Wesleyan University   The Honors College

The Rise of Web 2.0 Technology
and its Implications for Democracy

by

Renee Verdier
Class of 2009

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in Government

Middletown, Connecticut   April, 2009

Introduction
Charlotte's Web 2.0

"Do you understand how there could be any writing in a spider's web?"
Oh, no," said Dr Dorian. "I don't understand it. But for that matter I don't understand how a spider learned to spin a web in the first place. When the words appeared, everyone said they were a miracle. But nobody pointed out that the web itself is a miracle."

Though elder generations tend to harangue the youth for not reading enough, for preferring The Legend of Zelda to Zelda Fitzgerald, most people – young and old alike – are familiar with E.B. White's children's classic novel Charlotte's Web. Set on a rural farm, it is a timeless tale of friendship between Wilbur, a pig, and his stallmate, a friendly spider named Charlotte.

Wilbur, a spring pig, enjoys the first few months of his life being coddled by the farmer's daughter Fern. As he grows larger, he is moved to Fern's Uncle Zuckerman's barn with the rest of the animals. There he forges a deep friendship with Charlotte, who values companionship and rejoicing in the glory of the present moment. Wilbur joins the community of animals that reside in the barn, who clue him into what is perhaps the harshest reality of farm life: as a pig, he will be raised and fed over the summer and fall to be slaughtered for meat come the winter. This knowledge plunges Wilbur into an existential crisis, and Charlotte takes it upon herself to distinguish Wilbur's fate from that of other pigs.

Charlotte puts her plan to save Wilbur into motion by writing words in her web extolling Wilbur's excellence. One night, while the farm sleeps, Charlotte weaves the phrase "Some Pig" into a web directly above Wilbur's stall. When the Farmer Zuckerman family discovers the web the next morning, he is amazed and gathers his

family and friends around the stall to marvel. Yet as they disperse, Farmer Zuckerman makes a side joke about some fine pork the family will enjoy at Christmas.

Though Wilbur is dismayed, the ever-determined Charlotte is determined to save his life, and continues to praise Wilbur through the words in her webs: terrific, radiant, and even humble. With each successive creation, word of the miraculous webs and the pig who inspired them spreads to neighboring farms and towns. When the press catches wind of the story, a mass influx of visitors and fans travel to Zuckerman's farm to see the miracle for themselves. Due to Charlotte's efforts, and the resulting increase in tourism and business, Farmer Zuckerman decides not only to save Wilbur's life, but takes him to the county fair where he wins a prize. Unfortunately, Charlotte's spider-short lifespan ends at the fair, yet Wilbur honors her legacy by bringing her egg sac back to the farm with him and befriending her children. Prizewinning Wilbur is spared the axe and becomes an official member of the family, all thanks to the words of one little spider.

What does this have to do with the current state of the Internet? The story of Charlotte's Web is actually an illuminating allegory for the rise of user generated internet technologies and platforms (commonly referred to as Web 2.0) and their effects on the way individuals and groups communicate and share information with one another. These new mediums are accessible to anybody who can use a computer, and allow their patrons to instantly connect with other web users as well as publish content that can be accessed by individuals around the globe. Like Charlotte, individuals can use the medium of the web to spread their own messages and make their previously silenced voices heard.

Proponents of Web 2.0 - who tend to dominate existing literature on contemporary internet studies - claim that these new technologies will revolutionize communications by democratizing and decentralizing our methods of transferring, accumulating, and synthesizing information. Indeed, prior to the Internet, most individuals lacked an audience for the exercise of their freedom of expression; control over mainstream media content lies in the hands of a select few media conglomerates, and nobody listens to one little spider. Yet by using the medium at hand - the spider's web, the world wide web - little spiders can create their own little media niches, amateur publications that make it possible for their messages to even have an audience. While the Zuckerman family never thought to consult the spider over Wilbur's fate - nor do they speak spider - Charlotte's "Some Pig" web was able to communicate with the Zuckermans using a common medium that created a forum for further discussion of the pig. These little web messages constitute the first step in engaging a wider audience with the content at hand.

Yet the key point we can draw from Charlotte's Web - one that echos Charlotte's personal devotion to the value of humility - is that taken on its own, *the web is not enough.* Though Charlotte's early webs enthralled the Zuckerman's and their local friends, they did not sufficiently inspire Farmer Zuckerman to save Wilbur from becoming Christmas dinner, nor did they spur mass public interest in Wilbur or the farm; due to their obscurity, their audience was limited. Yet once the local newspaper took notice of and published stories about the miraculous webs, the story of Wilbur spread to a greater number of people - from the county to the state to the national level - and the farm saw a massive increase in hype and tourism. Though

Charlotte's early attempts alone had failed to save Wilbur's life, the wider coverage provided by the mainstream media granted Wilbur with the expanded audience he needed to make a wide and lasting impression.

