurate," he said. "That's a dilemma, and I'm not sure how it can be solved. But at least they are aware of it."

Kennedy, whose department at Northeastern University teaches a course called "Journalism Ethics and Issues," which he once taught himself, mentioned a method for ensuring accuracy in the future of online news that may not spring to mind immediately, but should be the most reliable one: education.
Educating the next generation of journalists about what ethical pitfalls to look for in cyberspace should also prove to be the best preventive measure to ensure heightened media ethics awareness and compliance in Internet-based journalism.
To this effect, Kennedy said that "Ethical considerations are an important part of all of our courses at Northeastern," and that he has found students to be "interested and engaged." He added, "We hope it gives them a grounding for situations that may arise when they are on the job, and when ethical considerations may not be the first thing that people think of."

While prevention through education may be a sure way of increasing media ethics in our news, Kennedy realizes that as collaborative practices gain popularity in all

sectors of media production, more will probably be needed to cover ethically and sustainedly the new needs and demands emerging from the technology-driven industry and audiences. "There is no single model. I agree with Clay Shirky that we need a variety of experiments -- for-profit, non-profit and voluntary," he said, adding that he is currently writing a book on an important non-profit site, the New Haven Independent, whose founder and editor, Paul Bass, "is spending a great deal of time trying to figure out how to make the transition from foundation grants (even local grants tend to be time-limited) to a more sustainable base of corporate sponsorship and NPR-style fundraising drives."

Looking to the future and the next step for possible institutionalization of whatever model proves to be a winner with both producers and consumers, drafting and encouraging the use of a common set of rules is likely to present news professionals with yet another headache.
"Standards are a function of human beings," Kennedy declares enigmatically. But he then offers us a dose of reality: "Thirty years ago you could have traveled to small, independently owned daily and weekly papers across the country, interviewed publishers, and been appalled by the standards espoused by some of them and heartened by those of others."
It is a sobering experience to realize that in 2011, after the most defining technological changes in our news media such as the advance of the Internet and mobile devices, we may well still be at the same stage of 'evolution' that Kennedy refers to when it comes to the establishment and enforcement of standards for online journalism.

The Undecided

A disclaimer note is in order here: the non-fiction author and former *Boston Globe* correspondent **Larry Tye**[35] is by no means undecided on the question of regulating or imposing standards on digital news production. Tye is unequivocal about his belief in the need for rules, including for digital media.
But his comments and tone reveal deep-seated indecision - a window on the many unanswered yet crucial questions that remain. "Yes, they should be regulated," he said of digital news media and its collaborative forms, "but not sure by whom. I know nothing about digital media other than that it, like every other form, has to play by strict rules to be credible," he added.

Echoing Berkman and Shumway's concerns about the reliability of information sources found on the Web and their fears that online information could actually discourage original reporting[36], Tye said he worried that "the easier access to info is making all of us lazy, and that online journalists aren't really journalists."
In the same line of thought, he could not help adding his astute and slightly sarcastic

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[35] Larry Tye covered health, sports, the environment and national news as a news-reporter at *The Boston Globe* from 1986 to 2001. As an author he has written many biographies, including the *New York Times* bestseller *Satchel: The Life and Times of an American Legend.* He was also my professor of journalism at Boston University in 1998. The interview took place July 25, 2010.
[36] See Chapter 8 of Robert I. Berkman and Christopher A. Shumway, *Digital Dilemmas - Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals* (Ames IA: Iowa State Press, 2003), 245-268.

observation that "the easier access to info should give us all more time to worry about ethics and accuracy, but it seems instead to be making us less vigilant."

Tye's conviction that regulation is the way to go to produce ethical news on the Net and collaboratively - and even 'strict regulation' in his own words - provides encouraging support to my own proposed endeavor of bringing some kind of order to the disparate attempts at collaborative news-reporting from cyberspace's main professional newsrooms and its antechambers of amateur producers.

Nick Daniloff, another professor of journalism at Northeastern University has also earned a spot in this section, although his indecision lies more in the fact that he offers little in terms of concrete solutions - which I assumed to be a sign of uncertainty on my key questions - rather than on his being confused as to where his allegiances lie.[37]

On the feasibility and potential benefits of bringing standards and more ethics to collaborative news, he said in no uncertain terms: "Regulation is impractical because of the First Amendment and natural, strong opposition to regulation."

His realistic, level-headed assessment is one more useful warning for us about the importance of thinking of ways to engage users because as he says, people are instinctively reluctant to rules.
This cautionary note reminds us of *The 48 Laws of Power* author Robert Greene's quite cunning but ultimately realistic recommendation to take it slow when introducing change and new rules. In his 1998 book, he writes: "Preach the need for change, but never reform too much at once. Everyone understands the need for change in the abstract, but on the day-to-day level people are creatures of habit. Too much innovation is traumatic, and will lead to revolt. If you are new to a position of power, or an outsider trying to build a power base, make a show of respecting the old way of doing thing. If change is necessary, make it feel like a gentle improvement of the past."[38]
Such soft reform is well worth considering for encouraging the use of my proposed code of ethics and collaborative platform, as well as any similar online news endeavors seeking to engage journalists and their audiences.

A little paradoxically given his doubts about regulation, Daniloff recognizes that "Codes of ethics are necessary but not very effective." But again, he offers no alternatives, although he is well aware of what such guidance would be most needed for. In addition to traditional difficulties of news-reporting, such as "the danger to individuals if their identity was disclosed or hinted at," Daniloff identified the new challenges as a kind of self-generated circle of ills, starting with economic priorities: "The new element is increased pressure to file badly verified, or not verified, info because of the increase in competition due to increased channels of distribution."

His hopes that teaching journalism students to be ethically aware is well-founded and promising - as we have established with Kennedy's own confidence in education - yet leaves a gap in the proposed methodology since he does not offer practical ways for students to transfer their knowledge into the real world. "Students are more concerned about ethics than professional journalists," he says. But that will soon become a

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[37] The interview with Daniloff took place July 14, 2010.
[38] Robert Greene, *The 48 Laws of Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998) 392.

problem, if there is no continuity in learning and application well into the professional practice of journalism.

Long-time journalist and former *Boston Globe* Health and Science Editor **Karen Weintraub**, now a freelance writer, is on the same page as Kennedy when it comes to her doubts as to the value and feasibility of introducing new rules for online news. "No. I don't think digital news and content could or should be regulated," she said in an interview for this thesis.[39]

Although a definite traditionalist stance permeates her comments, she makes the interesting observation that lack of additional guidance for online news may end up prompting audiences to be more critical and vigilant about what it consumes on the Net. Although she seems to put a pessimistic twist on this development, I would argue that this cannot be a bad thing[40]: "That (an unregulated digital media industry) puts the reader in a 'buyer-beware' situation, always having to judge whether the material was collected and is presented in a legitimate way, and is not advertising in disguise," she warned. "The only way to do that now, and probably into the future is to judge by the context and by reading over time. That is, information provided by a reputable news organization, such as a newspaper, is likely to be more credible than information provided by an individual with no track record for covering the topic," she said, clearly showing her deep trust in the established institutions of American journalism. "A company insider is probably right about the gossip he/she relates, but I wouldn't necessarily trust them on the perspective they provide about their employer. And there are plenty of niche readers, say certain parents in the autism community[41], who are more likely to trust fellow parents than mainstream media for their treatment advice," she added.

In a further sign of Weintraub's trust in the traditional models, her vision of a system that would be more impervious to the ethical risks of online journalism is one based on increased monitoring from traditional journalists - or what media analyst Axel Bruns would call "gatekeepers" versus "gatewatchers.[42]" Commenting on the new developments in today's journalism, she said "I would say that the most significant changes in terms of the Internet are access to far more information than ever before. Journalists now, in my opinion, have an even greater responsibility to act as filters than we did before; and a greater need to write distinctive stories rather than covering the same information as others" - the latter point about the increased need for original reporting falls directly in line with my own call in Chapter 4 and my general argument for more professional quality-journalism.

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[39] The interviews took place July 13 and 14, 2010. Weintraub is the former Deputy Health/Science Editor for *The Boston Globe.* She spent 20 years at major daily newspapers around the US, including *The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Houston Post* (now defunct) and *The Virginian-Pilot*. In addition to journalism, she is currently writing a book on autism with a doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital and teaching journalism at the Harvard Extension School and Boston University's graduate Science Writing program.

[40] In fact, encouraging more critical thinking among audiences of digital news is one of the key sub-goals of this thesis.

[41] See previous footnote about Weintraub's book on autism.

[42] See Axel Bruns, *Gatewatching - Collaborative Online News Production* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2005), 15-17.

Using her own working experience, both as a staff- and freelance writer and editor, Weintraub said "When I worked at The Globe, we had a fairly high standard of ethics dictated by a newspaper-wide ethics policy. The one I mostly butted up against while working in Health/Science (and now face from the other side) was the requirement that freelancers not also be working in public relations. As an editor I had to turn away several would-be freelancers, including some who had written for the paper previously, because their day jobs were in Communications. There is a different perspective you take on the world when you are involved in Public Relations, and that is not a perspective we wanted in news (though some of the same people went on to write travel stories or opinion pieces for The Globe). Now that I'm a freelancer, it is tempting to, say, write press releases for extra money, or for an in-house publication. I have been lucky enough to have enough journalistic work over the last seven months that I have not done that, but they pay probably twice what the Globe pays, so I may not resist forever, particularly if the journalism work dries up. So before, it was an issue of ethics; now, it is an issue of finances and whether I can afford my kids' ballet lessons," she said referring to an issue which has indeed dwarfed many others of an ethical or otherwise professional nature for many in today's news industry: economics.

On the subject of media ethics itself, Weintraub said "Existing codes of ethics are effective if people follow them. Personally, I won't accept anything more than a bottle of water from a source, while some colleagues from equally reputable publications frequently eat meals provided by institutions and individuals they cover. Does that compromise them? Probably not. For me, it was an issue of pride as much as ethics."

"On the other hand," she added, referring to her time as a Knight Science Journalism Fellow at MIT in 2008-09, "by accepting the Knight, which is at MIT, you could argue that I compromised my ethics. I certainly know more about MIT now than I did before and am on a first-name basis with more people who work at MIT -- though I took more classes and ended up with more connections at Harvard. (In the interest of full disclosure, I belonged to the gym at MIT before the fellowship and still do now, though at half the price because I am now considered an Associate Alumni.)

Asked how an ideal ownership model for online news would look and how we can ensure sustainability while maintaining professional standards, Weintraub said she was very interested very interested in the foundation model of journalism, such as Kaiser Health News, for example, funded by the Kaiser Family Foundation. "I think the jury is still out about whether this kind of outlet can produce compelling, important journalism over the long-term. And I'm not sure whether it could ever legitimately cover the health insurer Kaiser Permanente the way the LA Times can, for instance. But I think it is as promising a model for the future of legitimate journalism as any."

No matter what innovative models may emerge as the most effective for the future of news, Weintraub said she is concerned about the increasing overlap between editorial priorities and business interests:

"I worry about commercial journalism going forward, particularly if content continues to be provided for free," she said. She cited the recent[43] example of

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[43] The story broke in 2010. See Problematic Partnerships Part II: Conflicting Interests

ScienceBlogs.com, a collection of blogs produced by Seed Media, which "everyone thought was a legitimate voice for independent bloggers interested in science, (and then) admitted that it allowed companies - for a fee - to blog on the site, without labeling the blogs as advertorial. When that came out (in the context of a nutrition blog produced by a Pepsi employee), the site changed its policy and now says it will label its commercial content."

"Over the last decade, I have watched the firewall that long existed between advertising and news weaken as the Internet ate into profits, and I no longer have the same faith I once did in the distance between money and content in mainstream media," she added. "I guess I mean that it was easier to keep a distance between the news and advertising side when newspapers were making substantial profits. Now that they're not, the two are getting closer together, making joint decisions in a way that never would have happened a decade ago. There's a sense of 'we're all in this together' now that did not exist before."

Judging by the variety of concerns and ideas they expressed, it should be clear that Weintraub, Daniloff, Tye, Kennedy and Schaffer exceed the narrow parameters of the categories attributed to them. But the typology will prove useful when contrasting them to the more practical solutions offered by the next group.

Even though the traditional codes currently in use are fast becoming a cumbersome burden and an inadequate resource to deal with digital changes, many professional practitioners still cling to them. They don't seem able (or willing?) to let go of- or experiment with familiar principles[44], and would rather keep applying them, even in their present 'outdated' forms, preferring to rely only on heightened enforcement. Perhaps as a result, they may appear conservative, and shy away from suggesting that we modify or adapt current codes to establish a revised model.
It is this perceived attachment to current methods by a significant segment of journalists, and the concrete proposals for other tools and innovative experiments offered by some of their colleagues, albeit a minority, which has prompted me to include the latter in the last category of my interviewed sources, 'the pragmatists.'

The Pragmatists

Voicing now familiar misgivings about the feasibility of applying rules to the erratic and hybrid productions of journalism on the Internet, independent new media consultant **Dharmishta Rood** said "I don't think it's possible to regulate journalists on platforms that publish user-generated content from journalists and non-journalists alike. Journalism has become more ubiquitous on the social web, where content creators are broadcasters of information, and thus hard to discern what is 'journalism' and what isn't on these platforms. Not only do new platforms emerge all the time, but if there are strong barriers to publishing information on a given platform, users can switch to a new platform to broadcast information."[45]

Rood, who co-founded the open-source college journalism 'Populous Project,' then offered a glimpse into what an interesting alternative method of editorial control

in Chapter 4 for more on this.
[44] It must be acknowledged that the dangers of this are evident. See Chapter 2.
[45] The interview was conducted July 19, 2010.

could look like if implemented according to her recommendations for an open-source, collaborative approach to journalism ethics: "I think that there should be a communal, implicit code of ethics that exists among journalists at newspapers, for example respecting things that are 'off the record' or 'chatham house rule'[46] and welcoming bloggers with and without press passes to the community of journalists is an important first step in bringing journalism's values to the new community of bloggers."

Sadly, but not surprisingly given the many still unresolved technical and cultural difficulties, she stops short of thinking further about design and implementation of such a 'communal, 'implicit' method of regulation in online communities of news networks, publications and individual journalists. Even if we do not end up with an 'explicit,' concrete code of ethics, how can we make her idea for self-regulation concrete and practical for news producers and users on the Net?

As for current codes and how present-day knowledge of media ethics could be used to improve values-based decisions and compliance with the principles of the profession, Rood said we should take a second look at the ethical possibilities offered by the law and how legal implications for questionable conduct could be the answer. And even ethical or professional missteps carried out online could realistically be subjected to such normative scrutiny - as her inclusion of bloggers suggests.

"I think the most effective thing about ethics and journalism is the legal threat (libel, slander, etc), as even bloggers and others who use social media to spread information share, or should share the fear of legal threat, and accountability," she said. "The best ethics step we can take is making sure people who spread information are legally accountable for it (of course not when they are anonymous)."

Of course, ethical journalism has a long history of being enforced by the law.[47] But Rood's first suggested step toward bringing change to an outdated traditional system of editorial control calls for transferring our existing rules and penalties to cyberspace and extending responsibility for one's publishing endeavors to online communities. These - to think a little further and preview my own proposal in the later part of this chapter - could act in a collaborative manner and engage in a form of cooperative self-regulation, as journalists engage with each other and share information and reporting tips on social media sites and other online venues.

The only problem one may see in Rood's argument for using the law as a 'threat' to enforce compliance with rules and moral conduct in general among bloggers and

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[46] "The Chatham House Rule is a core principle that governs the confidentiality of the source of information received at a meeting. Since its refinement in 2002, the rule states:[1] When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. The rule allows people to speak as individuals and to express views that may not be those of their organisations, and therefore, encourages free discussion." For more, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chatham_House_Rule. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[47] I have referred to journalism ethics being imposed by the law in Chapter 2, but since the spheres of law and morality are not the primary topics of my research, I will direct readers to John C. Watson, *Journalism Ethics by Court Decree - The Supreme Court on the Proper Practice of Journalism* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 1954) especially Chapter1, 9-17.

journalists is that it is eerily reminiscent of the scare tactics used by repressive governments to solicit any desired behavior from their constituents.

Ruling and enforcing a desired philosophy through fear are unlikely to inspire the kind of personal motivation that drives a sense of moral responsibility to act ethically and care about one's community of sources and readers.

Asked about her vision of an ideal model for online collaborative news, Rood depicts a concept that is assuredly very far from present-day reality, but understandably desirable: "I don't think that news organizations should be supported by a single entity's money (owned by a company or the government), because news organizations need to have the perceived and actual freedom to hold anyone accountable for their actions," she said.

Of course, we are very far from such a system if we think of the way corporations are involved in the US media, or of other admittedly interesting and quite unique models such as The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which is a public service broadcaster funded mostly by an annual television license fee charged to British individual taxpayers and organizations, at a rate set by the government.[48]

Elaborating on the question of regulation and/or standardization of collaborative digital journalism, former director of the MIT Center for Civic Media **Ellen Hume**, now a Annenberg Fellow in Civic Media at the Central European University in Budapest, immediately set into 'solution mode,' suggesting a concrete method and tool for improving ethics adherence in new media: "My view is that the public deserves to know if some news producers are reaching for a higher ethical standard. Standards should be delineated and expressed perhaps with an embedded footnote that shows this author has subscribed to these ethics, so even as the news is spread away from its home origin, it can carry the 'seal of conduct' with it," she explained. "My view is that the same values that the best professional journalism observed can be appreciated in the other media formats: honesty, independence, transparency, accountability. The more complicated effort by some professional journalists to be 'objective' and nonpartisan in presenting a variety of perspectives, rather than to advocate a narrower point of view, is one area where the ethics codes might diverge. But if a tagging system were developed this could include several aspects of an ethical code, including the option to declare an attempt at objectivity in the news artifact."

As she cites the long list of ethical dilemmas that she sees facing online journalists, it becomes clear that Hume considers many of them to be perennial problems pertaining to basic media ethics and not exclusively products of the new media environment. But she, however, notes a significant change - or need, to be more exact - that of the increased pressure on audiences to be more media-savvy and vigilant about news on the Internet, recalling my earlier note on the importance of nurturing a critical audience of media consumers and participants.

"Being a good journalist always involves ethical dilemmas, virtually every day," she said in an interview she participated in from her new base at the CEU in Hungary.[49] "The problems include: how do you honor the innocent who have become ensnared in a story that is not of their own making? How do you do justice to the various points of view that the public deserves to know about, when you personally believe one of

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[48] For more on the BBC, see
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC. Accessed April 18, 2012.
[49] The interview was conducted July 18, 2010.

these views to be better than another? How can you provide information that you are convinced is true, but whose source is unwilling to stand by it on the record? What do you do when someone has lied to you and you have published that lie unwittingly? Being transparent and fair has always been a challenge. Now the audiences are generating much of the story with the journalist, so the question of who is accountable for the quality of the information is very challenging. The responsibility for the credibility of the information has shifted from the author to the consumer, who has to weigh the source and decide whether to believe it or not. Yet consumers are often ill-prepared to judge the quality of the information at hand. This is why transparency from the authors, and media literacy education, are more important now than ever."

This higher level of engagement and responsibility of physical and online audiences, and the resulting need to somehow 'train' them in online media ethics is an important part of the conclusions I draw in the later part of this chapter. So Hume's point is a useful preview and addition to my thesis' final conclusions.

Drawing from her experience as a news-reporter, Hume added "As a political reporter I was always under attack from someone who wanted me to push their partisan position. Even my most careful work to present fairly all sides would be criticized as 'biased' because it showed multiple perspectives instead of the single perspective of the reader. Ethics are very important to the best journalists, because ethics give their work its power and authority. But the audience is often unaware when someone has gone to those lengths to be honorable in their work, and is often too quick to believe the partisan attacks on 'the media' when journalists try to hold the powerful accountable."

The most 'pragmatic' of all my personally interviewed sources, Hume gave more concrete details on her idea for an ethics system for online journalists: "Tagged information embedded in a story could help establish its origins and refer to a code of conduct that the author has agreed to follow. The code of conduct should be about the author's attempt to be honest about what he/she is presenting, to be as complete and fair as possible, to be independent of hidden agendas or special interests, and to be personally accountable for the information," she said of the potential benefits of her proposed technological feature, which I did not attempt to apply to my own Open Park system and code (for time reasons), but which may well be a promising project for future code designers to explore.

Hume too, like most her colleagues in the profession quoted here, sees a future model for digital news that has been enriched by a variety of previous attempts, both pilot and completed ones. "I see a combination of several business models: nonprofit news collectives sponsored transparently by disinterested philanthropy (such as Pro-Publica), universities (such as New England Center for Investigative Reporting at BU) or other independent institutions (Poynter Institute); micropayments and pay walls for some information; and public/private partnership models such as the BBC, PBS and NPR," she said.

Before we move onto further thoughts and solutions from the broader spheres of the news industry, we can already draw some interesting preliminary conclusions. Notably, I found that my selected interviewees offered great perspectives because most of them, even though they hailed from a traditional journalism background, with decades working in the field, have, with few exceptions, re-invented themselves for

the new media economy, becoming authors, journalism teachers, bloggers and new media critics, among other creative ventures they launched as means to compensate for lost or diminished traditional duties.[50]

In fact, it was hard to find a journalist from the industry still fully engaged in the traditional models, even online. Their original traditional titles and duties of reporter, editor, photographer and others have converged to the point of creating new areas within news publishing.

As such, their views and experiences are invaluable for my proposed code of ethics, since it is precisely such users that it is targeting - today's professional journalists, who often have made the transition to freelance and other personal enterprises, in addition to new jobs in converged media organizations. Recently uprooted from their traditional structures, and hard pressed to adapt to the still unwritten laws of their new companies, they are the one I see as having the greatest need for such ethical guidance in their online work.

Morality, Codes, Collaboration: More Proposals

While the warnings about the risks of too much regulation and recommendations for an ideal model from my narrowly categorized interviewed sources unquestionably contributed to parts of my proposals, they are by no means the only ones. I offer here a selection of the most influential thoughts from the larger world of global media critics and journalists, which have in some way inspired certain features of my proposed code of ethics and collaborative news system.

And as we read through these ideas and explore some of them more deeply, we may also want to keep asking ourselves, 'what do we want to retain from them that we could use to form a sustainable and ethics-based collaborative online news system?' Whether by embracing these ideas or by deconstructing them - and engaging in many evaluating actions in-between, I indicate where my philosophical allegiances lie in terms of journalism ethics as well as the origins of the foundations of my argument for media ethics reform.

As we proceed to phrase our own moral code for journalists, it is worth recalling some of the urgent arguments of my selected media experts cited earlier, and ponder whether this is the directions that we want to go. Shall we, for instance, write from scratch a brand new 'moral language' - as British media scholars Morrison, Kieran, Svennevig and Ventress call for in their *Media and Values* book?[51] Their argument for developing the right moral language to help us acquire and maintain the specific virtues that are now needed when working collaboratively on the Internet, and which I expounded in Chapter 2, certainly has much weight. But such an enterprise seems to

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[50] Just to give an additional example than those duties I cited, Larry Tye is also, in addition to becoming a non-fiction writer following his years as a news-reporter, the director of the Boston-based "Health Coverage Fellowship," which trains journalists in covering more professionally public health issues. I should note that these enterprising transfers of knowledge and duties are not limited to this latest group of interviewed sources, but also apply to those who appear earlier in the thesis.

[51] See Chapter 2; as well as David E. Morrison, Matthew Kieran, Michael Svennevig and Sarah Ventress, *Media & Values - Intimate Transgressions in a Changing Moral and Cultural Landscape* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007 in the UK, 2008 in the US) Chapter 1 25.

deserve its own thesis - if only to tackle the apparently intractable issue of how to reach consensus on the terms and meanings of this new, values-based language (even if it is understood that it will not be totally 'new' in the literal sense, but a revised version built on existing words and concepts, as all innovations are). For all their arguments that today we are not giving enough thought to the kind of values we want in a liberal and voluntaristic media regulation system[52], their suggested task feels a little overwhelming at best, and at worst, impractical, if not unfeasible. But this should by no means discourage journalism scholars, practitioners and students from brainstorming in their online and offline communities about possibly revising and updating the 'old' principles. As I argue throughout the thesis, this discussion is most needed.

So since (re)writing a new, 'more moral' language is out of the question as it falls beyond the parameters of the thesis and presents multiple obstacles at both the design and implementation levels, we then have to think of different approaches to the kind of morality we want to infuse a regulatory system and how to do this in concrete terms.

Although not speaking specifically about news and journalism, Princeton philosophy professor Kwame Anthony Appiah's examination of what he calls "moral revolutions" offers, in the words of a *Publishers' Weekly* reviewer, "a refreshingly concrete solution to the question of how to alter deeply objectionable, deeply intractable human practices." His *The Honor Code: How Revolutions Happen* argues that fluctuating interpretations of honor and morality throughout history and the altering of these notions through moral revolutions have provoked both "positive changes in social behavior" and the continuation of "abhorrent practices (that) often continue despite their criminalization."[53]

This observation raises for media ethics reformers questions about whether we are ready to alter and expand the core principles of professional journalism to accommodate new social practices now prevalent on the Net.
Being flexible and willing to expand both job definitions and the rules and philosophies behind them is certainly a skill that is increasingly valued in today's news economy. Such an expansion may be greatly beneficial since a reduction in rigid rules can lead to greater freedom of speech.
But we also need to ask, where is the limit? Tampering with the core values of ethics and a profession's established principles should not be done lightly or without prior consultation with one's communities. Even if in journalism the consequences do not reach the level of 'criminalization,' as Appiah warns, we are on slippery terrain and facing more ethical dilemmas in future if this discussion is skipped and consensus is not reached on what can and cannot be changed.

Not that I am arguing for drafting inflexible rules and preserving ethical values that are carved in stone. In fact, at the beginning of my research for the thesis, I actually envisioned rewriting some of these core values in the long democratic tradition of free

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[52] Morrison et al., 26-27.
[53] See
http://www.amazon.com/Honor-Code-Moral-Revolutions-Happen/dp/039334052X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1326920579&sr=1-1.
Accessed April 18, 2012.

thought to leave room for the evolving and future 'non-traditional' and often unexpected behaviors and decisions that producing and interacting with Internet news seem to require.

Having given ample evidence of the need for a stable ethical foundation in digital media in Chapters 3 and 4, I have now the firm conviction that we need more, not less, caution and regulation in digital collaborative news production, and that journalists in all media need to stick to the core traditional values enunciated in the SPJ Code. The established rules have a place in digital collaborative media, only, they have to be adapted skillfully, ethically.

Perhaps this return to an earlier, stricter philosophy of news editorial practices (but with an adaptive twist for technological means of production) is a sign of digital media and collaborative news' cyclical nature too: no matter how innovative and ground-breaking, these open-source, ever-evolving hybrid new projects too are subject to the same transitional forces that I described in my early chapters. Thus, just as there was a time when there was a strong interest in discarding all the rules, there was also a time in American journalism when more control was vehemently demanded, most notably by the public.[54]

In any case, and whichever model one decides to adopt, it is hard to envision a future news environment where one will find prevailing such risky and irresponsible behaviors as that embodied by Hunter S. Thompson's boastful comment in his 'Gonzo biography' *Kingdom of Fear*: "As a journalist, I somehow managed to break most of the rules and still succeed," he wrote.[55]
The book has its symbolic place here, as its main theme focuses on rebellion against authority. Needless to say that my own proposed model, based on journalism's best traditional principles, excludes any new forms related to-or inspired by Thompson's 'Gonzo journalism,' of which he once said, " "If I'd written the truth I knew for the past ten years, about 600 people—including me—would be rotting in prison cells from Rio to Seattle today. Absolute truth is a very rare and dangerous commodity in the context of professional journalism."[56]
Considering what we observed in the WikiLeaks case study, we can assuredly say that Thompson is perfectly right: disclosing the full truth - and especially its sources - can be dangerous for the safety of those involved, as well as for the audience who may not be adequately equipped and trained to handle highly technical and sensitive policy data. Still, the moral foundation of my argument for accurate, original reporting in this thesis is incompatible with what was defined in Thompson's time as 'new journalism,' which encyclopedic site WikiPedia briefly defines as "tend(ing) to favor

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[54] See Chapter 2 on the evolution of media ethics and ethics codes for a detailed description of these processes. To learn more about the public protests against the press see Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News - A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1967).
[55] Hunter S. Thompson, *Kingdom of Fear - Loathsome Secrets of a Star-Crossed Child in the Final Days of the American Century* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2003) 187; Not technically an autobiography - for more on this work, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Fear_(book). Accessed April 18, 2012.
[56] Thompson made this comment in an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine published Feb 15, 1973; See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gonzo_journalism. Accessed April 18, 2012.

style over fact to achieve accuracy - if accuracy is in fact meant to be achieved at all (...)."[57]

Since I argue that accuracy is being increasingly challenged in online news, but still not optional, the need for a regulatory tool is evident.

This is why we have media ethics: its beauty lies in the fact that it forces journalists to acknowledge *the nuances* in news events and situations, and make considerate and fair decisions about their dissemination, ideally in a concerted effort with one's community of colleagues. This, I argue, more than ever, is needed for online news production.

Towards Common Solutions

Other well-directed open-source initiatives have offered very sensible and practical advice for creating a more ethically conscious model for online communications. One that comes immediately to mind - even though it is not strictly speaking only about journalism and addresses a quite specific age range - is the MacArthur Foundation project GoodPlay, which promotes the practical idea of 'ethical supports' for online participants in information production and exchange on the Net, and whose findings were published in a synthesis entitled "Young People, Ethics, and the New Digital Media."[58]

In the brief expose, the authors explain how 'ethical supports,' namely "adult supports - parent role models, teacher mentors, and school curricula - can play decisive roles in young people's online choices. Positive adult role models can provide resources to help youth buck the norms of the offline cheating culture and make considered choices online with respect to identity, privacy, ownership and authorship, credibility, and participation." They also suggest that such ethical guidance can also increasingly be provided "through digital media themselves," such as educational games and online open source curricula such as the New Media Literacies Learning Library.[59]

Of course such proposals for parental- and other social sources of supervision (and perhaps limitations) inevitably conjure up images of government oversight and other communications controls, or simply the old, traditional editorial model of 'gatekeeping.' The question here is, do we want to revive those roles and reintegrate them into open-source digital systems?

But considering that the GoodPlay Project leaders propose to supplement the ethical lessons learned via one's social circles with those of other, digital educational resources; and vice versa, to enhance the online experience with "offline adult and peer reflection and discussion," then it must be recognized that with its all-inclusive approach, the project offers what seems to be a very sensible, ideal model that combines innovation, participation, values-based purpose, and ethical guidance.

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[57] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gonzo_journalism. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[58] *Young People, Ethics, and the New Digital Media - A Synthesis from the GoodPlay Project* by Katie Davis, Andrea Flores, John M. Francis, Lindsay Pettingill, Margaret Rundle, and Howard Gardner (The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital Learning) (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009) 85-87); A first mention of the project can be found in Chapter 1.

[59] Davis et al., 85-86.

The issues that the researchers sought to help young people deal with revolved around illegal downloading of creative content and thus problems with IP rights, as well as privacy when it came to their interactions in social networks. But these issues regarding "a sense of entitlement about information and property" are certainly not uncommon among journalists. As for the GoodPlay Project's selected demographic segment for its study, the specific age range described as 'youth,' I would similarly argue that adults (including media professionals and their audiences) are also confronted by many of the ethical issues that the researchers cover. The authors' observation that "There is tremendous pressure on young people to develop the cognitive and moral skills and integrity of beliefs, values, and purposes that engender good play" is quite similar to what professional journalists who are making the transition to their publications' digitized versions are experiencing right now. And they too, as I have argued in this thesis, are quite on their own when figuring out how to remain righteous and professional online.

Moreover, the support they propose to provide to make better ethical decisions on the Internet does not involve rigid rules and impractical codes, but rather, seems to rely on a multi-source, suggestive, 'soft' approach.

"Ideally, our good play model provides a balance of technologies, opportunities, and supports that set the stage for young people to become productive, innovative, and ethical participants in the new digital media," the report's authors conclude.[60]

All in all, it seems that there are a lot of ideas and concepts that an ideal model for online collaborative news-publishing could take from the GoodPlay Project, with only a few adjustments, such as expanding its applications to news and journalism and to a wider age spectrum. What this project and the other proposals for maintaining quality in online journalism show is that my own final thoughts on these questions and my proposed model for collaborative news will also most likely be the results of *adjustments* made to existing established structures and innovative ideas for future collaborative news projects.

In fact, "adjusting ethical practices" for the digital age is exactly what media scholar Kathleen German argues for in her essay on ethics in emerging media.[61] Her insistence on the importance of recognizing "the wisdom of our past" and developing a strong personal moral foundation shares much with my proposal for improving digital news.. And she too has identified deficiencies in current codes that make them inadequate for the new needs of online journalists:

"Traditional codes of ethics have not kept pace with the rapid growth of emerging media," she writes in the closing paragraph of her essay. "In the realm of traditional news, the rapid influx of citizen journalists has challenged the established one-way institution-based news-gathering organizations. Existing codes of ethics do not cover the fundamental dialogic nature of online communication. And the result has been a medium that has evolved swiftly while flouting many of journalism's traditional rules. It is through such changes that ethics emerge. So let's approach this new communications frontier with an understanding of the wisdom of our past,

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[60] Davis et al., 87.

[61] Kathleen German, "Citizen Journalists and Civic Responsibility: Decorum in an Age of Emerging Media," *The Ethics of Emerging Media - Information, Social Norms, and New Media Technology*, Edited by Bruce E. Drushel and Kathleen German (New York: Continuum, 2011) 251-268, especially 259.

remembering that we will be judged by the kind of character we display in the work we do," she exhorts us.[62]

Yet another source of inspiration and possibly a model for our own code-drafting enterprise is an innovative and bold Web initiative that seeks to counter the rigid privacy policies and brutal advertising of social networking sites such as Facebook. In an article denouncing Facebook's "dictatorship," Huffington Post writer Bianca Bosker wrote how the new social networking site, called 'Unthink, "seeks to unseat the likes of Twitter, Google+ and Facebook with a premise that bucks convention in the web world: giving users complete control over their information and not letting advertisers get at it."[63]

One remarkable feature of this new venture, one that we want to emulate for our own ethics code, is its emphasis on good principles for online communications. As Bosker wrote, "Unthink is defined as much by the values it espouses as its technical features, which remain bare-bones at best and frequently buggy." The new 'anti-Facebook' site even comes complete with a code of ethics, or rather, its own version of it - a rare component of new Web initiatives.
Only, if we are to take a page out of Unthink's book for inspiration, then it should stop here. We do not want to repeat the apparent mistake the project's designers made when deciding how best to convey the site's philosophy and guidelines.
Indeed, according to Bosker, they are overwhelming users with a sea of rules, do's, and don'ts:

"The social network offers pages upon pages of deeds, covenants, manifestos and principles that spell out guidelines for the new online community. Unthink's narrative weaves a tale of uprising, revolt and liberation, casting Facebook as the evil overlord and Unthink as the savior of a populace held captive," she writes.
"In its deed with Unthinkers, Unthink describes Facebook as a 'cyber-monopoly' with a 'history of arrogance' that is guilty of 'repeated exploitation of the people.'
'Its dictatorship must end,' the deed reads. 'The time has come for the people to rise up and declare their emancipation.'
Unthink's manifesto exhorts its users to live by 18 principles, such as 'never negotiate any freedoms,' 'look for the angel in every person,' 'elevate your attitude' and 'dream big'," she cited.

May this example remind us of the need to keep any reforms simple.

Formulas to Emulate

Perhaps as we come closer to my own proposed reform and code adapted for collaborative digital news in the chapter that follows, it is worth reminding ourselves of the moral value of collaboration, and how the practice is after all not intrinsic to new media, but rather a chief characteristic of professional American journalism.

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[62] German, 268.
[63] Bianca Bosker, Unthink, "The 'Anti-Facebook,' Wants To Free You From Social Networks' 'Dictatorship," The Huffington Post, Nov 2, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/01/unthink-the-anti-facebook_n_1069466.html. Accessed Nov. 1, 2011.

We can find evidence of this collaborative drive in the practice of principled journalism in a note that U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart wrote about the unique role that the press had under the Constitution. According to Stewart, the Constitution's Framers held that:

"[A] free press was not just a neutral vehicle for the balanced discussion of diverse ideas. Instead, the free press meant *organized*, expert scrutiny of government. The press was a conspiracy of the intellect, with *the courage of numbers*. This formidable check on official power was what the British Crown had feared - and what the American Founders decided to risk."[64]

Here it is of course the words 'organized' and 'the courage of numbers' (emphasis added) that should retain our attention. The fact that the Framers of the Constitution saw collaborative efforts as an ethical act in itself is certainly an encouraging thought for present-day applications of participatory modes of journalism, including in the digital realm.

But the most inspirational thoughts on a truly ethical system for the future of journalism can be found in an Opinion piece by American journalist and author Chris Hedges.
Although not writing literally on the theme of journalism (the article addresses issues of education and public schools specifically), Hedges offers a picture of the personal integrity and critical sense that I argue are absolutely necessary for ethical collaborative journalistic endeavors. Moreover, he shows us how these qualities can be developed and nurtured, and what questions both journalists and their audiences should be asking to reach this point.
Virtually all his comments and observations can be applied to the sphere of mass media and news readerships:

Starting broadly by denouncing fraud, corporate greed and the amoral situation of hungry children and uninsured ailing citizens, Hedges shows us how ethical conduct in one's community and the world at large starts at home:

"Thought is a dialogue with one's inner self. Those who think ask questions, questions those in authority do not want asked.... They remain eternally skeptical and distrustful of power. And they know that this moral independence is the only protection from the radical evil that results from collective unconsciousness. The capacity to think is the only bulwark against any centralized authority that seeks to impose mindless obedience. There is a huge difference, as Socrates understood, between teaching people what to think and teaching them how to think. Those who are endowed with a moral conscience refuse to commit crimes, even those sanctioned by the corporate state, because they do not in the end want to live with criminals--themselves," he writes.[65]

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[64] Potter Stewart, Or of the Press, 26 Hastings L.J. 631, 634 (1975); Robert Trager, Joseph Russomano, Susan Dente Ross, The Law of Journalism & Mass Communication, "Is Journalism a 'Conspiracy of Intellect'?" (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2010) 50.
[65] Chris Hedges, "Our Public Schools Are Churning Out Drones for the Corporate State," AlterNet, April 11, 2011,

In addition, he pinpoints what (again theoretically) journalists could do to become better, more ethically conscious persons - and therefore journalists: "Those who can ask the right questions are armed with the capacity to make a moral choice, to defend the good in the face of outside pressure."

Most interestingly for our purpose, what Hedges is telling us here is what I have been arguing implicitly all along in my thesis, and do so explicitly in the last two chapters: that asking good, critical, 'questioning' questions is fast becoming a lost art among journalists working on the Internet.

Indeed, in addition to the interesting link that Hedges makes between the basic journalistic task of asking questions and the higher goal of morality, his remark also gives a glimpse at my final argument (and conclusion), which calls for a return to core professional practices.