What Web 2.0 utopians often overlook is that the same phenomena holds true for user-generated content on the Web; though Web 2.0 platforms provide new vehicles for free expression, the messages they contain are often lost in obscurity to the matrix *unless* they manage to grab the attention of larger media outlets with broader audiences. Expression without reception is an insubstantial form of communication. The act of expressing oneself is only truly complete - and is far more powerful – when the content is *received* by others. A government which holds that the will of the people is the source of its power and places freedom of expression at the top of the Bill of Rights – as ours does – cannot be truly democratic unless the voice of the public will is not merely expressed, but heard, recognized, and taken into consideration.

At the same time, a true democracy based on the common will must also provide ample opportunity for individuals to express their desires and opinions to the government and one another, an objective which has been undermined by the centralization of power over the ideology and content of mainstream media in the hands of a select few. The Web 2.0 utopians are correct that user-generated content has a vast potential to give silenced citizens a means to enter into the hitherto elite realm of political communications. Yet they fail to see that the mainstream media still plays a pivotal role in the success of Web 2.0 at improving democratic political communications, as I shall argue in the following thesis. Web 2.0 technologies

combined with their interactions with mainstream media outlets and their effects on mainstream media coverage together have the potential to improve the ability of the media as a whole to fulfill its three main democratic functions: providing equal access to the production and content of political communication, connecting citizens with the government and one another, and promoting state and corporate transparency by acting as a watchdog over institutional activity.

What is Web 2.0?

Before delving headfirst into a discussion of the political implications of Web 2.0, it is important to understand just what these user-generated technologies entail; though Web 2.0 is an oft-used buzzword within Internet communities and – via publications such as Wired and the science sections of most major national and international newspapers – has begun to enter the cultural lexicon at large, few seem to know exactly what it means. Though the word "Web 2.0" seems to imply a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to any specific technical updates, but rather to an ongoing trend regarding how software creators and web users utilize the Internet. The term was coined when the O'Reilly Media group hosted the first O'Reilly Web 2.0 conference in 2004. According to founder and CEO Tim O'Reilly:

> Web 2.0 is the… revolution in the computer industry caused by the
> move to the Internet as a platform, and an attempt to understand the
> rules for success on that new platform (O'Reilly).

The conceptualization of the Internet as a platform speaks to the transition from the Internet's use as a one-way medium for transmitting information from centralized sources to a global audience of users to its use as a two-way medium by which new software and the unique characteristics of the Internet position users to control their own data and share it with others.

Before the burst of the dot-com bubble in 2001, the main turning point for both Internet development and the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, mainstream Internet use was predominately limited to the utilization of centralized browsers provided by "Internet gateway" services - such as America Online, Compuserve, and Prodigy - to retrieve information. The content available on the World Wide Web was mainly generated by centralized sources, such as government agencies, businesses, or other organizations, and its accessibility required little user participation beyond typing in the web address. These "Web 1.0" websites were characterized by static pages instead of dynamic user-generated content, the incorporation of hyperlinks allowing users to "jump" from one page to the next. and the use of framesets, or different panels on a website that all contain different information. Moreover, most software applications were designed for and ran through personal computers as opposed to Internet browsers (Strickland).

Throughout the early to mid-1990s, software developers and Internet users began to explore the interactive possibilities of the World Wide Web in greater depth. Free web hosting services such as Angelfire and Geocities enabled Internet users to create their own webpages where they could publish personal content. However, there were few opportunities for these amateur web producers to connect with one another.

As the computer-using public became more web literate, innovators started building applications and services around the unique features of the Internet. Terry Flew, author of *New Media*, characterizes this transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2..0 as a

> move from personal websites to blogs and blog site aggregation, from publishing to participation, from web content as the outcome of large up-front investment to an ongoing and interactive process, and from content management systems to links based on tagging (folksonomy) (Flew 36).

Software developers built upon the interactive faculties of Web 1.0 to increase networking capabilities among Internet users by creating software applications run entirely through web browsers, enabling individuals to create and "own" the data on a Web 2.0 website and add value to the application as they use it (O'Reilly). This "architecture of participation" is one of the defining characteristics of Web 2.0 technologies; Internet scholar Dion Hinchcliffe goes so far as to say that the best concise working definition of the term is "Web 2.0 is made of people" (O'Reilly).

Web 2.0, in short, refers to the various technologies that have enabled the "shift toward more interactive Web-based applications that derive the majority of their content from users themselves" (Ryan). For Hinchcliffe, the key aspects of Web 2.0 are the concept that the Web and all its connected devices are one global platform of reusable services and data; data consumption and remixing from all sources, particularly user generated data; continuous and seamness updating of software and data, often very rapidly; rich and interactive user interfaces; and an architecture of participation that encourages user contribution (Strickland). Openness of information,

freedom of expression, and the building of collective intelligence by way of user participation are also essential attributes accompanying the rise of Web 2.0 technology (Greenmeier and Gaudin).