Still encouraging the capacity and moral responsibility to think critically as individuals first and foremost, Hedges makes another interesting observation about regulation and how the way rules are designed - or rather, *by whom* - can make a crucial difference in their successful implementation. "Those who meekly obey laws and rules imposed from the outside -- including religious laws -- are not moral human beings. The fulfillment of an imposed law is morally neutral. The truly educated make their own wills serve the higher call of justice, empathy and reason," he writes.

The formula to retain here is the idea of making one's own rules, which for the purpose of attempting to regulate to some extent collaborative journalism certainly has plenty of appeal. Self-regulation on such a smaller, self-contained scale is a variant that I am actually proposing in my proposed applications for the Open Park Code, such as for its use by communities of collaborating journalists.

Of course, this is already the essence of journalistic codes of ethics - voluntary self-regulation within the small group of a news company or community of journalists. But by 'self-regulation on a smaller scale,' I mean 'really small', that is, at the *individual* level. As I explained in Chapter 2, ethics starts with a person's own sense of morality and conduct, which then naturally spills over onto his/her fellow members in any given group he/she interacts with and the professional community at large. Thus, while I certainly argue for the idea of creative self-regulation in groups of collaborating online journalists, I first and foremost support it at the *individual* level. This is first of all the kind of 'self-regulation' that I am proposing through the OP Code - for *each and everyone single* user to learn, digest and make the best possible use of its tenets; and then to see how his/her own interpretations and uses of the guidelines can be applied to harmoniously with a group of collaborating journalists or his/her colleagues in a news company or project.

Of course, this 'solution' is not without its pitfalls, and soon enough the practical realities of trying to implement it will raise serious questions about equal and representative participation in the design phase, enforcement community-wide, and possibilities for further use and standardization once a community-based news project is over - among other potential issues. But as my readers will see later in this chapter, this is one proposal for self-regulation that I explore as part of my suggested code and collaborative platform.

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http://www.alternet.org/news/150578/our_public_schools_are_churning_out_drones_for_the_corporate_state/?page=entire. Accessed April 11, 2011.

And when Hedges cites Hannah Arendt warning us that "We must fear those whose moral system is built around the flimsy structure of blind obedience. We must fear those who cannot think. Unconscious civilizations become totalitarian wastelands," we cannot help but being reminded of the "dialogue with one's inner self" that Hedges establishes as the foundation of all else.

I would even add here that no amount of technological tools is going to facilitate collaborative journalism if this initial check with one's own values is from the start flawed, or worse, non-existent. Once we have established this foundation, the inevitable challenge for anyone seeking to translate such abstract moral foundations for online media ethics into concrete results in news-reporting is how to embed these values into a regulatory and editorial tool that journalists can use in their daily duties. I would be bragging and lying if I said that I have found a concrete method. But my proposals go at least a little in the direction for such an ideal, ethics-based yet practical system.

Hedge's solution can be summarized as the need for more and better education. "The truly educated become conscious. They become self-aware," he writes.

What is sure, is that the American Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist presents a perfect model for what I argue should form the basis of any reformed code of ethics or other adapted standards for participatory digital news - one based on individual morality, without which there cannot be ethical, professional collaborative teams of online journalists.

Another author who is well aware, and appreciative it seems, of the importance of individual character in a functioning larger system of media regulation is British media scholar Philip Dring, who in an essay for David Berry's book *Ethics and Media Culture* lamented the decline in standing and ethics of the press in the UK and considered alternative standards and methods for developing an ethical framework for the new digital contexts.[66] Here I should note that although Dring's analysis focuses on the British news media, the situation there is subject to the same social and technological upheavals as in the United States.

Dring actually does not hide his frustration at the changing nature of regulation and ethics in Britain and "the sheer complexity" of attempting "to relocate British journalism within good practice in other countries." To the traditional craft professionalism must be added "codes of ethics, the various notions of professionalism, including the traditional, the network of media law that has developed in Britain, the marketplace access and ownership," he writes.[67]

But citing a survey of European codes of ethics aimed at determining whether "there is sufficient ground to consider the development of a common, shared code of practice,"[68] Dring makes a pertinent comparison between the values systems of Britain and The United States that may prove useful in helping us determine an ideal model for collaborative news.

Most notably, Dring identifies in the US system of media regulation strong leanings towards an individualistic approach. Contrary to the "somewhat mechanistic approach

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[66] Philip Dring, "Codes and Cultures," *Ethics and Media Culture - Practices and Representations*, Edited by David Berry (Waltham MA: Focal Press, 2000) 311-324.
[67] Dring, 314.
[68] The survey was conducted by Tiina Laitila in 1995, and examined 31 codes of ethics in 29 European countries; Dring, 315.

[that] might be seen as typical of a European pattern of development which has placed a greater faith in the ability of laws and issues of professional practice to protect the freedom of the press and to force the media to serve the public," he writes, "In the USA, the approach is much more one of the individual journalist being able to make moral and ethical decisions. At its extreme form John C. Merrill's comment that 'Journalists must seek ethical guidance from within themselves, not from codes of organizations, commissions or councils' might stand, and it is worth noting that Merrill believed that social responsibilities placed on journalists posed a real threat to expressive freedom."[69]

Given my argument for an initial focus on the individual, this is the recognition of an approach that I am tempted to celebrate, and I believe we can build upon it to make it more suitable to the demands of hybrid, digitized media.
Such a step is not without obstacles, however, and Dring himself recognizes the difficulties when he says that "The emphasis in the USA is very much on the individual journalist being enabled *to wrestle* with ethical problems." (emphasis added).

What this means for us, is first of all, that the journalists Dring writes about could certainly do with a concrete tool to help them become more effective at personal ethical decisions in their jobs - with the assumption that this would lead to better, more ethical collaborations, both within newsrooms and with the outside world.
Secondly, Dring's observations might inspire us to design a model that takes the best of both worlds, that is, one based on established, institutionalized practices but which encourages individual critical thinking and decisions on issues, on a case-by-case basis.
Describing the different types of ethics codes in journalism, Dring writes "First, there are codes of behaviour which seek to inform individual journalists, in a manner related to the individualistic approach reviewed earlier (the National Union of Journalists' Code of Conduct may be seen as falling into this framework). Secondly, there are the codes which seek to create regulatory frameworks which apply to the broader journalistic environment. The Press Complaints Commissions Code of Practice, for example, makes references to editorial responsibilities and the role and function of newspapers within certain contexts as well as issues relating to the position of the individual journalist."[70]

I would propose to resolve this apparent conflict with a combination of the two models, and seek to embed the values of both the larger journalistic institutions and those of personal ethics into one concrete, user-friendly tool: a code of ethics that would be sensitive to all the fluctuations that influence individual and collective morality as they are confronted by all sorts of destabilizing elements on the Internet. This does not mean that its core, established principles of professional journalism could be bent backwards or ignored. Only, the code would allow for diverging individual points of views and possible adaptations depending on the case or ethical issue that it is being used for.

Making such a regulatory tool dual in nature and open source (adaptable by its users as needed) dissolves Dring's perceived dilemma of conflicting codes. Moreover, it is

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[69] Dring, 313.
[70] Dring, 315-316.

my firm belief that even though it would most likely be imperfect and in need of adjustments, such a 'complete' model is a possible, realizable project - as I demonstrate in the section on my proposed code of ethics in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: 'Solutions'[1] and Conclusions

My Proposals

Collaboration: the Way to Go

By means of introducing my four proposed solutions for ethical collaboration in professional journalism on the Internet, I should emphasize here one key component of my argument: that I consider collaboration as an intrinsically ethical act.
Indeed, as I demonstrated in my early chapters with analyses of media scholar Axel Bruns' theories on participatory journalism, open news and multiperspectivity, the activities of news-sharing, discussing and collaborating in news-gathering, -writing and editing can lead to a form of journalism that is (to use Bruns' terms) deliberative, more representative of varied views, and ultimately more democratic.

This by no means implies that the foundation of my argument - that strong personal ethics is essential for professional practice - is made any weaker by this emphasis on collaboration. Perhaps it would be more correct then to say that my argument is composed of *two* key components: a belief that initially a solid individual ethical foundation is essential for producing quality news-reporting upon which one can then build ethical collaboration with colleagues-journalists and peers at large.[2]
 I see these two levels of development of media ethics awareness as complementary for good practice on the Internet. May this proposed reconciliation constitute part of my contributions to the field of collaborative news theory.

There are certainly many new challenges presented by digital changes described in Chapters 3 and 4, and highlighted further by the partnering difficulties of the WikiLeaks case, but these should not deter professional journalists, attached to institutions or not, from trying to collaborate with their colleagues and the communities of less professional citizen journalists and bloggers on the Net.
 Journalists of all stripes and news organizations of all sizes and specializations may gain much and grow through such collaborations. The advantages may well outweigh the editorial and ethics-related difficulties - *if* the collaborating teams still make an effort to discuss and solve the latter as best as possible.

Another ethical dimension of my vision of professional collaboration in online news is the concept of non-competitiveness, which for most traditional mainstream media is anathema to their core business philosophies.
Here the moral choice involves making truth, accuracy and a story enriched by multiple perspectives and contributions from different news organizations take precedence over business interests and other competition-related obstacles.

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[1] Only proposed ones, and by no means infallible - hence the inverted commas.
[2] Collaborators and partners, as I have noted on several occasions throughout the thesis, can be the staff and freelancers within one news organization; staff and independent journalists from outside one's company (including from competing media companies); and larger 'crowds' of amateur and semi-professional and citizen journalists in the larger Blogosphere and Internet in general - the latter partners being the hardest segment in which to encourage ethical, professional practice.

Speaking to *The New York Times* on how his news organization supplemented its coverage of the 'Arab Spring' protests in Egypt by collaborating with amateur partners on the ground, Al Jazeera Director General Wadah Khanfar said "In my opinion, this is a new ecosystem emerging in media, between the so-called traditional media and the new media. And this new ecosystem is not based on competition and who is going to win, it's based on complementing each other. When our correspondents were banned, we had thousands of correspondents through these activists," he said.[3]

This is but one example of a successful collaboration. And even though what Khanfar describes is still happening at a level where fierce competition may not be expected (since the interaction it involves is between staff journalists and non-professionals), it may be safely presumed that such endeavors are a first step that will lead to more established partnerships between two or more traditionally competing professional news organizations in the near future.

Another key characteristic of the ideal model for collaborative digital journalism is the philosophy of open news publishing, as defined by Bruns.[4]

The concept, when applied to the field of journalism, certainly goes beyond the technical confines of software development to include the broader participatory and democratic possibilities that I mentioned above.

But what should additionally retain the attention of ethics codes drafters is the possibilities for self-regulation that such a model of news production offers. As Dan Gillmor wrote in his 2004 book *We the Media*, "An open source philosophy may produce better journalism at the outset, but that's just the start of a wider phenomenon. In the conventional mode of journalism I suggested in the Introduction, the first article may be only the beginning of the conversation in which we all enlighten each other. We can correct our mistakes. We can add new facts and context."[5]

While Gillmor correctly points out the many acts of self-correction and D.I.Y. editions already present in online news, both randomly in discussion forums and in more concerted efforts, it must be said that his blissful vision of enlightening and carefree cooperative coaching a little too enthusiastically skips the ethical dimension, that is, the difficulties that may arise with such representative models (issues of reticence from the traditional mass media, evaluating the credibility and quality of the contributions and their sources, among others). Nowhere do they appear in the short section (two pages and a half) devoted to the topic.

But with thoughtful debate and a little awareness-raising about these issues, the self-regulatory capacities and other advantages of the open-source model are evident.

 I have therefore made sure to design my proposed reporting system and code of withcs as open-source projects. The 'Proposals' section gives the logistical details of these initiatives.

All in all the benefits of collaboration among news professionals are many, and

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[3] Brian Stelter, "Televising the Revolution - Al Jazeera Hopes Reports From Egypt Open Doors in U.S.," *The New York Times*, Feb 7, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/business/media/07aljazeera.html?pagewanted=all. Accessed Feb. 6, 2011.

[4] Axel Bruns, *Gatewatching - Collaborative Online News Production* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2005) see especially Chapter 4 on making news open source, 53.

[5] Dan Gillmor, *We the Media* (Sebastapol CA: O'Reilly, 2004) 18.

recommendations on how to implement it in hybrid news models on the Internet and other devices are abundant.

Chris Brogan's *Social Media 101* is replete with good advice on how to initiate, increase and facilitate partnerships in information exchange and production in cyberspace, all of which can easily applied to the context of news. With several chapters devoted to the theme and a special section on "Ways to enhance social media power," the book encourages us to: "Find like-minded media makers; Use Twitter to develop relationships by communicating with people and finding folks who are interested in the things that you find interesting; Contribute to others' projects, and be useful. Think of way upon way to be useful; Help people connect…. Those who continue to give of themselves find themselves with great friends and an active, engaged community."[6]

Only, once again scant attention is paid to the numerous ethical and professional obstacles to healthy, functioning partnerships that I described in Chapters 3 and 4 - most of them due to the new realities of working in networked communities on the Net. In fact, Brogan does not broach the subject of potential obstacles or dilemmas that may arise in the course of these formal and semi-formal collaborations online.

In fact, one need not look very far for signs of trouble. WikiLeaks presented us with questions of a highly ethical nature that only media experts and trained journalists could begin to comprehend and solve, but there are plenty of questionable collaborations that are clearly visible to all, and whose effects are also tangible in everyone's daily news habits, on a mass scale. To take one prominent example of collaboration that raised eyebrows among both the new industry and the public: Google's efforts in collaborating with the press in its attempt at "saving the news" was the subject of a reality-check kind of article in *The Atlantic*.[7] According to *Atlantic* writer James Fallows, Google began its first serious interactions with news organizations in 2002 with Google News, and followed up two years later with Google Alerts, which "sent e-mail or instant-message notifications to users whenever Google's relentless real-time indexing of the world's news sites found a match for a topic the user had flagged," and in 2006, Google launched a news archiving project by "scanning the paper or microfilmed archives of many leading publications so that articles from their pre-digital era could be indexed, searched for, and read online."

At first sight, these tools do not seem susceptible to bring upon themselves controversies of an ethical order. As Fallows wrote, "Up to this point, the company's attitude was that it was doing the news business a favor, whatever the publishers themselves thought." He then quotes Google CEO Eric Schmidt as saying, "Our anecdotal evidence was that [these and other news efforts] were driving users to better stories. There was a set of publishers who recognized that with these tools, users were more likely to visit their Web sites"—"and in turn increase the publisher's online audience and make online ads easier to sell," Fallows commented.

However, as Schmidt added, "There was another set who believed we were stealing their content."

[6] Chris Brogan, *Social Media 101 - Tactics and Tips to Develop Your Business Online* (Hoboken NJ: Wiley, 2010), 14.

[7] James Fallows, "How to Save the News," *The Atlantic*, Vol. 305, No. 5, June 2010, p. 44, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/06/how-to-save-the-news/8095/. Accessed April 18, 2012.

In the same line of thought with regards to somewhat unexpected difficulties on the path to its innovative technological partnerships, Fallows cited Schmidt as writing in an Op-ed for *The Wall Street Journal* in December 2010 that "Google would be going out of its way to devise systems that would direct more money toward struggling news organizations," rather than, as many in the news industry assumed, simply directing more of everyone else's money toward itself, Fallows wrote.

He also noted that Google's projects which "have hardly been secret, since most of them involve collaboration with major newspapers, magazines, and broadcast-news organizations," have not attracted unconditional love and support from the information and innovation industries, as "most Internet and tech businesses have been either uninterested in or actively condescending toward the struggles of what they view as the pathetic-loser dinosaurs of the traditional media."

In the end, "Everyone knows that Google is killing the news business," Fallows concludes.

Whether they are grappling with problematic collaborative initiatives as members of large media organizations or as independent contributors to smaller and even alternative projects, whether in teams with their colleagues or on their own from their home office, it is these journalists caught up in the new, unchartered realities of digital collaborations that my proposed tools and concepts address and seek to help.

These tools and concepts spring from my identification of *a need* among professional journalists working today on the Internet for ethical guidance to supplement the current codes of ethics, which fall short of covering all the existing and perceived pitfalls in online media ethics. My goal is to help journalists 'take ethics in their own hands' and to give them the tools to do so, in the most professional way as possible. All the tools and ideas proposed can be used by individual journalists, but group use is also encouraged, since after all, their guiding rule is collaboration. Thus, debate and cooperatively made adjustments are encouraged.

One might want to call it "cooperative self-regulation."

20 Years of Online Community News

This section would not be complete without some concrete cases of working collaborative efforts in online news production, akin to the kinds of applications (although not exclusively) that I envision for my Open Park collaborative news project and code, and which one might want to use as a barometer or comparative tool to assess the potential of my systems.

Perfect examples of such initiatives are the professional experiences of Jack Driscoll, former *Boston Globe* Editor and author of *Couch Potatoes Sprout - The Rise of Online Community Journalism*[8]. In an interview for this thesis[9], he revealed the difficulties he has encountered when working with collectives of reporters, as well as what he finds missing in current journalistic practice.

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[8] Jack Driscoll, *Couch Potatoes Sprout - The Rise of Online Community Journalism* (Xlibris, 2008).
[9] The interview took place July 14, 2010.

Much of Driscoll's journalistic experience of the past 20 years has been with online community groups[10], and it is this work that led him to surmise that these local groups might need to expand on some of the accepted codes - which is very insightful for my own purpose of building a revised code, since it is aimed primarily at similar online communities of journalists.

"For instance, conflict of interest is a much more sensitive topic in local communities," he said. "Citizen journalists tend to be active in other civic affairs, so it is important to take extra care when it comes to possible conflicts or even the appearance of conflicts." Driscoll then showed how he made this work for his participants in his news projects:

"In my Rye, N.H., group I have had reporters who held such positions as: cemetery trustee, president of a seniors assistance non-profit, golf club member, chairman of a housing committee, member of a board for a special needs school (me), chair of a historical society, president of a regional social club called Over Fifty and instructor for the Public Library. We have set a rule that we will do no more than one story a year involving any non-profit and we use full-disclosure precedes on stories to declare a writer's involvement if it in any way relates to their outside activities."

Driscoll had a word of warning, though, about the practical use of code of ethics: he said they should be used as guidelines, not as edicts. "There needs to be flexibility when warranted. We can never anticipate every possible situation." And this stance accurately anticipates one of my own conclusions - that despite the undisputable usefulness of shared guidelines, a case-by-case approach to the problematic news story in question can also help resolve ethical dilemmas with reporters and sources.

Driscoll added that "It all boils down for the need for credibility between the citizen journalist and his or her readers. Codes tend to enhance the bond between the journalist and reader. But regulation tends to inhibit the free flow of information."

One of the key new difficulties of today's journalism, and the most alarming one about the digital age for Driscoll, is the lack of reporting and editing, he said - which in some ways echoes my own earlier analysis of the growing lack of original reporting as characteristic of the changes in the new journalism. Driscoll's own analysis of the 'new journalists' has a long list of criticisms. Least spared of all are the bloggers, who he says rely too much on their own interpretations of news events instead of investigating them.

"Bloggers tend to be subjective, commenting on the reporting of others and often failing to add any more information other than their own viewpoint. Good reporting is hard work. Too many bloggers are too pressed for time to do substantive reporting. Citizen journalists, with some training, can be adequate but not full-fledged, partly because their lives are not fully devoted to the craft. When they do personal profiles, they consider an interview with the subject as adequate but don't seek out the opinions of others, pro and con, to carve out a complete profile; they seldom do investigative stories. When it comes to editing, too many stories go from the writer to the internet without the benefit of a copy editor. Everyone--no matter how experienced or expert--

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[10] An experience that he said led to the publication of his book *Couch Potatoes Sprout*.

should have another set of eyes review their stories prior to publication," he concluded.

This 'evolution' of news-reporting at the hands of bloggers and other online writers is also having a detrimental effect on the professional journalists, he said:
"Media professionals, due to the proliferation of citizen journalists who compete with them even on a minor level, have become in too much of a rush to get their stories published without adequate double checking, attention to detail and fine tuning of the writing."
And the reach of the difficulties experienced by the profession as a direct result of the introduction of new technologies in the field has been pervasive, he says: "The professional media is at a crossroads caused by the emergence of the 'always-on' internet but more seriously from the corporatization of the industry. In-depth stories are less prevalent, because of the race to be first on the net and because of the budget-trimming going on in newsrooms. Newspapers and their websites are capitulating to the cops-and-robbers and entertainment/personality news that have overtaken broadcast outlets."

Driscoll recalled that when he was at *The Boston Globe*, and became Editor in 1987, in seven years, he added four foreign bureaus to the three they had, and began five regional sections. He said that today the paper has no foreign bureaus and only three regional sections. He puts part of the blame for this on the transfer of advertising to the Internet, but the profit-orientation imposed by corporate ownership is another cause of weaker content, he said.

"In 1983 Ben Bagdikian wrote a book called *Media Monopoly* showing the rise of conglomerates taking over locally-owned newspapers. I believe that book has been revised seven times to reflect the gobbling-up of independent newspapers. Bookkeepers have taken over from editors."

Beyond that, Driscoll said he worries about plagiarism, which he says is too easy to execute in the digital world, and photo-altering, which is becoming more prevalent as users learn techniques of Photoshop and other photo editing programs.
"Perhaps codes of ethics need to be strengthened on those two topics, but, in all honesty, I think these practices are already covered in various codes but are being ignored to such an extent that the practices are seen as acceptable by some. Plagiarizing is stealing; altering images is lying."

Driscoll could not avoid mentioning the persistent issue of the lack of a functioning, sustainable business model for the new journalism:

"I have worked in the non-commercial world for 20 years. Our Melrose and Rye members chip in $10 each a year and that covers all expenses with money left over for an annual party. Perhaps that is not a sustainable model. I am not sure I am competent when it comes to judging business models. Personally I prefer locally-owned and locally-operated citizen group approaches. Financing from foundations for startup purposes makes sense, but I doubt there are enough foundations to go around to sustain ongoing operations. So I would favor the tried-and-true model of advertising as the prime source of income. It requires strong leadership to maintain a wall between the advertising and business interests and the editorial operation. For decades this model worked in the U.S., because the owners tended to be families with

concern for the communities they lived in. Whether the model includes a print product as well as an online problem is irrelevant; the mix has to include professionalism on the business side with its own code of ethics and an independent news-gathering operation."

In his final conclusion, Driscoll anticipated my own concept of increased ethics awareness as a way to solve even the business aspects of today's journalism (which I elaborated upon in Chapter 3):
"As the public comes to realize the inadequacy of snippets of news via messaging and tweeting, serious news organizations at local, regional and national levels--even if online only--have the potential to operate at adequate profit levels while producing substantive news. Ethical guidelines that are valued by these institutions will not only enhance credibility but will perhaps be the most important marketing tool for building long-run credibility," he said in the same interview[11].

Even if Driscoll's vision of quality and sustainability via ethical awareness may sound financially and practically a little Utopian, it is yet the formula that I also see as winning in this new economy of digitally-supported news.
A renewed concern for media ethics in the new and changing environment of the Internet is key to my argument for a professional system of open news.
The four concrete ideas here below illustrate how I propose to design and implement such a vision.

4 Proposals

1] A Proposal for Open, Participatory, Multiperspectival News

So how can we attain the ideal concept and ultimate goal of 'cooperative self-regulation' that I introduced above, and how can we equip journalists and their contributing colleagues in the larger field so that they can 'take ethics and standards regulation into their own hands'?
For a quick answer, one may want to look at the formula encapsulated in the sub-title of this first proposal. 'Open, participatory, multiperspectival' are the qualities I believe to be instrumental in helping journalists create more ethical news-coverage, especially in the age of Internet news.

As we have seen in my early chapters, there are already many new, creative media content publishing models on the market, many of which are enhanced by user-generated contributions and are creating unprecedented opportunities for a new and multiperspectival take on the news.

Describing the papers and panels of the seventh Media in Transition conference of May 2010, an MIT Communications Forum brochure playfully called these projects "Unstable Platforms." But we know by now that the catchy appellation implies much more and much better. Some of the papers at the conference described how "emerging technologies and cultural practices are challenging inherited conceptions of art and journalism, communication formats, citizenship itself. Even our notions of an end state, of a desired coherence or completion, some provocative papers suggested, must

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[11]Driscoll interview.

yield in many cases to more open-ended ideas of a text or object that evolves as users and collaborators shape it in an ongoing process." The review of the conference even suggested that with such open infrastructure and philosophy, "individuals have the capacity to create and maintain a website like WikiLeaks to expose government and corporate malfeasance," which is "another form of informational power."[12]

In another conference at MIT on 'community innovation' and social technology, MIT *Technology Review*'s 11th annual Emerging Technologies (EmTech) Conference last fall, there was consensus among the numerous visionary companies in attendance that open data platforms hold the key to continuous information sharing and improvement of the quality of the content being shared. In fact, many of them are already using these platforms to enable such communities, according to press reports.[13] "The most innovative environments are non-market communities where ideas are continuously shared, it is more than a technology space," said conference guest speaker and author Steven B. Johnson. "It is a culmination of quick innovations that, through failure, evolve into highly tested and successful platforms for the future," he said.
As we will see with my proposed applications for the Open Park platform and ethics code, this idea of a cycle of tests, failures, corrections and adjustments, and eventually improvement and growth that Johnson alludes to is one of the latest strategies that have emerged from new media and innovation circles, and one that I fully embrace for my proposed tools in this thesis.

But while there is no lack of well-planned systems of collaboration, including in the news business, few seem to have given much thought about preserving ethical standards in the digital sphere and encouraging their audiences to be ethically and critically aware. In an age of increasingly concentrated ownership of mass media that "determines who and what is represented and how," to paraphrase media critics Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share,[14] the question of "the independence and diversity of information" being compromised is largely left unaddressed, which the two authors conclude may lead to "highly undemocratic" information production and exchanges. Similarly, when attempts have been made at establishing some norms, few among the new collaborative online news operations have considered how to reconcile the varying degrees of ethical and cultural standards that these new enterprises have given rise to, and how to resolve the question of who will decide them.

It is precisely such questions and issues that my proposed Open Park collaborative model for online news production and its code of ethics for new media seek to address.
Thus, in the open-source spirit, the code has its own section on OP's Web site and is open to ideas and proposed clauses from outside qualified or engaged contributors. As

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[12] MIT Communications Forum Year in Review - 2010/2011 Highlights; For a transcript of the conference, see dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/36880. Accessed April 18, 2012.
[13] Robert McQueen, A Look into the Future - EmTech conference highlights future of tech, MIT *The Tech*, Oct. 21, 2011, 1.
[14] See Douglas Keller and Jeff Share, "Toward Critical Media Literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, Volume 26, Issue 3, 2005, 369-386; http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01596300500200169. Accessed April 18, 2012.

the descriptions of the OP platform and code below show, together these tools help implement the philosophy of 'cooperative self-regulation.'

Perfecting Multiperspectivity[15]

The beauty and benefits of open-source software - the free programs developed by loosely knit groups of developers that contribute to an Internet and online culture that are more open and resistant to centralized control[16] - are being secured by the technologists among us and their rules and *raisons d' être* are more or less understood by the broader populations. But how do we achieve 'multiperspectivity' - 'multiperspectival news' being, to use Axel Bruns' definition, "news that represents as many perspectives as is possible and feasible."[17]

Now that we have established in our early chapters that contributions, feedback and corrections from multiple sources, together with fair, balanced coverage of all sides of a news event can add to the participatory experience of collaborative digital journalism, including to its ethical dimension, how do we implement this feature in daily news-reporting? What are the avenues that can lead to the principled journalism embodied in the SJP Code, but in the ethereal and changing world of the Internet?

In my research and field tests of my Open Park platform, I have found that some of the best news beats to evaluate the open and participatory capacities of a news-reporting tool are those that involve issues of biases, stereotypes and the laws on taste and taboos, which speaks directly to the SPJ Code of Ethics' overriding duty for journalists to serve the truth: "We believe those responsibilities carry obligations that require journalists to perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy, and fairness," the introduction to the Code says.[18]

Readers will find plenty of theories and tactics to avoid the fearful feelings, preconceived ideas, and other stereotypes that creep into American reporters' work with various degrees of visibility and hamper multiple perspectives on the news in Melvin Mencher's course book *News Reporting and Writing*.[19]

But what interests us most here is how even the principled approach to these unethical practices has been challenged in the digital age. The Internet has no doubt offered numerous opportunities for expression to all sorts of groups and manners of opinions - but with little regulation or guidance on what is acceptable, what is considered respectful of sources' rights, what the laws of taste and decorum say about portraying victims in news events, etc.

But even with the undeniable free speech opportunities the Net provides to the many voices on the periphery, it is now a recognized fact that many minorities, groups and

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[15] Term coined by media scholar Axel Bruns. (see Bruns, 24), but subsequently adopted by new media analysts and practitioners.

[16] Definition loosely based on that of *The Economist*, in "Open-Source Software - Untangling Code," *The Economist*, Jan 15, 2011, 93-94.

[17] Axel Bruns, 25.

[18] Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (1987), *The Journalist's Moral Compass - Basic Principles*, Edited by Steven R. Knowlton and Patrick R. Parsons (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1994, p. 5).

[19] Melvin Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1997) 378, 580, 604, 620.

individuals suffer from unbalanced news-coverage, often for reasons based on race, religion, gender or other factors. .

The problem is a long-standing one in American journalism. "Writing in the late 1970's, (journalism researcher Herbert) Gans already expressed grave concerns about the ability or willingness of (U.S.) mainstream news to cover a broad range of community views on the news," Bruns observed in *Gatewatching*.[20] "The major issue concerns what questions are to become facts - and by extension, what sets of facts should be selected, as stories, for the news. In effect, most critiques of the news accuse journalists of asking the wrong questions. In other words, his concern is centrally with the input stage of journalistic processes. He also pointed out, however, that such problems could not be fixed merely by replacing one set of questions with one another, but by increasing the range of questions asked as far as possible," Bruns wrote, quoting Gans as saying:

"Ideally then, the news should be omniperspectival; it should present and represent all perspectives in and on America. This idea, however, is unachievable, for it is only another way of saying that all questions are right. It is possible to suggest, however, that the news, and the news media, be multiperspectival, presenting and representing as many perspectives as possible - and at the very least, more than today."[21]

And as recently as last summer, AlterNet columnist Paul Rosenberg pointedly challenged us with the question and task "How to Make Media Reflect the Popular Views of Americans, Not Those of Elites," a clear sign that even today, only a trickle of carefully selected viewpoints are making it to the front of the news.[22]

As evidenced by Gans' comments, these problems of unprincipled, unethical news-reporting are not new, but as I demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, they have been exacerbated by the changes and unpredictably developing social and technological practices of digital media, and the laxer attitude towards media ethics that the Internet seems to foster.

In fact, examples of one-sided, biased or otherwise unbalanced news coverage and other tensions regarding the coverage of sensitive topics still abound in today's news - from CNN being divided between "expand(ing) its audience through programs like O' Brien's 'Latino in America,' while reaping the ratings benefit of Dobb's anti-immigrant vitriol and sizeable fan base"[23]; to the now long-standing, controversial treatment in the U.S. media of Islam and its followers, including people originating from predominantly Islamic regions.[24]

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[20] Axel Bruns, 24-25.

[21] Bruns, 25.

[22] Paul Rosenberg, "How to Make Media Reflect the Popular Views of Americans, Not Those of Elites," AlterNet, May 30, 2011, http://www.alternet.org/economy/151062/vision:_how_to_make_media_reflect_the_popular_views_of_americans,_not_those_of_elites/. Accessed May 30, 2011.

[23] Azadeh Moaveni, "The Anchor," *The New York Times*, Jan 30, 2011, 8.

[24] The issue has been a staple for the past few years (and especially since 9/11). For just two samples of news coverage, see Laurie Goodstein, "Drawing U.S. Crowds With Anti-Islam Message," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2011, A1; and Glenn

Even more worryingly, much of this news-coverage is unsubstantiated. And the misconceptions and inaccuracies it contains, already pernicious in themselves in the traditional forms of mass media, tend to and spread like fire once unleashed on digital transmedia platforms.

 In an Amazon.com Customer Communities discussion forum on "the negative image of Africa," a disgruntled poster ('Artistic Maven') asked: "Why are most news stories viewpoints of Africa reflected in a negative light? Does the world believe Africa is full of starving kids, warfare and AIDS and offers no positives?"[25] A respondent in the same forum ('uduzu') denounced the perceived monopoly that mass media and established academia have on news stories and the discourse around them.

Other participants in the African forum discussion even showed the way to better news coverage by suggesting concrete conduct and acts of news-reporting that people can do, such as blogging and collaborative storytelling - suggestions which for our purpose, we can extend to include professional journalists and media organizations. Such methods would amount to non-professionals and the public 'taking their narratives into their own hands.' In fact, there is no reason why media professionals could not similarly adopt these 'do-it-yourself' methods in their daily news-gathering activities. For sure, many already do so to some extent. But these methods would involve the input of a much broader range of perspectives from the community at large than what traditional media normally offers, as well as more direct interaction with the communities and sources one is covering, than the present extensive use of aggregation practices by professionals allows for.

So what can working news professionals, media scholars and regulators do to ensure more views and representation of all parties in our news production, and eventually produce more balanced and principled journalism? How can we increase 'multiperspectivity' in online news?

First, the 'solutions' proposed by the online forums participants cited here already point us in the right direction, with suggestions that nudge us to broaden our perspectives on the themes and issues we are covering.
Then, as we have seen, *collaboration*, both with one's own colleagues and news initiatives in the outside world, is an effective strategy to bring in more diverse views and enrich one's background research work and news coverage.
However, the well-meaning suggestions from participants in online news forums and even the more informed ideas and efforts from professional bloggers and media-concerned journalists include no such concept of cooperation with one's peers and competitors in the larger field. On the contrary, they evidently are quite disparate, disconnected thoughts and recommendations thrown randomly around the Internet, which inevitably will lead to disconnected actions and random acts of principled news-reporting. Those who propose such recommendations do not have, independently or in common, a system of shared tools and codes of conduct and

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Greenwald, "Growing anti-Muslim hatred in the U.S.," Salon.com, March 3, 2011, http://www.salon.com/2011/03/03/hatemongering/. Accessed March 3, 2011.
[25] All quoted material is from http://www.amazon.com/forum/africa/Tx21645KPWPS83A. Accessed April 18, 2012; Editorial note: here, as elsewhere for similar user-generated commentaries, I have left the quotes unedited, unless errors of grammar or spelling could alter or hamper the meaning or understanding in any way.

standards to facilitate news-reporting from a broader range of voices. Not only do they not have the tools for collaboration, but they also do not have *the values* for it embedded in an ethics code at their disposal on their Web sites and discussion forums to consult and use whenever a conflict or sensitive issue comes up.

Many of these discussions result in only talk, with no plans for a system to implement some of the very promising ideas put forward.

Now, were the present-day Blogosphere and other journalism online platforms equipped with the technological interactive features for such more diverse news publishing, given the sensitivity of some issues ("Also, did you know that most of Israel is inhabited by Muslims and not Jews?" asked Jury Duty on the Africa forum)[26], without a code of ethics to regulate tempers and standards of quality, such efforts may well descend into chaos.

All in all, the current opportunities for fair, diverse and professional collaborative news production on existing Web sites and digital initiatives fall short of the ideal model that I propose for online news professionals - a model that starts and ends with media ethics and respects the core principles of journalism, such as protecting one's sources' privacy and expression rights.

It is my firm belief then - and my argument, as well as proposed 'solution' in this thesis - that with the appropriate open-source Web base, supported by ethical guidelines, ideally in the form of a code of ethics, that there is plenty of room and potential for improvement for professional journalism's standing in our new digital world of news.

Before we look at the contents of my proposed Code and its supportive platform for collaborative news, it is worth mentioning some creative initiatives that seek to provide some of the desired features that we cited, namely, balanced journalism through diversity of views and free expression for all.

One of them that was recommended by a poster on the Africa community group on Amazon.com is Wafrika, which describes itself in the following terms:

"Wafrika (Swahili: Africans) offers a forum where Africans can meet to discuss, review, analyze and provide clarity to ambiguous and complex issues facing the continent. Wafrika's core objective is to challenge the underlying assumptions of Africans by deconstructing information from policy makers and media outlets that consistently distort, omit, and restrict information. Such information is what shapes the minds, opinions and beliefs of Africans. Africans have enjoyed long traditions of telling their stories. In modern and post-modern cultures, Africans, for the most part, have allowed their stories to be told by others. This had a detrimental effect. Wafrika attempts to provide a forum for Africans to start telling their stories again. Wafrika strives to be expansive and widen Africans' perspective of themselves by reframing the debate, asking the right questions and allowing voices that are often ignored but are essential to the debate, to be heard. The ultimate goal of Wafrika is to reach a critical mass of Africans, challenge their core beliefs, and engage them in an analytical process from which ideas will emerge and viable solutions can be offered."[27]

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[26] See http://www.amazon.com/forum/africa/Tx21645KPWPS83A. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[27] See http://www.wafrika.com/?page_id=2 for more on the Wafrika project. Accessed April 18, 2012.

In addition to news on Africa and discussion forums, the site also offers blogging tools and creative writing opportunities and resources.

But just to be clear, it is important to realize that this Web project represents only a possible model for journalism, and not professional journalism per se. Such innovative enterprises lack some crucial characteristics of journalism - most evidently the institutional support and the hierarchical organizational structures.

Another very interesting project that seems to have embraced interactivity even further and to be taking an even bolder step in the direction of the proposed plans for the Open Park Code and tools is the Web platform 'islawmix,' a project of the Berkman Center for Internet for Internet and Society at Harvard University that focuses on "the media and policy landscape where Islam and the news mix," and whose motto is "Bringing Clarity to Islamic Law in the News."[28]

The Web project, which was presented by Berkman Fellow and Boston College Law Professor Intisar A. Rabb at the MIT Center for Civic Media session "Representing Islam" in September 2011[29], is one of the closest collaborative efforts to my ideal model of cooperation among professional journalists and outside expert resources that I have identified on the Net to date.

On its site, islawmix says it "connects news readers, media producers, and legal scholars with credible, authoritative information about trends in Islamic law ("sharī'a"), by developing innovative aggregation and visualization tools to: map the growing landscape of news stories about Islamic law in traditional and new media; analyze trends on that landscape, including metrics for sourcing, subject-matter covered, and spread of issues on the new and legacy media outlets; and offer resources, background briefs, and in-depth analysis related to trending issues by the small group of experts who have significant, relevant experience and expertise."

In her presentation, Rabb said "Some of this representation of Islam [in the media] is sometimes simplistic, and sometimes even misleading. There is little information about what Sharia Law is. Journalists have a hard job to do. We can connect journalists with experts about Islam so they can do a better job at covering these issues about Sharia law."

Her comments were supported by Comparative Media Studies Assistant Professor Sasha Costanza-Chock, who said that he had observed how the propagation of hate speech in the media was facilitated by the Internet: "There are hate speech narratives that use specific words that get replicated throughout the whole virtual spaces, Twitter, the Net, etc," he said.

The islawmix Web site specifies that "islawmix scholars have advanced degrees in American law (JD) and in the study of Islamic law (PhD), or the equivalent, and teach issues of contemporary Islamic law and society in American law schools. They have been recognized by their peers; by their publications; and by prestigious legal, academic, and other institutions for their timely scholarship on issues of Islamic law. They represent a diverse range of ideological and scholarly perspectives, experiences, and approaches."