There are several different types of Internet platforms and websites that incorporate Web 2.0 technologies. The personal websites of Web 1.0 have been updated to blogs, websites maintained by individuals with regular entries of commentary or other material such as images or video, which can link with other blogs to form blogging communities based on similar interests or subject material. Social networking sites enable individuals to create virtual profiles of themselves and link up with other likeminded people. RSS feeds allow users to subscribe to regularly-updated web content such as blogs and podcasts. User-friendly web services such as Wordpress and Ning make it possible for virtually anybody to create their own website, blog or social networking platform, all of which can be made open to external participation. These technologies all make it incredibly easy for an individual with cursory computer skills to find, connect with, and share information with other individuals over the world wide web.

Additionally, companies such as Ajax and Google have developed a number of websites that mimic desktop applications such as word processing, the spreadsheet, and slide-show presentation. These technologies, which speak to Web 2.0's core mission of bringing desktop applications to web platforms, make it significantly easier for individuals who do not otherwise have access to certain computer applications to utilize a variety of computer programs; if an individual does not have the tool to complete their objective, they can simply download them or use an

application via a website. Many of these tools, referred to as "open-source technologies," are available at no cost and thus greatly expand individuals' potential to perform computer-related tasks and create various types of content. This very "Introduction" is the fruit of an open-source tool. The Microsoft Word application on my somewhat-schitzophrenic laptop underwent a massive failure as I began to write, and now refuses to open at all. Lacking an alternative word processing program on my computer, I performed a quick search for open-source word processors, downloaded a program compatible with my prior Microsoft Word documents called OpenOffice, and ten minutes later I am writing these words. Isn't technology grand?

But I digress. It is clear that Web 2.0 technologies provide great opportunity for individuals to engage with others in the virtual realm, publish their own content, and develop new platforms and forums for global interaction. The question, then, is whether – or rather, how – individuals will take advantage of these opportunities and tools and put them to use.

Will the Media Revolution be Televised?

At its core, this thesis concerns the effects of Web 2.0 technologies on freedom of expression and information – that is, the freedom to express one's opinions or ideas within a society as well as the accessibility of government-held information – and their relation to the media's overall ability to fulfill its democratic functions as set out in liberal-democratic thought. I hope to show, through various examples and case studies of Web 2.0 and mainstream media outlets, that the rise of

these new technologies and their ensuing interactions with existing mediums will improve the the media as a democratic institution by increasing its capacity to provide average citizens with a vehicle for expression, an opportunity to easily enter political discussion, a greater ability to engage in extrainstitutional activity, more institutional transparency, and wider access to diverse sources of news and information.

The media has historically been viewed as a vehicle for the realization of individual rights to freedom of expression and speech, and as a forum for the dissemination of information and the expression of a plurality of views. The media make the government and citizens aware of public opinion and facilitate a public sphere for open debate. This "marketplace of ideas," when it functions freely, acts as a public watchdog capable of unveiling corrupt activities, a consumer representative that reflects popular opinion, and a locus of information that promotes the free trade of ideas and news (Curran).

The marriage of the traditional forms of the media (newspapers, television, etc.) with digital computers ushered in the age of the "new media"; the rise of the internet and global communications technology allowed for a huge surge in the speed, range, and volume of communication and provided new opportunities for interactive communication. Web 2.0 has brought these technologies from the media industry into the hands of the average citizen. Though early critics of Web 2.0 feared that individuals would not have the technical knowledge or the motivation to learn and use these tools, the vast popularity of social networking platforms and the ever-growing blogosphere suggests otherwise. Statistical accounts of the blogosphere vary, but track somewhere around 150 million blogs worldwide, while social networking

site Facebook has over 150 million users to date and is available in 30 different languages, with 60 new languages in development. It is clear that the question is not *whether* people will use Web 2.0 technologies, but *how* and to what ends.

More specifically, what does this transformation mean for the role of the media in a democratic environment? Academic thought is divided over the implications Web 2.0 has for media institutions as well as citizen participation. Some, such as Douglass Kellner and James Bohman, argue that new media, and particularly the Internet, provide the potential for a democratic postmodern public sphere in which citizens can participate in well informed, non-hierarchical debate about their society and public policy; in short, they can enable an electronic democracy in which citizens may assemble and discourse in a virtual Athens (Kellner 15). Others, like the scholar Cass Sunstein, predict mixed consequences. They see these new technologies – especially the Internet – as promoting a freedom to choose information sources that both screen in and screen out ideas (Sunstein xi). Traditional media expose people to competing perspectives and enhance public knowledge, which are fundamental aspects of democracy; by contrast, the new media harbor "echo chambers" in which like-minded people speak or listen mainly to one another (undermining the spirit of compromise and wonder necessary for political cooperation (Sunstein xii). Other scholars, such as Ed Herman and Robert McChesney, argue that new media technologies have given governments and global corporations new opportunities for transferring capital and collecting information on individuals' preferences, enabling them to exert a hitherto unseen influence (Herman and McChesney 111). Still others highlight the critical, liberatory element of new media, maintaining that interactive

communications create new avenues for participation in democratic discourse, liberalizing the media and encouraging individuals to engage in the public sphere (Croteau and Hoynes 322).