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[28] For more on this project, see http://islawmix.org/about-us/. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[29] For details of the session, see http://civic.mit.edu/event/civic-media-session-representing-islam. Accessed April 18, 2012.

What this tells us is that this is a collaboration strictly on the level of professionals and experts - among journalists, lawyers and other scholars on Islam, law and religion, among other relevant fields.

In view of this, and Wafrika's opposite focus on the Internet's broader, non-expert crowds of contributors, we might be tempted to perceive these two models for participatory information exchange as somewhat defective, in that while they are giving a voice to 'the voiceless' or poorly understood issues, each project in its own way is missing another major component and participant in the debate - the involvement of professional journalists and experts in the case of Wafrika; and the involvement of the public and amateur writers in the case of islawmix.

But perhaps of more concern than this perceived lack of balance in representation[30] is the lack in both collaborative projects of a system of moderation and rules to ensure quality, principled news-reporting.

This is not to say that these two online projects do not include any input from the other side of the expert-amateur equation, but the contributions are grossly unequal. And as said, neither relies - at least to my knowledge - on a code of ethics for the news and information it disseminates and encourages its contributors to actively use. Perhaps such a code would be a good starting point to regulate a more diverse pool of contributors - essentially the two major groups of news professionals and the participatory amateur commentators and other writers they inevitably come into contact with in the course of their work on the Internet. This would certainly prove the centrality of a code of ethics to ensuring true 'multiperspectivity' in today's hybrid digital news. Similarly, the 'professional side' (the five partnering publications) of the WikiLeaks collaboration may have felt more at ease and clear about where they stood had the other 'non-traditional' partner (WikiLeaks) agreed to establish together and follow a common code of conduct; the partnership's activities and their results would have been more ethical and more transparent to the public from the start.

The Platform Where it's Happening

My proposed system for encouraging ethics-centered collaboration in digital news includes a Web platform for collaborating journalists that I have called '**Open Park**,' which is in fact where the idea of a code for digital media originated. However, since the news-gathering and -writing platform is *not* the 'piece de resistance' of my thesis - the OP Code of Ethics is - I am only devoting a sub-section of this chapter to it. Rather, I see the Web site and its capacities as one means (out of many, albeit one I deem as one of the best) to provide the ideal environment for 'Open, Participatory, Multiperspectival news.'[31]

The project, initiated for the MIT Center for Civic Media[32] as part of my research in

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[30] 'Representation': To be understood here as in 'representative democracy': giving a voice and support to as diverse a community as possible, ideally involving all equally.

[31] By this, I mean that 'Open, Participatory, Multiperspectival news' is one of my fours proposals (or 'solutions') for increasing media ethics awareness and application in collaborative digital news - not the Web platform itself. The OP site is just one possible tool or venue for the OP Code of Ethics, but on this practical question of access and implementation, options are open.

[32] At the time (2008) called The Center for Future Civic Media [C4FCM]. Open Park's Web site is at http://openpark.media.mit.edu/. Accessed April 18, 2012.

CMS, is the proposed home base for the Open Park Code of Ethics (the Code has its own section under "New Media Tools'). But of course it is not the exclusive venue, and the Code has been designed so that it can be easily 'transferred' to other digital spaces on the Net (and obviously mobile ones too). As I further explain in this section, the Code's open-source, participatory nature makes it adoptable by various communities of online news producers and adaptable to their own specific needs, for one particular news project or for the long-term.

Essentially, the collaborative Web site plays its own specific and important role in fostering a culture of interactive and representative news-coverage in digital enterprises, and especially in helping make them and online journalism in general become a more ethical exercise for professional journalists. In doing so, it has its place in my thesis' overall goals of increasing ethics awareness and practice in collaborative digital news.

To give a brief outline of the basic functions of the Open Park project and the concept of non-competitive collaboration behind it, one may define its primary purpose as acting as an open-source, collaborative news-gathering and -writing Web platform for journalists to work together on news and investigative stories, and share resources both within and outside news organizations and with news professionals from the larger world of media.[33]

While the Web site itself has already been designed and built as part of my work for the C4CM and is functional, the more intangible and also challenging philosophy of non-competitiveness is based on an ethical and cultural practice for professional journalism that I have at times defined as 'new' - although this is not technically correct since, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, I use the term more for convenience and stylistic sake than to reflect the true nature of innovation, which we know to derive from earlier forms.

But what this means too, is that the success of this news-reporting tool depends on the conceptualization of a new journalistic practice that discards the still tenacious notion of competition among media players. Last but not least, such an initiative, just like any other in online news-publishing, requires a sustainable business model, which I have defined in the early stage of my thesis as beyond its scope.

If we hypothetically grant my envisioned Open Park system these two foundational premises of accepted non-competitive practice and financial sustainability, one may define the goals and ultimate benefits of the OP system of participatory news as the following:

. a collaborative cultural practice for journalists to work on stories and share their resources across newsrooms and news organizations in the country. This means more dialogue between editors and the public.
. more original, quality content via the reporting of personally[34] verified facts, and less aggregated information, little-value, entertainment-focused news or unsubstantiated opinions.
. clear and open guidelines for editorial policy so that editors can improve reporters' work without using excessive monitoring methods and can do so in collaboration with the reporters, copy editors, artwork and multimedia creators and other contributing

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[33] See also http://openpark.media.mit.edu/node/2. Accessed April 18, 2012.
[34] 'Personally verified': meaning by the reporter himself/herself, regardless of the source of the information, even if it is from a reputable news agency.

journalists from within and other organizations. In an ideal regulatory system, those guidelines should be flexible enough to be adapted on a case-by-case basis to the needs of a particular editorial situation or issue, which tend to vary unpredictably in journalism on the Internet.

. an open online space, where free speech is respected and encouraged, as well as individual freedoms, including that of expressing unpopular views or opinions that may seem offensive to some.[35] This is the essence of multiperspectival, participatory news. In addition, engagement of all participants in an informed and representative debate when there is a need to balance these personal freedoms with respect for sources' rights, especially in cases of requests for anonymity.

. a democratic, deliberative dialogue around issues that matter to the public, and enriched *by the public'*s interaction with journalists. Here it is implied that members of this public may themselves be media producers, and some of them very qualified ones (albeit not strictly speaking 'professionals'). It is this particular hybrid aspect of the news production taking place on the OP platform that the Open Park Code of Ethics seeks to regulate. This also demonstrates a more active form of engaging one's audience.

In terms of how the Open Park Web-based system can help implement the ideals of ethical collaboration and diversity in news coverage described above, the online platform comes with suggestions for concrete actions and recommended practices. Some of these tools have already been built in and include collaborative Blogs and forums each devoted to one aspect of the teamwork. Worth mentioning are:

. an online discussion forum devoted to debating the ethical and cultural implications of the proposed practice of non-competition, and how to make it work in present-day journalism.

. a shared work space on the OP Web site where users can post stories they are working on and assignments requests. This forum lets users test the idea of sharing reporting tasks for a particular story and divide assignments among themselves, with one person interviewing, one fact-checking, etc. Teaming up with one expert [an economist, health care provider, etc.] to work on a story is another possibility for experimenting with collaborative reporting.

On a more abstract but as useful level, the OP system for digital news collaboration:

. helps increase freedom of speech on the Net by reducing the level of editing and monitoring of web-based news production models. It lets the users be their own editors and strives to be all-inclusive when considering possible new audiences and participants.

. The project also encourages potential individual users and communities of adopters to host one or more interest groups or fan communities on their Web site. This may attract more people to the OP site and engage an even wider group of people into practicing media ethics on the Internet.

. It welcomes talkative, diverse people with controversial views, who can be counted on to keep the debate lively and interesting.

. It is also worth repeating here that the project does not attempt to create a tool or practice that is 'brand new' – the more disruptive the proposed practice or technology, the harder it will be to get it adopted and embraced by its intended audience. Rather,

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[35] For more on the source that inspired this point of view, see chapter 5, "When Words Hurt" in Mike Godwin, *Cyber Rights - Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003) 109.

the OP philosophy is to encourage users to select the best practices they have found in existing models of traditional media and combine them with the ethics promoted in the Open Park Code.

OP Collaborative News Platform Applications: Research and Field Tests Results Topic: Biases and Stereotypes in Ethnic Communities News-Reporting

Open Park seeks to promote multiperspectival collaborative reporting– presenting various angles and viewpoints on a topic. One of the main ways I sought to achieve this when designing and testing the site is by covering a national issue through case studies, from the perspective of various states, cities or towns, with student reporters form local schools and journalism departments covering the issue from their home location.[36]
This method can certainly be applied to the development of the code of ethics itself, since the input and experiences from these students-reporters, with their varying journalistic educational background and experiences could be expected to generate different approaches to solving the ethical dilemmas their assignments may present.

One important common feature of the four case studies the journalism classes were presented with is that they are all concerned with giving a voice to the voiceless and those ethical issues related to biases, taboos and stereotypes and matters of diverse, multiperspectival coverage of these communities. These issues all refer to the main area of concentration for my work on the OP Code of Ethics and its news production tools, which can be considered the first section of theme in a list of sections to be added by future users of the site. Thus, I expected all four case studies, but especially the main initial one, to inform the formulation of my selected section of the Code.

The journalism classes were sent suggested tasks and approaches to cover ethnic communities in a balanced, multiperspectival and ethical way. Participating students were encouraged to submit their own suggestions for ways of covering assignments or for questions to be addressed.

Also, the case studies and the Open Park platform have been designed with flexibility of use and the users' freedom and preferences in mind, so that a journalism professor at a participating university or college could turn his students' work on a case study into a class assignment for credit. He/she could assign the proposed tasks or adapt them to his/her pedagogic needs and interests and those of the class. The case studies and tasks I am proposing are very specific, but the philosophy behind the project is quite open and flexible.

Thinking about and designing the practical exercises and suggested field work has significantly informed the theoretical basis for a code of ethics for collaborative journalism, as well as guided its ethical foundation: the dilemmas encountered during these real-life news-reporting assignments, together with the solutions participants

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[36] Due to time and monitoring constraints, only one journalism student, Emily Cataneo from Boston University's School of Communications, completed the project from start to finish, having focused on the Russia case study. Invitations to participate were sent to many high school- and university-level colleges in and around Boston, but most said they required more time and permission from superiors to take a decision.

proposed following collaborative decision-making discussions may well form the basis for establishing certain mandates or other entries in the OP Code. To stay true to its open-source nature, these recommendations from users, even those which have found their way into the Code, should not be fixed in stone, but rather be open to amendments and additions as future users find out more about the best way to deal with ethical issues in this digital age.

Similarly with regards to the open publishing nature of the Open Park project, many different experimental case studies, as well as actual news coverage can take place on the OP platform. It is certainly not my goal to close the doors to outside suggestions for good topics to cover. But for the purpose of scalability and meeting the well-defined requirements of my thesis, I had decided to zero in on one major case study for the elaboration of the code of ethics for collaboration. Later, I added three smaller-scale case studies-exercises that were meant to act as preparation ground for the main case study.

Last but not least, it is important to remember that the type of collaborative reporting that Open Park seeks to promote is multiperspectival - presenting various angles and viewpoints on a topic. One of the main ways I have sought to achieve this is by covering a national issue through case studies from the perspective of various states, cities or towns, with student reporters covering the issue from their home location. This method can be applied to the development of the code of ethics itself, since the input and experiences from these students-reporters, with their vastly varying journalistic educational background and experiences, are likely to generate different approaches to solving the ethical dilemmas their assignment may present.
Potential users - journalists and editors in news organizations and in independent models are encouraged to design their own ways for adapting and using the OP Code of Ethics according to their own needs and the kind of stories, issues and beats they are covering.

2] A Proposal for the Open-Source OP Code of Ethics

In addition to some guidelines for building ethics codes and comparisons with useful elements found in other similar initiatives, this section can be viewed as also acting as legend or explanatory notes on the Open Park Code in Appendix A.
It is also worth repeating here that, since the OP Code has not yet been tested in a real-life work environment, this section and its observations on the ideal journalistic ethics code by no means claim to be final. Rather, they aim to spur an informed and diverse debate on the issues and successes related to the regulation of digital media.

A final but important note to keep in mind when reading my Code in Appendix A is that the OP Code of Ethics is strongly inspired by, not to say even based on the principles of the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, which is still the most widely used code in newsrooms across the country, even by digital news organizations.
In fact, all the tenets of the SPJ Code still hold true in digital media, as I explained in Chapter 2 about the immutable importance of ethical values, and I would say they are even more relevant than before in line with my argument that new practices and technologies require extra vigilance from journalists working on the Internet. So I

would encourage my readers and potential users of the OP Code to familiarize themselves with it before tackling my OP code.[37]

This is not to say that the SPJ Code should not be up for some revisions and adaptations to the new realities of our age and today's hybrid journalism. Today's online news professionals may indeed find even the latest edition of the Code somewhat outdated, since it has not been revised for the past 15 years. The SPJ site itself says that "The present version of the code was adopted by the 1996 SPJ National Convention, after months of study and debate among the Society's members."[38]

So, just like Steve Buttry who recommended updates for the Code that I cited here earlier, my argument rests on the fact that today's codes do not cover the ethical intricacies of working online, and thus should be revised. Hence, my own proposed Code for digital collaborative media.

To give one concrete idea of how the SPJ Code of Ethics could be revised and enhanced using new technologies and practices, one could take for example two entries from the Code's 'Be Accountable' principle: "Admit mistakes and correct them promptly"; and "Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media."[39]

It is easy to see how the new digital service 'MediaBugs' could come in handy when trying to apply these principles to journalism on the Internet.[40]

MediaBugs describes itself as "a service for reporting specific, correctable errors and problems in media coverage." At the heart of the project is audience engagement: "See something wrong with a news item in print, broadcast or online? You report the problem. We'll provide a neutral, civil, moderated discussion space. We'll try to alert the journalists or news organization involved about your report and bring them into a conversation," the site management says. It describes its goals in the following manner: "Give the public tools to report errors and problems they find in media coverage (print, broadcast, web); Help get those errors corrected and problems resolved by facilitating civil, productive discussion of them between journalists and the public; Help journalists by organizing and filtering the reporting of errors; Track data on errors and corrections for public use; and Improve communication between the media and the public, making the press more accountable and giving the public more confidence in the news."

Based on these ideas for correcting errors in news-reporting, it is tempting to imagine such a system of editing being applied to the traditional codes, and the Web tools, whatever they are, being somehow embedded in present-day normative systems for the news media. To start with, it would go towards implementing a system of self-regulation, which is line with the nature of journalistic enforcement of rules and standards, which is even more audience-oriented in the age of digital news.

After all, the SPJ Code stipulates that "Journalists should clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct,"[41] and MediaBugs similarly concludes that "As a result of this dialogue between journalists

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[37] The latest version of the SPJ Code of Ethics can be found at http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[38] http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[39] http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[40] For more on MediaBugs, see http://mediabugs.org/pages/intro. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[41] See http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp. Accessed April 18, 2012.

and the public, some errors may get corrected; others won't. Either way, the discussion will leave a useful public record."[42]

For the careful readers and those who can read between the lines, the SPJ Code also contains other hints at what could be improved upon to make it more digital news-friendly, or simply that prove the Code's suitability for such amendments.
Here it is worth citing in full one relevant entry from the Code, the fifth one entitled "Pledge":

"Adherence to this code is intended to preserve and strengthen the bond of mutual trust and respect between American journalists and the American people.
The Society shall - by programs of education and other means - encourage individual journalists to adhere to these tenets, and shall encourage journalistic publications and broadcasters to recognize their responsibility to frame codes of ethics in concert with their employees to serve as guidelines in furthering their goals."[43]

In this short passage there are three points that should hold our attention: First, the SPJ clearly only "*encourages*" Code users to adopt its principles - a clear sign that only voluntary adoption is meant. This, as noted earlier, is the essence of ethics, which can then work in concert with laws through professional societies. As we are engaged in re-writing current codes and shaping new norms for digital media, this is a point that should not be lost. On the much debated question of enforcement, I've concluded that the model for my proposed OP Code and related guidelines and standards should be voluntary self-regulation.
Secondly, on this last point of self-regulation, it is also noteworthy that the Society encourages media leaders and editors to actively develop these regulations, together with their reporters and other staff - "*to frame codes of ethics in concert with their employees*." Such an active role can only enhance the motivation to then follow the instructions and standards developed. Such a system reinforces the collaborative aspect of the exercise. So the SPJ' s recommendation, as I see it, is perfect for digital journalism.
Finally, it is also significant that the Code mentions specifically "*individual* journalists," which if we transfer this recommendation to the digital news industry may imply that we should be sensitive too to the needs for guidance of independent bloggers and freelance online writers and multimedia producers - a stance I would also personally encourage.
These three different observations and the conclusions I draw from them were perhaps not intended by the SJP to be seen in this exact light, but the point I want to make is these are three areas that today's digital code-drafters may want to focus on and develop in the ways I suggested here above.

In addition to the SPJ Code, I should cite three concrete applications of ethical codes by present-day digital news enterprises that have inspired and informed my own OP Code.
First, the Ethics Code of the Qatar-based independent broadcaster Al-Jazeera caught my attention by its self-designated 'global reach and significance.' Indeed, the Web page of the English operations of the organization exhorts its audience to "View our internationally recognised Code of Ethics. Being a globally oriented media service, Al

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[42] See http://mediabugs.org/pages/intro. Accessed April 18, 2012.
[43] Cited from http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp. Accessed April 18, 2012.

Jazeera has adopted the following code of ethics in pursuance of the vision and mission it has set for itself," the site's editors explain.[44]

Evidently, the news organization has decided not to leave anything to chance when it comes to regulating its digital activities with, in addition to the Code, a page of "Community Rules & Guidelines, "[45] as well as a page devoted to "Website terms and conditions"[46] that include many of the rules one may find in an ethics code.

But what is most interesting for us is Al Jazeera's confident definition of its rules as 'international.'

While I will not jump at an immediate adoption of such terminology and implications, this may prompt us to think carefully about how we want to shape norms that would be adopted by a relatively large group of users. I have certainly argued earlier in this thesis for forming normative systems that could be shared as much as possible by diverse groups of media producers, and for commonly approved and shared rules. But the case of Al Jazeera may prompt us to think of various issues that come to mind about its claim of 'international recognition': to start with, the veracity of this statement, then the feasibility of its implementation, and finally, how can such a code evolve in such a culturally diverse news environment as today's global media?

In drafting my own Open Park Code, I have aimed for what I believe is an ideal model: one that is more balanced and based on the center of these two extremes - one that is not aimed at only a very specific group of journalists and inflexible; but one that also does not aim at international recognition or is indifferent to social and cultural differences among people and types of media.

Another form of self-regulation that I found most interesting and quite rare, and therefore perhaps worth replicating in our own models, is that of independent journalist-blogger and media critic Peter Kafka.

Contrary to most Internet news sites and digitized versions of established publications, through which the average reader must wade and dig deep to find the company's code of ethics and stance on editorial issues, Kafka is most open about his own moral credo and makes sure his readers know it too by placing his 'Ethics Statement' upfront on the Homepage of his MediaMemo Blog with a teaser that says: "Here is a statement of my ethics and coverage policies. It is more than most of you want to know, but in the age of suspicion of the media, I am laying it all out."[47]

Similarly, his 'About Us' page has 'Peter's Ethics Statement' center-stage.[48]

It is significant that perhaps half seriously and half tongue-in-cheek, Kafka mentions that 'this is more than the average reader wants to know.' It is certainly true that it is more than the reading public is used to see on online news sites in terms of the

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[44] See http://www.aljazeera.com/iwantaje/201052121352560224.html for the full code. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[45] See http://www.aljazeera.com/aboutus/2011/01/201111681520872288.html. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[46] See http://www.aljazeera.com/aboutus/2011/01/20111168582648190.html. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[47] See peter Kafka's MediaMemo Blog on AllThingsD at http://allthingsd.com/20110419/news-me-the-ipad-news-aggregator-blessed-by-big-publishers-gets-ready-to-launch/. Accessed April 19, 2011.

[48] See Kafka's Ethics Statement at http://allthingsd.com/20110419/news-me-the-ipad-news-aggregator-blessed-by-big-publishers-gets-ready-to-launch/#peter-ethics. Accessed April 19, 2011.

journalist' or company's ethical makeup. But it is also an approach that I would personally encourage for all digital news endeavors.

Moreover, this concern about media ethics is coming from an individual journalist-blogger - not a news organization - an even rarer occurrence in the offerings of digital media. Most journalists who launched themselves into news blogging did so without bothering about how they would deal with the possible ethical difficulties that may come up, let alone publicizing their beliefs about media ethics. Those professional journalists who, in addition to their staff jobs at news companies, run their own Blog seem to assume that their company's codes extend to their independent writings automatically, for everything, and that readers know this. Hence they too do not bother themselves with explanations of an editorial nature.

A last but what should be a most informative and influential model for drafting ethics codes and standards for digital news production is the one developed by communications researchers Noam Lemelshrtrich Latar and David Nordfors.[49] Their research deserves a mention because the principles for digital journalism they elaborate are based on moral and behavioral analyses of journalists' audiences.

While their observations and conclusions go far deeper into the fields of marketing, sociology and behavioral psychology that I could afford to do in this thesis, their paper's sections on "Principles of Journalism and Digital Identities" and "Principles for Using Digital Identities for Journalism" represent a perfect examples of what a new (or revised) code of ethics for the digital age may look like.
Since their focus is more concerned with taking into account the marketing and business realities of today's news industry, their suggested rules tend to be formulated in terms of 'don'ts' or simply warnings not to let the profit-oriented priorities of media players get in the way of adherence to the core values of principled journalism.
"The interaction between digital identities, as discussed above, may improve the outcome for all parties involved. But it is a hazardous scenario," they warn. "It needs to be discussed among the actors who care about journalism and its role in society. Looking at existing journalistic principles, at least the following can be strongly affected by the above scenario," they remark before introducing their list of principles and pitfalls to avoid. To cite but one:

"Journalism's first loyalty is to the citizens: Journalists can be pressured to show loyalty to citizens' digital identities rather than to the citizens themselves.
If each story is coupled directly to the business model, and if the business model builds on selling audience attention/interaction to advertisers, this can be a problem. It will be difficult to maintain a loyalty to the audience of citizens if the journalist will earn more money by adapting to the [digital identities of the] advertisers."[50]

While the focus of my research for the Open Park Code has been what could be called 'pure ethics' and the moral aspect of principled journalism rather than the concerns of

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[49] Noam Lemelshrtrich Latar and David Nordfors, "The Future of Journalism: Artificial Intelligence and Digital Identities" (Preprint 19 Jan 2010); The full paper with their research and results can be found at http://isaleh.uct.ac.za/AI%20andThe%20Future%20of%20%20Free%20Journalism%20%20vf2.pdf. Accessed April 10, 2011.
[50] Latar and Nordfors, 24-25.

sustainability and ethical harmony between editorial and advertising parties in new journalism models, Lemelshtrich Latar and Nordfors' proposed principles certainly offer a template for drafting and building upon new elements or existing guidelines that focus more on the ethics of daily news-reporting.

OP Codes and More

In addition to the informed tips, methods and suggestions from professional media regulators (i.e. the SPJ), alternative and/or innovative media leaders (Kafka; Lemelshtrich Latar and Nordfors) for adapting or perfecting new models of ethical conduct for journalists, other considerations and models from the field of new media have influenced my decisions when elaborating my own adapted guidelines for digital collaborative news-reporting. And to give credit where it is due, I should say that many of the ideas and principles featured in the projects and regulatory efforts cited below have found their way in one form or another into the Open Park Code. And for those that have not, I would encourage fellow digital media code designers and regulators to embrace them too in their own systems. Often, some principles or recommendations did not make it into the OP Code because they were meant for too specific a community or topic of news coverage - but by no means does this mean that they should not be applicable to other contexts. Adaptability should be part of an open news publishing system.

Values, especially individual values, form the foundation of the Open Park Code of Ethics. Only strong, personally developed and adhered to values can then be communicated and enforced (on a voluntary basis) among larger groups of news producers.

On the research question that I raised in my first Chapter, on to what extent a universal set of rules is desirable, it would seem that the kind of balance that ethics expert Mary C. Gentile advances in her book *Giving Voice to Values* would be the fairest and most feasible to achieve: "Know and appeal to a short list of widely shared values, such as honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion. In other words, don't assume too little - or too much - commonality with others," she recommends. [51]

Gentile's preference for "values" rather than "ethics" has also influenced the implementation plan for the OP Code. As she explains, "In general usage, ethics suggests a system of rules or standards with which one is expected to comply. That is, we may talk about business ethics, medical ethics, legal ethics, or more generally, professional ethics. Individual businesses often have their own formal codes of ethics (a set of written standards and guidelines); they distribute these widely and sometimes even conduct training sessions to make sure employees are aware of them. Thus, ethics is often seen as rule-based and externally imposed, something that exists outside the individual," she concludes.[52] And this is exactly what we want to avoid for a new or revised form of monitoring: adherence to correct moral conduct and choices in editorial decisions should spring first of all from a personal sense of morality, and such conduct should be encouraged - not forced upon journalists.

Since our ultimate goal is to design an ethics code for collaborative journalism, some specialists in the area of collective intelligence and community news-reporting have

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[51] Mary C. Gentile, *Giving Voices to Values* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 24.
[52] Gentile, 25.

also proved influential. For instance, Jeff Lowe's "10 Rules of Crowdsourcing" are, in his own words, "neither comprehensive nor fireproof, but they do provide a rough road map to help you navigate this new terrain."[53]

Admittedly, his recommendations are stronger on the practical aspects of organizing community news projects, with concrete tips for engaging participants ("Offer the Right Incentives"), keeping tasks small and manageable ("Keep It Simple and Break It Down"), and how to still maintain some form of order and organization ("Communities need community leaders"). Thus, advice on how to perform all this in the most ethical manner possible, and using a code of conduct that is embraced by all is left outside of the perimeters of his set of rules. Still, Lowe has certainly showed me how to make the Code and its related tools for discussing ethics more functional in group settings.

A media expert who is far more attuned to the ethical difficulties of regulating collective news production on the Internet is cyber lawyer and free speech defender Mike Godwin, who as an insider from the pioneering community news project The WELL, tells us in his seminal book *Cyber Rights* that he has found The WELL's model very useful "for understanding the rules for planning virtual communities around free speech principles. Working from this model, I've come up with a set of principles that provide a good starting point for building these communities," he wrote.[54]

Although referring more broadly to online communities of media producers than the more selective set of professional journalists who are my target audience, Godwin's adapted "Ten Principles for Making Virtual Communities Work" still hold some very thoughtful recommendations for the ethical practice of collaborative journalism online. Of especial journalistic and regulatory significance for us is the clause "Let the users resolve their own disputes": "On the whole, WELL management has taken a hands-off position when it comes to users' interpersonal disputes and conflicts on the WELL. Experienced users don't turn to management to complain. They choose instead to hash out their differences in public," Godwin explained. "And the WELL has imposed few rules on public discourse: the result has been that the user population has developed or adopted its own norms about quoting each other and publishing e-mail that are enforced largely by social pressures."[55]

Such a stance on community controls is most suited to new media models of open and participatory news publishing, since they (like my OP system) advocate minimal monitoring and editorial regulation imposed from above.

It is even more encouraging to see Godwin reporting on the rules and practices that naturally emerge from such self- and user-generated models - precisely the kinds that the Open Park Code seeks to prompt in its users, by relying on its open-source and adaptable structure.

But the set of proposed rules for digital journalism that I have found to be the most central to my argument is the one that, at first sight contradictorily, looks back to the basics of journalism ethics. Indeed, Ron F. Smith's "Five ways the Media can improve" spell out guidelines that are rooted in the traditional practice of

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[53] Jeff Howe, *Crowdsourcing - Why the Power of the Crowd is driving the Future of Business* (New York: Crown Business, 2008) 278-288.
[54] Godwin, 39-43.
[55] Godwin, 41.

journalism.[56] But a return to - or rather, careful reform of the core duties of principled news-reporting - is what I have concluded is the most desirable format for digital collaborative media enterprises.

It is worth citing Smith's five rules in question, since they appear in an adapted version in the OP Code. News coverage would be better, Smith says, "if journalists followed basic tools of reporting, such as":

. *"Question persistently."*
. *"Be upfront about verification."*
. *"Correct mistakes prominently and promptly."*
. *"Use exact attribution."*
. *"Don't rush things into print or onto the air."*

It is easy to see how the latter point could be expanded to include publishing on the Internet.

But the principle that strikes a the strongest chord with the essence of Open Park's ethical framework for the Web is the one that exhorts journalists to be extra careful with sources and attribution: "Explain who sources are and how they came about their information - even official sources," Smith says.

This is a key entry in the OP Code, and one that stresses the importance of renewed vigilance with regards to sources of information (human and data-based ones) found on the Internet. I have even gone a step further than Smith by recommending that journalists double check all types of information, even those originating from reputable sources such as the established media and newswire agencies.

Perhaps the closest forms to an established code of ethics for online journalism that I have found among new media initiatives are the Founding Principles of the Online News Association.[57] Of course, these guidelines are 'established' to the extent that journalists from all media and stripes have heard about the ONA and similar media regulation innovators - which we may safely assume is still far from a universal reality.

The ONA principles by the ONA recognize the new difficulties of multi-sourced and multi-platform storytelling and have offered me a good base on which to work. They certainly cover the basics of journalism excellence, as expected from traditional professional practice, while being aware of the "complex challenges and opportunities for journalists as well as the news audiences" that the Net presents. The ONA identifies these principles as: "Editorial Integrity; Editorial Independence; Journalistic Excellence; Freedom of Expression; Freedom of access."

While the ONA is clearly conscious of the need to retain the core values that have shaped American journalism and ethical news-reporting, the explanations for each principle shows adjustments made to the new realities of working on the Internet, such as guidelines for careful use of linking, attributing and distinguishing between sources of information. Just as I argued in Chapter 4 for the need to be especially vigilant with verifying Web-based sources, the ONA stipulates that "Online journalists should uphold traditional high principles in reporting original news for the Internet and in reviewing and corroborating information from other sources." It also

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[56] Ron S. Smith, *Ethics in Journalism* (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 76-77.

[57] The Online News Association (ONA)'s statement of values can be found at the end of its Mission at http://journalists.org/about/mission/. Accessed April 18, 2011.

stresses the need to maintain the foundational principles of ethical journalism: "Online journalists should maintain the highest principles of fairness, accuracy, objectivity and responsible independent reporting."[58]

However, the ONA's stated values offer little in the way of telling online journalists *how* to perform these news-production activities online while maintaining the standards they have learned in J-school or through years of practice in the traditional press and networks.

For a more detailed, hands-on approach to a code of ethics for online media professionals, I should cite Jonathan Dube's Bloggers' Code of Ethics[59], and Rebecca Blood's "Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog" from her Weblog Handbook[60], both of which have been seminal in my formulation of the OP Code. Like me, Dube acknowledges using the SPJ Code as basis, seeing in it the unquestionable values of American journalism. As for Blood's Weblog Ethics, the explanations attached to the entries might seem a little lengthy and impractical, but this makes them far more specific in their instructions for implementing ethical values in one's daily work on the Internet and other digital platforms with multiple users. She too, encourages us to apply extra caution when dealing with sources and checking the veracity of the information found online: "Note questionable and biased sources; Publish as fact only that which you believe to be true."

Last but not least, it is important to note that while these two systems of regulation and standards address only bloggers and professional journalists who blog as part of their assigned duties in their companies, their proposed directives can clearly be applied to many, if not all forms of multimedia and collaborative news production using digital technologies. Hence my unhesitant adoption and adjustment of many of their instructions and principles to my own proposed rules in my Code in Appendix A.[61]

While the various codes and proposed rules for digital media that I have cited and in some cases analyzed briefly here above have all been instrumental in helping me develop the Open Park Code for online journalists, they have also made me aware of the pitfalls to avoid - such as overly verbose or unclear guidelines - and showed me what is missing in current proposals - such as a code that would cover a broader range of online news professionals than just bloggers as Dube' and Blood's principles do.[62] This need can in fact be extended to the next level, and prompt us to think of ways to establish more firmly a potential system of regulation and standards so that it covers as many spheres of media production as possible and takes into account the hybrid collective nature of journalistic production in our era. Ways to establish and

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[58] ONA.

[59] Dube's Bloggers' Code of Ethics can be found at http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php. Accessed April 18, 2012.

[60] More on The Weblog Handbook can be found at http://www.rebeccablood.net/handbook/. Accessed April 18, 2012.; A copy of Rebecca Blood's Weblog guidelines can be found in Cecilia Friend and Jane B. Singer, *Online Journalism Ethics - Traditions and Transitions* (Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007) 129-131.

[61] Credit and sources are given whenever relevant in the footnotes of Appendix A.

[62] Readers will find full versions of some of the key ethics codes here mentioned, as well as the most influential ones in the industry in Appendix A, following the OP Code of Ethics.

institutionalize such a system, so that its values are shared and adhered to by as many participants in digital news production is, as I write in my conclusion, most likely the next challenge for media innovators, but also the next logical, natural step.

It is my belief that while the OP Code has obviously not reached the level of such adoption and adherence, its principles and guidelines possess all that is needed to be embraced by diverse communities of media producers and are functional enough to be implemented in present-day digital journalism. With flexible adjustments and corrections to suit the specific needs of news stories and communities of journalists, the OP Code can foster more media ethics awareness and practice in collaborative news initiatives and help online journalists 'take cyber ethics into their hands' and do a better job in an environment of unpredictable news developments.

3] A Proposal for the Global Media Ethics Forum

One of the risks that I knew I was incurring when conceptualizing my Open Park Code of Ethics is that it might end up sharing the fate of many existing codes and journalism guidelines and gathering dust on the shelves of newsrooms or in the depths of the Internet and news organizations' internal Web pages.
How to make the Code a 'living' tool and using it as a participatory experience for all was one of the biggest challenges. The open-source model of news publishing no doubt goes a long way in giving the Code the capacity to evolve and improve with time and use, since it is 'open-ended' and meant to be adapted to different circumstances and ethical dilemmas encountered by diverse communities of collaborating journalists. But the capacities for expansion and improvement did not solve the question of how to engage potential users and encourage already working journalists in using the OP Code in their work. More was needed. A broader strategy was in order.

Here I must give credit to Placeblogger[63] founder and Knight News Challenge Fellow Lisa Williams for her good advice on implementing digital media projects in a fast-evolving context. In a Blog post on her site, she wrote on the importance of an overall strategy: "How can you make sense of what seems like a confusing and chaotic environment? To keep life in the entrepreneurial fast lane from becoming life in the entrepreneurial oncoming lane, you have to have a strategy for making decisions in the absence of crucial information. How can you move forward if nobody knows yet what's going to work, and there are a zillion different people doing a zillion different things?" she asked before listing a few recommendations for smooth management and collaboration.[64]

This is the approach that I decided to adopt for my proposed reform for the news media, one that is based on a specific and also broader strategy than just a document of suggested guidelines, but rather, is accompanied by supporting news-reporting tools to encourage engagement and interactive use of the Code among actual and potential users.

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[63] For more on the project, see http://placeblogger.com/. Accessed April 18, 2012.
[64] The Blog post can be found at http://www.slideshare.net/lisawilliams/the-future-is-small-but-the-impact-isnt. Accessed Jan. 5, 2012.; and
http://www.mikemarcotte.com/2011/03/the-future-is-small-placeblogger.html.
Accessed March 10, 2011.

Thus, in addition to the various opportunities for contribution and engagement with the collaborative news projects of the OP Web site through the group Blogs and the shared writing platform, the site hosts an online **'Global Media Ethics Forum'** in which newsroom editors, reporters, independent journalists and multimedia news producers from across the nation and beyond, as well as the public can engage in discussing and solving ethical difficulties or simply sensitive situations they may have encountered in the course of their news publishing or consumption.

Forum participants can present to self-selected groups or individuals any difficult ethical decisions they have to make or case they have observed in the news media and try to solve it collectively. Of course, consultation and active use of the Open Park is encouraged. But this does not mean that other existing codes are not consulted, and users are in fact encouraged to broaden their experience and knowledge, as well as their chances of solving their ethical dilemma, by bringing to the table their own regulatory tools and codes. This can only enhance the OP Code, and should a particular point prove useful yet missing from the Code, amendments can then be made.

Anyone can take part in the problem-solving sessions to the degree he/she wishes, as well as use his/her real name. However, as a way of ensuring full free speech opportunities, anonymity is also possible, with the creation of nicknames.[65]

The Forum is partially moderated by a group of moderators selected by vote among the regular users, and with the help of a brief list of guidelines for appropriate online conduct and language use, moderators apply minimal editorial controls over the comments and longer Blog posts contributed by both professionals and the public.

All in all, this participatory approach to ethical challenges, the likes of which I have not found in current offerings of regulatory tools aimed at digital news media production and journalism, serves not only as one of my 'solutions' to the ills of the industry, but also as a simple and practical support to the Open Park Code. In fact, one may say that the two tools complement and enhance one another, and significantly augment the chances of collaboratively reached ethical solutions to the new dilemmas of digital news.

4] A Proposal for a New Approach and Terminology

In addition to proposing an adapted Code of Ethics for the digital news media and a supporting practical Global Media Ethics Forum for solving ethical cases collaboratively, I am also proposing a new way of approaching and phrasing these 'new ethical dilemmas and issues' that emerged with Web-based news-reporting, as I described in Chapters 3 and 4.

Unlike most media analysts who tend to phrase the debate in pessimistic or downright negative terms[66] I suggest we see these issues and unpredictable dilemmas as offering exciting challenges and new possibilities to online news professionals. In other words, I argue for seeing them not as difficulties, but as *opportunities* to finally sit down with ones' editors, professional journalists from other organizations, citizen journalists and

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[65] For the use of anonymity as a tool for free expression on the Internet, see Godwin,143.

[66] Robert I. Berkman and Christopher A. Shumway are only two, but also the best examples of such thinking. See their book *Digital Dilemmas - Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals* (Ames IA: Iowa State Press, 2003).

the public and discuss and solve concrete ethical problems and situations that occur in our daily news coverage, individually or collectively as they deem best.

So the change I am proposing here pertains to a new terminology and a different, more positive approach.

Establishing Tools & Practices

With these four proposed tools - the concept of open, multiperspectival news, the OP Code, the Ethics Forum and the new terminology - my approach and proposed solutions for practicing ethics in collaborative news-reporting online come to a close. While already operational on many levels and commented upon and even praised by professional journalists and my own interviewed sources (i.e. the OP Code, the OP Web platform for collaborative news production), these proposed tools are obviously very far from having reached the level of being broadly embraced and shared values among communities of journalists, let alone the level of adoption in newsrooms, and standardization within the industry.

But this does not mean that it is too early to design a plan for more collaborative thinking on media ethics in journalism and adoption of this Code and tools on a broader level than within the confines of my thesis, the CMS department or MIT.

It is at this point that a little help from the industry would come in handy. Not only could journalists and news organizations test further the OP Code and system for collaborative news and improve it with suggestions for amendments, but it would benefit them to have at their disposal a toolbox for improving the ethics and quality of their news-reporting and a pool of what Lisa Williams calls 'bodies' (i.e. additional news-reporters and multimedia producers) whom they can call upon to help their own staff reporters and editors - since all projects are based on a volunteering model.

Generally, the mutual benefits of having a support base are evident. From the perspective of a code designer - and this is true for any proposed media reformers - the next most useful step, once a new (i.e. revised) ethics code has been freshly formulated, is to seek support for it among established media.