As in most of the social science disciplines, there is a little bit of truth to all of these arguments; indeed, it is impossible to precisely codify the trends of a network as vast, decentralized, and prone to human unpredictability as the Internet. Yet it is not out of line to discuss the ways in which Web 2.0 technologies currently and have the potential to operate with regard to the democratic function of the media, which provides insight on general trends of Web 2.0 use, both present and future. Though scholarly discussion often diverges over the normative consequences of user-generated content, it is united by the belief that Web 2.0 technologies do and will continue to have a profound effect on the way individuals obtain information and interact with one another. The rise of Web 2.0 and other digital communications technology has spurred a transition from a singular, unidirectional media – from one-to-many media, such as television, and one-to-one media, such as the telephone – to bidirectional media in which many can communicate with many, even simultaneously. Yet whether the mass *decentralization* of the media translates into a *democratization* of the media is still unclear.

Having reviewed and tested these arguments against one another in great depth, in the following chapters I synthesize these different views and provide my own account of the rise of user-generated media and its implications. Despite the complexity of the effects of Web 2.0 technologies, I argue that they have the ability – both potentially and in practice, as reflected in a variety of examples of their current

utility, to improve the institutional media's capacity to fulfill its various roles in a

democracy. Yet rather than studying the nature and consequences of Web 2.0

technology taken by itself, as the above scholars and the vast majority of my

contemporaries do, I focus on the interactions between Web 2.0 platforms and

existing media outlets, specifically the ways in which Web 2.0 affects mainstream

media activity and vice versa, the differences and overlaps in their respective content

and coverage, and the implications of competition between the two. In the following

exploration of these interactions, I show that the rise of Web 2.0 platforms has created

new virtual arenas for political deliberation, citizen journalism, and amateur

watchdogging, all of which enhance the media's democratic functionality and speak

to the vast potential these technologies hold for improving the institutions of our

democracy. Though to equate the decentralization of the media with its

democratization would be hasty, Web 2.0 has empowered the people with the ability

to take the production of new media into their own hands, and the ensuing

participatory media has the potential to encourage further social and political activity.

How, you might ask? Read on, intrepid netizen!

Navigation System

The first section of my thesis presents a summary of the evolution of the

media that provides a historical context for my discussion of the emergence of web

2.0 technologies and their interactions with preexisting media. In Chapter One, I

outline the historical development of communications media, beginning with the

genesis of regular news correspondences amongst merchant communities during the rise of trade-capitalism in the 13th century. I review the implications of the popularization of the Gutenberg printing press for public literacy, standardized vernacular, and nation-building as well its role in formulating conventions of political participation. I go on to trace the rise of commercial media during the Industrial revolution, and the development of new communications mediums – from the telephone to the radio to the television– over the 19th and 20th centuries. I end this chapter with a brief overview of the historical development of computer-mediated communication, culminating in the rise of Internet technology over the past twenty years.

In the second chapter, I provide a theoretical context for my argument regarding the effects of the media in the political sphere with a brief explanation of democratic principles and a discussion of the role of the media in a democracy. I identify the ideal democratic purpose of the media as the promotion of institutional and extrainstitutional realization of citizens' political agency, and present the three main functions by which it can fulfill this obligation: providing equal access to the means of political communication, connecting citizens with institutions and other members of civil society, and acting as an institutional watchdog.

In the next section of my thesis, I observe the effects of Web 2.0 technologies on old and new media's ability to fulfill their democratic roles. In Chapter 3, I turn to the first of the media's three main functions: promoting free expression and information. I provide context for this discussion by detailing various policies that led to the current consolidation of media outlets into a handful of major global

conglomerates. I then delve deeper into the consequences of the concentration of media ownership, from the streamlined media corporations' homogenization of content to the limitations that commercial motives place upon the spectrum of political views expressed. This chapter emphasizes the ways in which the rise of internet technologies – and their ensuing interactions with preexisting mediums – provide a remedy to these consequences and enhance democratic expression, from increased access to a wider range of content brought about by pre-Web 2.0 internet technologies to the blogosphere's promotion of citizen journalism and media plurality to the virtual Habermasian public spheres blossoming in discussion forums. It also discusses how Web 2.0 users can generate hype for their views within the mainstream media, and the advantages of competition between the two.

In my fourth chapter, I focus on the second of the media's democratic functions – enhancing individuals' ability to connect with one another in civil society – and the ways in which Web 2.0 tools and their intersections with preexisting methods and mainstream media enhance extrainstitutional expression and action. I explicate the organizational advantages of Web 2.0 technologies, including instantaneous individual and group communication, virtual group-forming and resource-sharing, and enhanced coordination capabilities for real-world action, and discuss the various methods by which Web 2.0 activity encourages participatory mindsets. Drawing upon examples of extrainstitutional organization, varying from anarchist movements to political campaigns, I argue that political efficacy is maximized by utilizing a combination of Web 2.0 and preexisting tools, emphasizing the importance of the interactions between the two.