Such an effort could be implemented by approaching the established press and major media institutions to ask them to lend their support and recommendations for adopting the Open Park Code of Ethics as one of the key tools on the market for regulating emerging collaborative media.

I would propose approaching five to ten major American newspapers and inviting them to use the OP Code (and possibly Platform and Forum) for a certain period of time on mutually approved terms.

In addition, it would be most useful, for establishing a more standardized form of a code of ethics for the digital age to have the support of a board or committee, which could be formed in a similar manner - by inviting members of the news media and journalism institutions.

These two endeavors would actually be the first step towards establishing the Open Park Code more firmly in local (to start with) and national communities of practicing journalists, and standardizing its related practices and recommendations for use.

The participating media would serve as useful and informative testing grounds and provide chances for adjustments and improvements through the experiment with the selected print publications.

The support and experienced-based advice of the participating newspapers and those of the Board members would also be in the spirit of and enhance the collaborative nature of the whole Open Park media reform project.

On a last note, it is worth re-quoting here *The Boston Globe*'s Jack Driscoll and reiterating his observation that institutional support is key to promoting the adoption of ethical standards for professional American journalism. Just the fact that established media are devoting time to testing the proposed rules and regulatory efforts is half the job done, he said. To cite him once more:

"As the public comes to realize the inadequacy of snippets of news via messaging and tweeting, serious news organizations at local, regional and national levels--even if online only--have the potential to operate at adequate profit levels while producing substantive news. Ethical guidelines that are valued by these institutions will not only enhance credibility but will perhaps be the most important marketing tool for building long-run credibility," he said.

May this idea of approaching and sending invitations to news organizations and digital media players for potential experimentation and use of the Open Park Code of Ethics be my fifth, 'unofficial' proposal and last step in my suggested solutions.

Conclusion and Future Work

Return to the Roots for the Internet Era

So after seven chapters, numerous research questions, as many comments and opinions from interviewed sources and the industry, a few proposals and tentative solutions, and the still lingering, overriding challenge of how to make digital collaborative journalism more ethical and professional, where are we?

I may have taken my readers on a long and complex exploratory ride through the meanders of media ethics, codes and regulations, journalism reform and innovations, not to speak of my own experimental Open Park Code and projects.
But in fact, it is all very simple. At least, if we think of the thesis' ultimate goal of preserving American' professional journalism's foundational values in the world of the Internet and collaborative, hybrid media. After all, these are immutable, as Lawrence K. Grossman explained in *The Electronic Republic*:

"Nothing could be clearer and simpler than the language of the First Amendment that protects free speech and a free press: 'Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.' Only fourteen words, and as Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas noted, their meaning is plain: 'Government shall keep its hands off the press.'"[67]

In view of this, a return to these core values and the moral imperatives of an independent press, with deliberative consideration of appropriate reform of certain

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[67] Lawrence K. Grossman, *The Electronic Republic - Reshaping Democracy in the Information Age* (New York: Viking, the Penguin Group, 1995) 190.

news-reporting practices for the Internet and social media, may well be what the digital doctors would order - in any case, *I* would. And this is also my final conclusion on my key research question on the need for- and desirability of regulating new media.

As the sources consulted and interviewed for my research have shown, the new digital dilemmas that have arisen in the wake of the (at times) hasty adoption of new technologies have brought both the digitized press and the digital natives new, unprecedented challenges that demand a new or adjusted more flexible framework for addressing them. As part of doing so, many in the industry, including among those interviewed for this thesis, agree that codes of ethics are still fulfilling their irreplaceable role as moral compass for the profession. In the same line, we can also establish confidently that the code of the Society of Professional Journalists is to this day the best tool available, and the most likely one to be effectively adapted to a version for digital media (as some of my sources have already suggested, and even implemented[68]).
But this does not change the nature and duties of journalism, as well as the rights and responsibilities of all involved. To an even larger extent than my isolated smaller cases and examples, WikiLeaks' experience with media partners has evidenced how problematic, opaque and unethical such collaborations can be when left outside of all media regulation, editorial controls, public scrutiny and professional principles.
Like many of my sources, then, I second the view that the foundational principles of ethics and the basic moral values of contemporary American journalism are not only still relevant, but also perhaps even more so today, now that virtually all news media production has been transferred to the Net.

This leads us to my final key argument and conclusion that we need new rules and standards - ideally in the form of a revised code of ethics - for digital media. This, in fact, means *a return to our trust* in rules and standards to appropriately guide online professionals in their work, while it is still evolving in today's fast-paced emerging media. Thus, the 'new' guidelines I propose, by definition, will most likely involve an adaptation of the foundations of professional journalism to present-day realities and predictions for future developments in the field.

Such an adapted code, I have argued, fills the purpose of not only ensuring more media ethics awareness and practice among professional journalists working individually or in groups in digital media, by also, with its open publishing on news sites and encouraged use and reviews by all site visitors, hone the critical skills of the reading, viewing and participating audiences.
In short, we all benefit.

One area where this 'return to past practices' has actually already been taking place and garnered some drive towards establishment under our very eyes has been 'collaborative journalism'.
We all know that teamwork is part and parcel certainly of all television and radio work and other broadcast initiatives at all editorial and production levels. This, in fact, is true to a large extent for the traditional press news-reporters too, especially those working on investigative stories. It is a well-known fact that reporters are encouraged

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[68] See Steve Buttry's propositions and SPJ updating experiments earlier in this chapter.

to develop and nurture working relationships with the key sources in their local communities or group of experts and potential commentators on their area of coverage or beat. Journalists of all stripes have been doing this for centuries. Yet no one had defined this as 'collaboration' or 'community journalism' until now, when both professionals and industry insiders and the media audiences at large seem to see this practice as a 'new media' movement in the field of journalism and story-telling in general.

We have witnessed, in only at the level of terminology, a return to the basic tasks of news-reporting, and a momentum to define them more fully and create norms for them in the digital world. This drive towards establishing 'collaborative journalism' as a social and professional practice seems to have been happening naturally both within and outside the news industry, at least at the level of language.

Observations about the importance of preserving the foundations of ethical journalism have been made by some key media scholars and legal experts.

Former President of the Public Broadcasting Service and NBC News Lawrence K. Grossman has also noticed such trends and is arguing for past philosophies and practices:

"My own conviction is that the more complicated and diverse communications technology becomes, the simpler and more unambiguous our First Amendment protection should be. The electronic republic will be best served in the twenty-first century by returning to the late eighteenth century approach to the press that was specified in the Bill of Rights. Its content should be entirely free from 'abridgment' by government. In that respect, tomorrow's telecommunications media should enjoy the same freedom as yesterday's print press," he wrote in the aptly entitled chapter 'Media Reform - Back to the Future' of *The Electronic Republic*.[69]

"That freedom should hold no matter what form its content may take: whether print, sound, film, or tape; whether the message appears on television, computer or movie screen, or is delivered via satellite, transmitter, microwave, cable, phone, fax, printing press, or soapbox."[70]

"Although written long before the advent of what we now know as mass media and certainly long before the arrival of personal telecommunications media, the First Amendment 's centuries-old language, taken literally, should be the beacon of the future," he continued. He then proceeded to cite a list of principles that "should shape the nation's approach to free speech and a free press during the transformation to the electronic republic, no matter how the telecommunications environment may evolve." Among these, we will find guarantees for equal application of the First Amendment to *all* media; of no restrictions on who may publish; for diversity of media ownership and control; and for a public space accessible to all citizens for debate and decision-making.[71]

Grossman's views on relying on primary structures for shaping the journalism of the future do not mean there is no need or room for creative flexibility and adjustments for the new demands of our age. But these should be engaged in with extra care, as risks of ignoring core principles and laws may easily lurk in such enterprises, as Grossman points out too, with a perfect example:

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[69] Lawrence K. Grossman, 191.
[70] Grossman, 191.
[71] Grossman, 191.

"During the past century, the 'press' evolved into the 'media' and has taken many different forms, from hand-printed broadsheets to digitally transmitted telecasts to computer-generated on-line bulletin boards. Future technologies, as we have all seen, will develop still more forms of communication. Yet until now the practice, wrote Justice Robert Jackson, has been to consider each new medium 'a law unto itself,' thereby justifying the 'differences in the First Amendment standards applied to them.' That means 'a separate First Amendment test must be applied to each medium and a new standard developed with each technical innovation.' Such an approach, said media scholar Ithiel de Sola Pool, 'has led to a scholastic set of distinctions that no longer correspond to reality. As new technologies have acquired the functions of the press, they have not acquired the rights of the press.' First Amendment decisions 'reveal curious judicial blindness, as if the Constitution had to be reinvented with the birth of each new technology.'" Grossman wrote.
"That doctrine should change. Whatever their form, the new media should enjoy the same full measure of First Amendment protection as the old-fashioned press. The government should keep its hands off content," he concluded.[72]

All in all, what may at first sight appear like an unlikely marriage of 'old' and 'new' in my proposed formula for reforming media standards for digital collaborative journalism is in fact not uncommon in many spheres of publishing and the information industry. As Paul Walton observes in his essay "Cyber-ethics: regulation and privatisation," creative innovation and traditional models are not incompatible partners, on the contrary:

"Even Bill Gates is given to flights of utopianism. In the chapter on education in his book, *The Road Ahead*, Gates rhapsodies:

The highway will allow new methods of teaching and much more choice. Quality curriculums can be created with government funding and made available for free. Private vendors will compete to enhance the free material (1995, p. 198).

"Yet this advice is offered in a traditional, randomly accessible, portable, energy free, re-readable device - a book. Its cultural form has been around for over five hundred years," Walton noted.[73]

And Audiences?

In this climate of deep changes and momentous decisions for the industry, one may wonder what all this means for media audiences, both those 'passively' just consuming, and those actively participating with contributions, formal and informal.[74]

A sure conclusion that we can draw, based on the risks for misinformation and unethical use of sources identified above is that today's news media consumers and

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[72] Grossman, 193.

[73] Paul Walton, "Cyber-ethics: regulation and privatisation,," *Ethics and Media Culture - Practices and Representations*, Edited by David Berry (Waltham MA: Focal Press, 2000) 211.

[74] Of course media audiences' level of engagement with news is in reality not so clear-cut, and happens in many nuanced ways, often by mixing both practices.

participants must be far more critical about what they are consuming online than in the earlier days of journalism, and more attuned to what kind of information they need.

By 'what kind,' I also mean 'of what caliber' - readers/viewers should decide in advance what *their* standards of accuracy, reliability and ethical appropriateness are for what they find on the Internet, and make a conscious choice to go only for such quality material, thus actively engaging in a constant and ruthless process of selection. It is my firm belief that such critical and informed skepticism about Internet news, especially that produced in hybrid environments and with amateur journalists, must be nurtured among present-day audiences.

And while one of the most logical methods for doing so - education - was not technically speaking part of my thesis's area of research, the Open Park platform certainly offers plenty of interactive tools to help digital news consumers and producers develop these critical skills.

A *Newsweek* brief on news and information, "Decision: Where Should I Get My News?" offers some more practical and ready-made help for avid news readers[75] to hone these skills and the appropriate media consumption behaviors. In a user-friendly format, the short piece listed:

"Choices: Print versus online. Blog versus old-media site. Drudge Report versus Huffington Post. RSS feeds versus Twitter.
Noise: Can you trust what you read in newspapers? Can you trust what you read on the Internet? Are liberals more or less trustworthy than conservatives? Do you want to know a lot about one thing or a little about everything?
Best strategy: Mix it up. Read the top story in The New York Times - and then just let the bloggers tell you what it missed."[76]

While this strategy still relies on a relatively passive attitude from audiences, telling them to put their trust in *The New York Times* and bloggers, rather than being themselves skeptical and questioning, and scrutinizing for themselves the sources of the information published, the questions *Newsweek* suggests should still be staples in our daily news consumption activities and responses.

Eventually, an informed, engaged and critical digital media audience may well end up designing its own norms, just as some information communities are already doing for their own internal purposes and projects, in a bottom-up type of managing infrastructure.

Claire Cain Miller of *The New York Times* has identified such a phenomenon in online social practices, such as interacting on Facebook and other networks. Quoting media experts, she wrote: "But attitudes toward sharing have not necessarily changed. Instead, people are developing new norms to manage their online lives, said Coye Cheshire, an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who studies online social intelligence. For instance, after a party or vacation, people will often e-mail others in the group to find out if it is O.K. to post the photos on Facebook. People begin to realize the implications of their actions, and that's where norms get

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[75] Of course, online radio listeners, videos viewers, and numerous other types of media consumers and participants are included in these observations.
[76] "Decision: Where Should I Get my News?" *Newsweek*, March 7, 2011, 31.

generated," she quoted Professor Cheshire as saying.[77]

Ideally, I would support a system where these audiences are engaged *with the professionals* in this exercise - and are not just left to design any rules or guidelines they deem fit on their own. As we have seen, numerous conflicts of interests and the diversity of the various communities involved can get in the way of implementing a fair and representative system of shared values. A go-it-alone approach runs the risk of falling for a system that is closed to other people's interests and views.

These instructions and the learning and application of online media ethics and professional principles can only be enriched and facilitated if professional journalists are involved. This would yield quite a balanced, equal, and democratic model.

To take this idea one step further, I in fact believe that the journalism profession should be leading this endeavor. But if it takes the lead in guiding its audiences of readers and media participants to have their say and a part in media reform and ethics codes-drafting, it should do so in a more democratic manner than was the case in the previous top-down, traditional news model.

The technicalities of creating such a shared and equal system for drafting new media regulation unfortunately fall beyond the scope of this thesis.

In fact, establishing the rules, possibilities and limits for such a balanced system could certainly be part of *the future work* in this area.

Future Tasks

The opportunities for further research, tests and applications that are directly related to my enquiry on the ethics of collaborative electronic publishing, or can act as useful extensions of it, are many. To cite some of the key logical next steps to my conclusions on the need for a revised code of ethics for digital media: one major task would be to test the Open Park Code of Ethics in a real-life news environment, such as locally-based electronic newspapers and other publications, or give the Code to local communities of interest groups or selected ethnic communities for them to use while covering their news. Previous research work for CMS and the C4CM has already identified potential communities, such as Haitians in Boston, the Russian and Somali Diasporas of New York and other major U.S. cities, or the Franciscan order and its community youth service in Brooklyn, New York.

Such an enterprise should ideally be conducted with the help of professional journalists. This can be implemented by inviting news organizations as well as independent news producers from alternative media to participate. Of course, journalism students and their news-reporting and multimedia classes would also offer a perfect testing environment, in addition to or as an alternative to the real-life newsrooms and communities.

Last but not least, establishing my proposed Code for digital collaborative media would be another key task in bringing the project to full completion. As I suggested earlier, this can be best achieved by inviting selected newspapers and media organizations to bring their support to the Code, and maybe test it with their staff and contributors. Forming a Board to support these initiatives would also take the project

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[77] Claire Cain Miller, "The Many Faces of Facebook," *The New York Times*, Oct 16 [online], 17 [print], 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/17/weekinreview/17miller.html. Accessed Oct. 16, 2010.

to the next level of accomplishment.

While all these ideas and suggested actions for future endeavors pertain to the rather technical and pragmatic, it goes without saying that the more abstract research question of how best to manage digital open news publishing collaborations still hangs above our heads.

At this point I would say that the dilemma that still presents itself to us and could do with more research is the question of how best to represent all views on the ethics of digital hybrid journalism. As my readers have now realized, there are many and conflicting views on whether online journalism should be regulated - if at all. I have also made my stance on this question quite clear, opting for the drafting of a revised code of ethics, that in the real world I envision taking place collaboratively among professional and amateur journalists and the public in an open news system.

But one may well wish for a regulatory system that is representative of all the views on the subject, and is sensitive to all parties' needs and characteristics. Although such a system verges on the Utopian, I would think it could still be the focus of further research.

Still Unsolved

It should be clear by now even to the casual reader that I have raised far more questions than I have answered clearly and solved definitely.

Given the complexity of the still evolving news landscape we are in, this is not too surprising.

As Charles Bierbauer of CNN wrote in his Foreword to *The Journalist's Moral Compass*, at first sight, "It's almost too simple. Ask the question. Get the answer. Write the story." But, he adds, "The questions are getting tougher, though. Perhaps that's where the journalists in the highly competitive, technologically accelerated media of the late 20th century are running afoul."[78]

Bierbauer is actually echoing Grossman, who later in his analytical chapter on media reform admitted that "Despite its unambiguous language, the history of First Amendment doctrine involving speech and the press is as complex and contradictory as the range of human discourse that the constitutional amendment was put in place to protect."[79]

These complexities and contradictions certainly have had their part in the fact that many unresolved questions still surround the design and potential practical applications of the Open Park Code of Ethics. Topping the list of lingering questions are how to implement the fair and representative drafting of such a code (although the open source model of course partially solves this), and how best to enforce this Code while encouraging voluntary engagement and adherence?

These two questions on their own could easily provide enough enquiry material for another Master's thesis or two.

As *The New York Times*' 'Media Equation' author David Carr conveniently summarized, "the trends are too numerous to elucidate." He then asks, "As the number, size and portability of screens multiply, will dominant companies continue to regain hegemony?... And finally, will Angry Birds eventually eat away so much

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[78] Charles Bierbauer, in Knowlton and Parsons, xiv.
[79] Grossman, 190.

mindshare - people currently spend 200 million minutes a day playing the game - that no one has any time for plain old media?"[80]

And I am tempted to add my own concern to his - that there is no more time for 'plain old' media ethics.

But hopefully this thesis will have done its share to help reverse this trend.

In any case, if there is one thing that is virtually certain in this still changing news environment it is that we are in for more changes and more challenges on the journalism ethics front, and that new ethical dilemmas are likely to appear as more levels of skills and involvement merge into interesting new partnerships among all the media players of this increasingly connected world.

And given this exciting but still unpredictable future of the news industry, it is reassuring to know that we have out there a Code of Ethics for digital collaborative journalism - the Open Park Code.

As a Last Resort

And if all else fails, OP Code included, we can always resort to more drastic measures to regulate digital media production and instill a modicum of appropriate behavior among professional online journalists - such as the one described by Michael Jackson's biographer J. Randy Taraborrelli, who reported that the singer (whose relationship with the media was rather stormy) told him that his eight-foot pet boa constrictor Muscles "was trained to eat journalists."[81]

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[80] David Carr, "The Great Mashup 2011," *The New York Times*, Jan 3, 2011, B1.

[81] J. Randy Taraborrelli, *Michael Jackson - The Magic, The Madness, The Whole Story, 1958-2009* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, first edition: 1991; last edition 2010) 234.

"The Problem of ethics or morality in human conduct is as old as humanity itself.(...)
"What makes us moral? Hereditary beliefs? Unusual circumstances? Epiphanies?
Moments of great fear or pain?" (...)
What lessons are we teaching our young people? Have we taught them to develop an
ethical compass within? (...) Young people who are remarkably thoughtful and
engaged with enduring questions; young people who are sensitive to the sufferings
and defects that confront a society yearning for guidance and eager to hear ethical
voices.
Listen to the ethical voice within."

Preface to An Ethical Compass - Coming of Age in the 21st Century.
The Ethics Prize Essays of the Elie Wiesel Foundation
Elie Wiesel

Appendix: The Open Park Code of Ethics

Editorial Notes:

The guidelines that I am proposing for digital collaborative journalism take as a foundation the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics (the last, 1996 version can found here – http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp); all its principles and tenets on the ethical practice of the profession hold true for the practice of online journalism in general.[1]

Thus, these recommendations consist, in addition to an explicit reinforcement of traditional norms for the digital workspace, of additional guidelines specifically aimed at online media professionals such as bloggers, newsrooms' Twitter users, and other categories of new media publishers working individually or collaboratively on the Net and other digital platforms. The added guidelines have been designed to answer specific potential ethical dilemmas that are intrinsic to cyberspace.