In Chapter Five, I turn to the means by which Web 2.0 technologies interact with mainstream media to affect the third democratic function of the media, ensuring that democratic institutions – including the media – fulfill their obligations to the public. First, I explain how different Web 2.0 tools act as watchdogs by providing new avenues for visibility and analysis of institutional activity, intensifying the scrutiny of political actors and institutions, and providing virtual space to anonymously release confidential information. I then turn to the interactions between these tools and the mainstream media, which enhance institutional monitoring by widening the scope of investigative reporting and creating a forum in which to voice criticisms of established media.

Chapter 1
A Brief History of the Media

Before leaping into my discussion of Web 2.0 technology, it is important to understand the historical and technological developments that preceded its rise. In this chapter, I very briefly discuss the development of modern communications technology, from the earliest printing methods to the invention of the Internet. Beginning with the rise of news correspondences within 13th century merchant communities, I trace the evolution of the communications media through the various technological advances that enabled and steered its growth. I also discuss the development of the media as an institution in terms of shifts in political and social power throughout the rise of nation-states and into a globalized context, providing context for present theoretical conceptions of the role of the media in society.

Early communications technologies appeared in 8th century China and Japan, where the method of blockprinting, or using a carved woodblock to print a single page of specific text, was invented. By the 11th century China had created a form of the movable printing press. However, this technology did not see widespread use and did not significantly impact mass accessibility to text; the machine was inefficient for printing a language that used thousands of ideograms (Briggs & Burke 13).

The genesis of modern communications media can be traced back to the 13th century, when the rise of early finance and trade capitalism led to long-distance traffic in commodities and news. During this period, advances in transportation technologies and a growing demand for foreign goods expanded trade opportunities. Merchants realized that with more knowledge of the nature and status of their distant markets, they could tailor

their ware selections and visiting times to individual markets, thereby maximizing their profits (Habermas 16). A system of written correspondence between merchants and other commodities administrators arose, and the growing trade cities "became at the same time great centers for the traffic in news; the organization of this traffic on a continuous basis became imperative to the degree to which the exchange of commodities and of securities became continuous" (Habermas 16). Note that at this point in time, the traffic in news was still relatively private; correspondence was commercially organized by "newsdealers" and was not accessible to the general public (Habermas 16).

The expansion of the free market had a profound effect on the growing communities of Europe and their structures of authority. As trade and industry flourished, the mode of agrarian production organized through feudal relations began to be replaced by capitalist production of commodities. Trading hubs blossomed into urban areas, and the means of production and distribution of commodities became increasingly controlled and regulated by political institutions.

When Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable printing press in the early 15th century, the printed word was mainly controlled by religious and intellectual authorities. The efficiency of the printing press quickly overtook the manuscript trade – books had previously been hand-printed by scribes – and allowed these institutions new opportunities to spread their ideas. Most of the books produced in the early printing presses were written in Latin and were religious in nature, while others included books of classical and medieval philosophy and theology, texts on law and science, and other academic readings. Additionally, the state often commissioned printing enterprises to publish official documents (Thompson 55). Print communications were essential to the

continued power of these institutions, as "their success and continued survival generally depended upon their capacity to commodify symbolic forms effectively" (Thompson 55). The advent of the printing press also played a significant role in the emergence of European nation-states, as the expansion of written communications and literacy aided political authorities in establishing national languages and identities. Due to an increase in readership and demand in the 16th century, publishers shifted from printing books in Latin to printing in the vernacular based on location, allowing them to maximize the circulation of texts (Thompson 60). Fixing print into vernacular was a precondition for the formulation of national identity; when books were printed in a standardized vernacular, readers speaking various dialects began to be able to understand one another and develop a common discourse. It was this "convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language [that] created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation" (Anderson 46).

Standardizing national languages through print created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars (Anderson 44), laying the basis for national consciousness. As opposed to communities, which are based on face-to-face interaction, nations – which, due to their size, cannot possibly be based on face-to-face interaction – are imagined communities, wherein individuals hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity (Anderson 6-7). John Thompson explains: By reading vernacular texts, individuals gradually became aware of the fact that they belonged to a virtual community of fellow readers with whom they would never directly

interact, but with whom they were connected through the medium of print. (Thompson 64)

Standardization also gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build "the image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation" (Anderson 44). Around this time, the postal service was established, enabling individuals who were geographically distant to communicate with one another relatively cheaply. This regular system for the transmission of messages was essential to the formation of nation-states, as it enabled centralized political institutions to communicate with and exercise authority over distant territories.

The emergence of the nation-state as well as the rise in literacy and public participation in the media resulted in an increase in demand for government visibility and public information, ultimately giving rise to the creation of the sphere of public authority. However, the consolidation of power by territorial leaders reduced the publicity of representation that individuals had enjoyed under their smaller communities' estate-based representation. States had an incentive to maintain news trafficking – it was essential to their economic and political operations – but had no incentive to make it public. Yet the new possibilities afforded by the postal service and increased access to literature inspired a public appetite for knowledge beyond individual experience, and demand for more public information grew.

In the mid-17th century, weekly or monthly "political journals" consisting of bits and pieces of reports garnered from private correspondence began to appear. At this point public reporting was dependent upon the merchants' private exchange of news, and their willingness to divulge their information. Moreover, all of the news from abroad, news of

the court, and minor commercial events that were printed in the political journals had to pass through the merchants' information control as well as state censorship apparatuses before being published. Nevertheless, merchants had an incentive to publicize their correspondence as they realized that the public was willing to pay for access to their private information. Habermas observes that "the traffic in news developed not only in connection with the needs of commerce; the news itself became a commodity" (Habermas 21).

By the end of the 17th century, newspapers, pamphlets, and instructive periodicals containing scholarly articles, historical reports, criticisms and reviews enjoyed regular circulation. At first, these periodicals were simply academic information directed at the members of the literate bourgeoise. As readers learned more about foreign experiences and perspectives, their increased awareness and connectivity strengthened their social unity. This group of newly-connected individuals constituted what Jurgen Habermas calls the "public:"

> …the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon
> claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public
> authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general
> rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly
> relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.
> (Habermas 27)

This public defined itself in opposition to the notion of state authority – and its sphere of police, policymakers, and courtly-noble society - solidified by the transfer of town- and estate-based power into the hands of territorial leaders.

Simultaneous with the rise of the Habermasian public was the development of the notion

of public reason, an implicit recognition amongst the citizenry that the laws and beliefs of

the state are not objectively given and are subject to questioning. Since the dawn of print

media, political and religious powers had maintained control of the production and

dissemination of knowledge. But as the members of the public gained more access to

cultural products – from art to politics to theology – they began to exercise more

autonomy over the interpretation of those products:

> The private people for whom the cultural product became available as a
>
> commodity profaned it inasmuch as they had to determine its meaning on
>
> their own (by way of rational communication with one another), verbalize
>
> it, and thus state explicitly what precisely in its implicitness for so long
>
> could assert its authority. (Habermas 37)

Through both self-reflection and the creation of spacial forums (such as the coffeehouses

of 17th and 18th century Europe) in which members of various strata of the private sphere

could convene for discussion of public issues, the citizenry began to understand its role in

regards to the sphere of state authority – that is, as an intellectual watchdog with the

ability to use public reason as a check on institutions of authority:

> Wherever the public established itself institutionally as a stable group of
>
> discussants, it did not equate itself with the public but at most claimed to
>
> act as its mouthpiece, in its name, perhaps even as its educator – the new
>
> form of bourgeois representation. (Habermas 37)

The sentiment of public reason flourished during the Enlightenment period in 18th

century Europe. The first hints of critical reasoning appeared in periodical articles in the

form of cultural criticism, and the state began to realize the press' potential to pass public judgment on authority. Publishers began to print reading material which lay no claim to objectivity, such as critical periodicals - instruments of institutionalized art and cultural ccriticism which, though directed to a public audience, reflected the subjective opinions of the critics and did not obligate its readers to hold the same opinion – and moral weeklies – journals which focused on the public as a subject, encouraging self-understanding (Habermas 41-2). Soon the ideas of public critical reason developed within the private sphere began to appear in the ways in which the citizenry related to the state. The media, in its various forms, was heralded for its potential to spread knowledge to the public:

> The process in which the state-governed public sphere was appropriated by the public of private people making use of their reason and was established as a sphere of criticism of public authority was one of functionally converting the public sphere in the world of letters already equipped with institutions of the public and with forums for discussion. (Habermas 51)

The cultivation of critical reason led citizens to question their reliance on public authority. Increased social communication and closeness, combined with the Enlightenment principle of the publicity of knowledge, stood in opposition to the state's concept of absolute sovereignty, which defended the practice of state secrecy. A new awareness of subjectivity problematized the conceptualization of the state as a source of law, as it suggests that law could be merely the arbitrary or self-interested will of state leader(s). This notion is reflected in the political philosophy texts of the time, which put

forth the conception of law as "not merely justice in the sense of a duly acquired right, but legality by means of the enactment of general and abstract norms" and demoted the exercise of state power to the execution (as opposed to the creation) of laws and norms. (Habermas 54). The members of the public came to see themselves as a body of subjective individuals with the ability to influence public policy in their interest, and asserted public opinion, yielded by rational discourse and critical reasoning over what is just and right, as the only legitimate source of law:

> Public debate was supposed to transform voluntas into a ratio that in the public competition of private arguments came into being as the consensus about what was practically necessary in the interest of all (Habermas 83).

Only public reasoning could bridge the gap between law as the will of the people and Kant's rational-universal law.