Here it should be stressed that, like the SPJ Code and all major journalistic codes of ethics, the suggested Code is a self-regulatory tool, adopted and used only on a voluntary basis. On this point, the SPJ notes:

"The SPJ Code of Ethics is voluntarily embraced by thousands of journalists, regardless of place or platform, and is widely used in newsrooms and classrooms as a guide for ethical behavior. The code is intended not as a set of 'rules' but as a resource for ethical decision-making. It is not — nor can it be under the First Amendment — legally enforceable."[2]

On a related note, in light of its open-source nature, it is not just adherence and usage that are being encouraged, but also amendments and additions by users so as to reflect the ongoing and upcoming changes in digital news production. Thus, these guidelines should be considered an open-ended, 'living', adaptable document, constantly attuned to the demands of the time. It is recommended that those amendments be made, as the

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[1] This latter statement is based on my own argument in this thesis. I am not claiming it is universally, inalienably true. Simply put, I believe and have argued in this thesis that the new digital journalism still needs to rely on the SPJ Code and traditional norms of ethics to ensure its professional and ethical practice on the Internet. I have been using mostly the 1987 version of the SPJ Code for references to the Code in the thesis, which can be found in *The Journalist's Moral Compass - Basic Principles*, Edited by Steven R. Knowlton and Patrick R. Parsons (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1994) 5-7. To clarify, The SPJ notes on the Code's Web page that: "The present version of the code was adopted by the 1996 SPJ National Convention, after months of study and debate among the Society's members. Sigma Delta Chi's first Code of Ethics was borrowed from the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1926. In 1973, Sigma Delta Chi wrote its own code, which was revised in 1984, 1987 and 1996." (http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp. Accessed April 18, 2012. (Sigma Delta Chi is the foundational name of the SPJ).

[2] http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp; See also http://www.spj.org/ethicsfaq.asp. Accessed April 18, 2012.

SPJ itself recommends for the elaboration of its own regulations[3], within the context of an open and representative debate and vote. It is also my belief that such amendments would be best made by the active users of any new set of guidelines, since they will have the benefits of practical experience in real life news situations. Lastly, just as the SPJ notes that the SPJ Code "is widely used in newsrooms *and classrooms* as a guide for ethical behavior"[4] (emphasis added), these guidelines too can serve as an educational tool for journalism students and the next generation of online bloggers and media producers.

I must stress that the principles and guidelines presented here are suggestions only - my proposals for improving ethics in online collaborative news production - and thus they are not meant to be taken as fixed and infallible (especially since they have not yet been tested in a real life news environment).
As my proposed instructions for new journalism are based on the SPJ Code of Ethics, by definition they do not purport to introduce any 'new' concept in media ethics. Rather, as I have explained in the thesis, they are meant to be adapted according to the digital and collaborative needs of online journalists and the stories they cover. The suggested principles here below already show more generally how the traditional standards can be revised for the digital new context.
Also, my proposed code includes some entries that may appear to be more akin to practical news-reporting tips than fully-formed ethical rules or standards of practice. This springs from a belief that ethics is not an art or science that needs to be studied only, but actively practiced in everyday assignments. And concrete, practical ethical situations and dilemmas are where solutions and standards are being progressively formed through good, ethical decision-making and where rules and principles eventually come from.

In addition to the pages that follow, the OP Code can be found on the Open Park platform, together with research papers (by me and other media scholars) that have informed it (in the 'Code of Ethics for Collaboration' and 'Research' sections respectively[5]). In each section, comments are welcome.

Online journalists should apply even higher scrutiny to digital and hybrid content and sources than when they were news-gathering for the traditional press and networks. Their first task in practicing online media ethics is to apply the SPJ's principles with renewed intensity on the Web, such as in collaborative environments and cross-platform news-reporting.

At the end of this Appendix are included the full versions of some key codes of ethics, both influential ones still in use in the profession today and a couple of alternative forms aimed at new media news.

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[3] Under its sixth principle, 'Pledge,' the SPJ states: "The Society shall - by programs of education and other means - encourage individual journalists to adhere to these tenets, and shall encourage journalistic publications and broadcasters to recognize their responsibility to frame codes of ethics *in concert with their employees* to serve as guidelines in furthering their goals.". Knowlton and Parsons, 7.
[4] See http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp.
[5] See http://openpark.media.mit.edu/node/21. Accessed April 18, 2012 and http://openpark.media.mit.edu/node/22 respectively. Accessed April 18, 2012.

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The Open Park Code of Ethics:
Suggested Guidelines
For Collaborative Journalism in the Digital Age

Suggested Principles

1] Follow the SPJ Code with Vigilance on the Net: Know and apply the principles of the SPJ Code when working in digital environments, including Web-, mobile, and multi-platform collaborative spaces, with heightened care.

2] Original News-Reporting is Always to be Preferred: Individual, original news-reporting (i.e. personally researched and written news) is at the root of accuracy in journalism - the first tenet of the SPJ Code ("Seek Truth and Report It," which calls for journalists to "test the accuracy of information from all sources" themselves, and not copy it from other journalists). Therefore, report, don't repurpose. Linking to others' work is no substitute for reporting and writing. *All* news material should be acquired by the reporter, in person, directly from the source(s), whenever possible. In original reporting, there is no copying or repeating other reporters' work (such as their reported facts, choice of sources/commentators, etc.), including from established news sources such as the wire agencies, and there is no aggregating. If citing facts reported by others cannot be avoided, name the full source in the story. (It is fine to say that a certain source reported x fact, or that according to x source, such or such event happened- especially if this is important to the story - but only use this as an accompaniment to your own primary original news-reporting).

3] Practice Razor-Sharp Verification: Be intransigent when verifying and confirming your facts. Be impeccable with your sourcing and attributions.
. Unless writing an Opinion piece, *always* give the source of the information you cite.
. Question, question, question: apply skepticism and healthy critical thinking to anything you find on the Net (and of course offline too). Verify and confirm any information you are considering using in your report.
. Unless a source has well-grounded reasons to request anonymity, keep usage of the latter to a minimum. If anonymity is used, explain in your story why.
The minimum criteria for a named and credible source should be: full name, title/position and affiliation. (Age, location and other details, if relevant to the story). Ask potential sources to give you these details *first*. If they refuse, don't bother interviewing them (unless they are the sole or crucial source for a story)
. Say in your article when (give as clear a date as possible) and *how* the interview took place - i.e., how the information was acquired (by email, in person, comments posted on a Blog, etc). Be transparent about your news-gathering and reporting methods.

. Whenever possible, practice multiple verification. One suggested way of doing this is by checking several times your cited material and quotes with your sources (with multiple sources even for just one piece of information, and at different times as the story evolves. For example, on different days, even with the same source: ask people to clarify what they meant, if they still are of the same opinion, or if it has changed since they last spoke to you, just to name a few possible questions). If one of your sources, on a second chance, gives different information than the first time, report this: this is part of the story. Just report it, without passing judgment. Let the readers decide for themselves what these different pronouncements might say about the person or situation he/she commented on.

. For both human sources (persons) and 'non-human' sources (data-based) found on the Net and whose origins and validity are unclear, it is recommended to apply strict evaluation techniques. Watch out for: 'Personal' pages; a lack of contact information on the site; email contact only; spelling and grammatical errors; no evidence of recent activity; outdated look and feel; outlandish or peculiar claims. On the other hand, take it as a sign of credibility if you see: complete contact information; an 'About Us' link; elegant, intuitive design; indication of timeliness; backs up claims; philosophies, approaches, methodologies outlined.[6]

. Be extra vigilant with information found on social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc) online Blogs, forums, and other community sites. Try to contact the (human) source of the information in person and ask them permission for quoting/using the material in your piece. This will avoid potential ethical problems.

(And don't forget at the same time to monitor your own postings and conduct on social network and the Net in general, at all times: you are the face of your organization and of your own integrity after all).

. If you know information (in the form of comments, opinions) given to you by one of your sources to be factually, universally established as incorrect still quote the person faithfully, but try to present the corrected facts through another source (an expert on the matter for example) and quote him/her as a response to your first source.

. If one of your sources is visibly biased or questionable (in a straight news story, not an Opinion piece), and has been recognized as such by a significant number of people, alert your readers to this by suggesting that this might be the case. Such public perceptions about an individual, company or other entity belong to the context surrounding them and as such, are part of the story. Reporting on this does not mean passing judgment, but simply informing the public about such perceptions. You can do this by mentioning the other side's point of view in the story. The same applies if such suspicions about a source are your own. It is fine to say this even in a straight (not Opinion) news piece.

4] Respect Your Sources: Know and respect your (human) sources' rights (privacy and others) offline *and online especially*. Respect their cyber rights, and make sure your sources know them too: make sure they know exactly whom they are talking to (the media), and that 'within seconds' their quotes, opinions and some of their personal details will have spread to the vast, little-regulated expanses of the Internet. Give special attention to victims, crime suspects, children and minors, and all other sources and subjects of sensitive or controversial stories (as well as to their families and closely affiliated people). This is particularly important for visual materials such as photographs and video clips, where taste, decorum, respect, and most importantly fair and balanced treatment should be applied. Be also very careful about representing

'bystanders' -people who 'happen' to be in the frame of your film shot or photograph, in the background or elsewhere, but have nothing to do with the story. If the story is controversial, this could also compromise them.
At all times and on all occasions, the ultimate rule is: minimize harm.

5] Nurture Relationships with Sources Online *and Offline*: Get to know people as much as possible in person. Find ways to develop and cultivate sources who may comment on your story/beat (or recommend people who may be able to do so) using the Internet and digital technologies such as social media. *Take the time* to spend time with your sources and share with them what they are going through. Participate in whatever they are doing. Experience for yourself what your sources are experiencing.

6] Practice Independence Above All: Avoid conflicts of interests, remain independent. To build upon the SPJ Code's obvious principle of complete freedom from interest-based obligations for all journalists who consider themselves professionals and the inalienable right of a free society to enjoy a free press, one should add that should online journalists, bloggers and commentators *not* be fully independent, they must disclose any conflicts of interest, affiliations, activities and personal agendas[7] on their Web Blog, personal page or space on their news organizations' Web site, close to their published work and byline.

7] Don't Be Hasty with Updates: Be careful with quick updates of evolving news stories. With increased time pressures and rewards for 'being first,' your news organization may encourage you to submit fast updates. Despite the deadline-driven pressures, check the facts for yourself through original reporting (with phone calls, email interviews, etc). Stay away from any practice that will overly 'speed up' the story (copying, linking, citing others' work, aggregating, and replicating a Tweet or other comments found on online social networks, among others).

8] Collaborate Carefully: Be clear about the ethics of collaboration with one or several partners (both in-house with your colleagues and outside your organization with the staff and contributing freelancers in other companies, as well as fully independent bloggers and journalists on the Internet). There are plenty of informative resources by which you can educate yourself and your partners on professional journalistic collaborations and on the ethical pitfalls to avoid.
Choose your partners carefully. Make sure that all participants are on the same page about the terms of the collaboration (on all - ethical, editorial, business, etc.-- levels), that there is an open and representative debate about these terms, the goals of the project, and the rights and duties of everyone, as well as about the distribution plans and post-publication developments (or potential consequences if the news project involves a controversial topic).

9] Design, Debate, Decide Democratically: When it comes to journalistic collaboration in cyberspace: plan your partnerships, and deal with editorial dilemmas ethically and professionally. Draft and apply a plan of action agreed upon by all involved for dealing with ethical issues that may arise in the course of or after the collaboration.

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[7] For more on this, see Jonathan Dube, "Bloggers' Code of Ethics," CyberJournalist, April 15, 2003, www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php. Accessed April 18, 2012.

Make use of online resources to deal with ethical dilemmas (and locate them *before* starting the collaborative project!; make sure your staff/partners know where to find them too). Use these resources and recommendations with your collaborators to define the moral dilemma, decide whose dilemma it is, identify the competing moral values, debate options and solutions, and decide on a final ethics-based solution.[8] If there are any, study and make use of precedents too (although this is less likely with digital dilemmas).

. Draw and apply guidelines for the role of social media (such as Twitter, Facebook, personal and group Blogs, etc.) in collaborative news-gathering, both for work-related and personal use. (For example, what can or cannot be said about one's work or an ongoing story on personal Blogs, etc).

. Use open-source and transparent publishing tools as much as possible for work in shared online spaces. Archive your material (both the published stories/projects and ideally, the history of the collaborative work, drafts, comments, etc. The software and online tools are out there, use them!).

10] Use, Adapt the OP Code or Design Your Own!: Adapt codes appropriately and ethically to your news organization's or your own needs; or feel inspired and design your own code and professional online publishing principles.

Decide on a code of journalistic conduct and standards for your own news-writing activities, stick to it (without being inflexible and closed to future adjustments), make it public by posting it on your organization's Web site, your personal Blog, or whatever other publishing platform you are using. Make it easily accessible to your readers, and last but not least, make it open source by inviting comments, contributions and suggestions for adjustments from your audiences.

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5 Key Ethics Guides

Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics[9]

Preamble

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media

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[8] For a good example of such resources, see Susan Huntley, "Tools for navigating ethical dilemmas: being ethical requires more than just following laws," State Legislatures, Dec 1, 2006, http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Tools+for+navigating+ethical+dilemmas%3A+being+ethical+requires+more...-a0155869494. Accessed April 19, 2012.

[9] http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp

and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is voluntarily embraced by thousands of journalists, regardless of place or platform, and is widely used in newsrooms and classrooms as a guide for ethical behavior. The code is intended not as a set of "rules" but as a resource for ethical decision-making. It is not — nor can it be under the First Amendment — legally enforceable.
For an expanded explanation, please follow this link.

Seek Truth and Report It

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.
Journalists should:
— Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
— Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
— Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
— Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
— Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
— Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
— Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
— Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story
— Never plagiarize.
— Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
— Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
— Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
— Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
— Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
— Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
— Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
— Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in

the open and that government records are open to inspection.

Minimize Harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should:
— Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
— Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
— Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
— Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
— Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
— Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
— Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
— Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

Act Independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.
Journalists should:
—Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
— Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
— Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
— Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
— Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
— Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
— Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

Be Accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other. Journalists should:
— Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
— Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
— Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
— Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.

— Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is voluntarily embraced by thousands of writers, editors and other news professionals. The present version of the code was adopted by the 1996 SPJ National Convention, after months of study and debate among the Society's members. Sigma Delta Chi's first Code of Ethics was borrowed from the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1926. In 1973, Sigma Delta Chi wrote its own code, which was revised in 1984, 1987 and 1996.

Radio-Television News Directors Association - Code of Ethics[10]

The Radio Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) of Canada is a national industry association for radio and TV news journalists. Its Code of Ethics, which Canadian broadcasters must follow, is used to measure fairness and accuracy in broadcast news. The Code, which was revised in June 2000, has proved to be a valuable tool in dealing with issues around broadcast news, which is one of the most active areas of viewer and listener concerns.

Of the code's 14 guidelines, key commitments include the requirements to:

. inform the public of events in an accurate, comprehensive and fair way
. resist any attempts to censor the news; intrusion into content, real or apparent, should be resisted
. refrain from pressuring viewers and listeners to change or alter their own views
. report only when relevant such factors as race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or physical or mental disability
. respect the dignity, privacy and well-being of people in the news

The RTNDA Code of Ethics is administered by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC). To submit a complaint about broadcast news content or activities that may contravene the Code, consumers can use the complaint forms on the CBSC and the CRTC Web sites (see right sidebar).

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[10] http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/codes_guidelines/television/private/tv_rtnda_ethics.cfm; See http://www.cbsc.ca/english/codes/rtnda.php for the full text. Accessed April 19, 2012.

National Press Photographers Association Code of Ethics[11]

Preamble

The National Press Photographers Association, a professional society that promotes the highest standards in visual journalism, acknowledges concern for every person's need both to be fully informed about public events and to be recognized as part of the world in which we live.

Visual journalists operate as trustees of the public. Our primary role is to report visually on the significant events and varied viewpoints in our common world. Our primary goal is the faithful and comprehensive depiction of the subject at hand. As visual journalists, we have the responsibility to document society and to preserve its history through images.

Photographic and video images can reveal great truths, expose wrongdoing and neglect, inspire hope and understanding and connect people around the globe through the language of visual understanding. Photographs can also cause great harm if they are callously intrusive or are manipulated.

This code is intended to promote the highest quality in all forms of visual journalism and to strengthen public confidence in the profession. It is also meant to serve as an educational tool both for those who practice and for those who appreciate photojournalism. To that end, The National Press Photographers Association sets forth the following.

Code of Ethics

Visual journalists and those who manage visual news productions are accountable for upholding the following standards in their daily work:

. Be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects.
. Resist being manipulated by staged photo opportunities.
. Be complete and provide context when photographing or recording subjects. Avoid stereotyping individuals and groups. Recognize and work to avoid presenting one's own biases in the work.
. Treat all subjects with respect and dignity. Give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy. Intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see.
. While photographing subjects do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events.
. Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects.
. Do not pay sources or subjects or reward them materially for information or participation.

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[11] http://nppa.org/professional_development/business_practices/ethics.html. Accessed April 19, 2012.

. Do not accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.

. Do not intentionally sabotage the efforts of other journalists.

Ideally, visual journalists should:

. Strive to ensure that the public's business is conducted in public. Defend the rights of access for all journalists.

. Think proactively, as a student of psychology, sociology, politics and art to develop a unique vision and presentation. Work with a voracious appetite for current events and contemporary visual media.

. Strive for total and unrestricted access to subjects, recommend alternatives to shallow or rushed opportunities, seek a diversity of viewpoints, and work to show unpopular or unnoticed points of view.

. Avoid political, civic and business involvements or other employment that compromise or give the appearance of compromising one's own journalistic independence.

. Strive to be unobtrusive and humble in dealing with subjects.

. Respect the integrity of the photographic moment.

. Strive by example and influence to maintain the spirit and high standards expressed in this code. When confronted with situations in which the proper action is not clear, seek the counsel of those who exhibit the highest standards of the profession. Visual journalists should continuously study their craft and the ethics that guide it.

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Five ways the Media can improve[12]

[Ron F. Smith's interpretations of and conclusions from *Times-Picayune* reporter Brian Thevenot's proposals for covering disaster events such as Katrina more ethically].

1. Question persistently.

2. Be upfront about verification.

3. Correct mistakes prominently and promptly.

4. Use exact attribution.

5. Don't rush things into print or onto the air.

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[12] Ron S. Smith, *Ethics in Journalism* (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 76-77; See also http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=3959. Accessed April 19, 2012.

Founding Principles of the Online News Association[13]

OUR VALUES

We believe that the Internet is the most powerful communications medium to arise since the dawn of television. As digital delivery systems become the primary source of news for a growing segment of the world's population, it presents complex challenges and opportunities for journalists as well as the news audience.

Editorial Integrity: The unique permeability of digital publications allows for the linking and joining of information resources of all kinds as intimately as if they were published by a single organization. Responsible journalism through this medium means that the distinction between news and other information must always be clear, so that individuals can readily distinguish independent editorial information from paid promotional information and other non-news.

Editorial Independence: Online journalists should maintain the highest principles of fairness, accuracy, objectivity and responsible independent reporting.

Journalistic Excellence: Online journalists should uphold traditional high principles in reporting original news for the Internet and in reviewing and corroborating information from other sources.

Freedom of Expression: The ubiquity and global reach of information published on the Internet offers new information and educational resources to a worldwide audience, access to which must be unrestricted.

Freedom of Access: News organizations reporting on the Internet must be afforded access to information and events equal to that enjoyed by other news organizations in order to further freedom of information.

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[13] The Online News Association (ONA)'s statement of values can be found at the end of its Mission at http://journalists.org/about/mission/. Accessed April 19, 2012.

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