By the middle of the 18th century, publishers that operated separate from and often in opposition to state authorities proliferated. Print was used as a medium not just for official government proclamations, but for criticisms of state actions and events. Freedom of the press began to be seen as a fundamental right of society, and state attempts at censorship of the media evoked harsh resistance from the intellectual elite. By enhancing the visibility of state activity to those not physically present at its occurrence (the vast majority of society), the media became to be seen as a valuable method of educating the masses. It also provided a means by which the masses could respond to those who exercise power, establishing its role as a check against government power.

At this time the technical advances of the Industrial Revolution vastly increased the affordability of production and circulation of print media, while expansion of

urbanization and literacy in western societies increased readership of newspapers. The increased demand for printed material caused a boom in commercial publishing operations, which began to be funded by commercial advertisers and merge into media conglomerates (Briggs & Burke 134).

Around the turn of the 20th century, the telegraph, the telephone and the radio were invented in the United States. These new technologies enabled instantaneous communication of space. The telegraph and telephone allowed physically distant parties to interact with one another, making immediate person-to-person communication possible. The radio was used for two-way, point-to-point communication as well as one-way communication, broadcasting messages from a central source to a widely dispersed group of recipients.

The surge in media venues throughout the 20th century made the management of visibility increasingly important to state credibility, as the widening reach of the media also widened the audiences to which the state had to present and respond. The 1950s saw the rise of television as a mass medium; its one-way popular entertainment programming created a collective experience for viewers, helping to shape social consciousness. In the 1960s, politics became the highlight of television, which began to be used as a forum for political competition within liberal democracies; millions tuned in for the Kennedy-Nixon presidential debates. Kennedy's win, with no small thanks to his charismatic personality on camera, ushered in a new era of political campaigning in which it has become imperative for politicians to understand how to manage their own visibility. Television allowed visibility to become literally visible; the objectivity of the unadulterated image sidestepped the issue of biases in written accounts. This increase in

mediated visibility limited the ability of states to carry out activities in secret, giving it the potential to render the exercise of political power more accessible and accountable to the public (Thompson 147).

During this period, computer technology was developed on both sides of the Atlantic. The first electronic digital computers were devised during the Cold War for military purposes. The early machines of the 1950s were monstrous collections of tubes, knobs, and hardware; the first home computers were not distributed until 1975. By the end of the 1970s, computers were used "not only as business instruments but as the mainspring of a whole range of media activities, stimulating the imagination as locomotives had done. (Briggs & Burke 227)

Around this time, the US military developed the first computer network, called ARPANET, in order to operate multiple computers at a distance. Though this technology was not yet commercially available, computer hobbyists recognized its potential for communications and in the 1980s began to use it to connect with one another via their personal computers and telephone lines. Telecommunications developers and researchers developed their own networks using ARPANET's research as a model, and new networks continued to pop up. However, these networks were disjointed and separate from one another. Scholars and programmers, who saw the potential of computer networks as a form of mass communication, called for a protocol for inter-networking, where multiple different networks could be joined together in a super-framework. A brochure on new telecommunications technology written by Eyrl Davies in 1983 concludes:

> When every source of information is reduced before transmission to a
>
> stream of digital information just like computer data, there is no reason

why all information should not share the same highways and exchanges.

(Davies in Briggs & Burke 219)

Indeed, even from the onset of digital communications technology there was a rhetoric of collaboration.

In the mid 1980s network protocols were standardized into the common internetwork protocol TCP/IP, spawning an inter-network that laid the foundations for the global inter-network that would be called the Internet (Postel). Existing networks converted their protocols to be compatible with TCP/IP, and new networks sprang up across the globe. In 1989 a programmer named Tim Berners-Lee – who coined the term "World Wide Web," developed hyperlinks, a new technology for organizing distributed data which held the key to all future progress on the internet. By giving users the ability to "click in" to certain words or symbols within a document and thus "travel" to a new document within the network, hyperlinks were the actual mechanism by which the internet became a two-way, interactive medium. According to historians Briggs and Burke, "Time magazine… called his achievement 'almost Gutenbergian'. He had taken a 'powerful communications system that only the elite could use and turned it into a mass medium" (Briggs & Burke 245).

Interest in the commercial use of the internet and the subsequent introduction of privately owned Internet Service Providers loosened the control the military and academia exerted over network technology, and led to its expansion into popular use. By the 1990s, Internet users across the globe were able to engage in near-instant communications via e-mail, text-based discussion forums, and the World Wide Web.

In 1993 the Mosaic web browser entered the market; its user-friendly interface

made the Internet more accessible for the average person and further boosted its

popularity. Due to the suddenly low price of reaching millions worldwide, and the

possibility of selling things to and communicating with these people instantaneously,

entrepreneurs saw the Internet's potential to revolutionize industries such as advertising,

mail-order sales, and customer relationship management and developed various online

business models. Investor speculation in the markets created by these ventures led to the

inflation and collapse of what is known as the "Dot-com bubble." This major market

collapse stripped countless online ventures of their capital, many of which never turned a

profit.

 Despite this economic reshuffling, the Internet continues to grow, both in scale

and popularity. Internet access is available in every country of the world, and, though

statistics vary, approximately 23% of the world population now uses the Internet (Internet

World Stats). It continues to surge in popularity.

Chapter 2
Knowledge is Power! : The Role of the Media in a Democracy

Though the media has evolved drastically throughout history, a consistent theme holds true: information is power. Because a democratic government derives its power from its citizens, and because the media is an essential tool in determining and expressing the public will, it is impossible to maximize democracy without a free and independent press. In order to effectively promote democracy, the media must fulfill several important purposes. It must hold institutions accountable to the public, it must direct public attention to important issues, it must educate the citizens so they can make informed political decisions, and it must strengthen the bonds of civil society via interconnection (Hume 3). In order to fulfill these purposes, media institutions must perform three main tasks: First, they must provide equal access to the means and content of political communication. Second, they must connect citizens with one another, so that citizens may collectively exercise their rights to free expression and free association. Third, they must promote state and corporate transparency by acting as an external watchdog, and by increasing public awareness of democratic processes, so as to ensure that institutional activity aligns with the public will.

Before we delve deeper into the roles the media plays in the operation of a democracy, we must clarify what our conception of democracy entails. Although there is no universally accepted definition of democracy, most scholars agree that democracy includes two basic principles: first, that all members of a society enjoy universally recognized freedoms and liberties, and second, that these members have equal access to power (Schumpeter 8). These principles are based on the concept of popular sovereignty,

which holds that the legitimacy of the state and its laws is based on the will of the people; as citizens are the source of all political power, they must be able to play a role in shaping the political decisions that affect their lives.

The ways in which equal access to power is realized vary with different forms of democracy, and occur through both institutional and extrainstitutional structures. Since most nations are too large to sustain direct democracy, a system wherein citizens personally participate in deliberation and decision-making, most governments employ a system of representation in which citizens elect government officials to act on their behalf . In order for this system to be democratic, however, the government, its officials, and its policies must reflect the will of the people. Political scientist Donald S. Lutz notes the variety of institutional mechanisms designed to promote this congruity:

> To speak of popular sovereignty is to place ultimate authority in the people. There are a variety of ways in which sovereignty may be expressed. It may be… mediated through representatives who are subject to election and recall; it may be ultimate in the sense that the people have a negative or veto over legislation, or it may be something much less dramatic… In each case, however, popular sovereignty assumes the existence of some form of popular consent (Lutz 38).

Though these institutional mechanisms support democracy, they cannot adequately promote it on their own. The media is a necessary complement to formal methods of the democratic process geared towards realize the will of the people, and provides alternative ways for citizens to exercise their political agency. They must have access to and utilize the tools and resources to act individually or collectively to promote their interest and to

hold the government accountable for its actions. These extra-institutional mechanisms supplement and ensure the efficacy of institutional methods.

The ideal role of the media in a democracy is to promote the institutional and extrainstitutional realization of citizens' power in the democratic process. First, it must provide equal access to both the means and ends of political communications. If a democracy is to be responsive to the ideas and values of people generally, individuals must have access to adequate information to form their own ideas as well as access to the means of expression of those ideas:

> Freedom of public opinion… should be considered "the substantive and effective foundation" of democracy because it constitutes "the element which gives substance and effect to popular sovereignty. (Zolo 145-6)

The task is twofold; the media must responsibly promote public knowledge to ensure informed political decision-making as well as serve as a conduit for public opinion in the political realm.

The former task enhances the institutional processes by which citizens promote their interests, such as voting, by increasing the amount of available information about public issues – the basis upon which political decisions are made. The more knowledge a citizen has, the more effective his or her public reasoning will be; George Krimsky, the former head of news for the Associated Press' World Services, explains that "a self-governing society, by definition, needs to make its own decisions. It cannot do that without hard information, leavened with an open exchange of views" (Krimsky). The latter task plays an essential part in maximizing and diversifying this information base. Communications media connects citizens with government services and enhances their

dialogue and cooperation by giving citizens an opportunity to express their will to government officials as well as one another. The media provides a forum in which a wide range of individual perspectives can be voiced and shared with others. This public access to political expression not only supplements public reasoning by providing more facts and perspectives, but is itself a prerequisite for democratic representation:

> In a democracy, all citizens should be free to participate in the political competition, either as candidates or as voters, and should be able to give public expression to their opinions… for political competition can call itself democratic only when it is free competition for a free vote. (Zolo 145)

A diverse media sector with competing services allows multiple perspectives to be voiced, maximizing the public's ability to make responsible and rational political decisions. It serves as a forum in which public reasoning occurs as well as the means by which the conclusions of public reasoning are communicated from the people to the government. There is a broad consensus that to maintain the essence of democracy, "communication should be open so that all political interests enjoy an opportunity to advance their causes, regardless of the popularity of their views" (Graber, McQuail and Norris 3). In order to best fulfill this role, the press must be free and independent from external influences, such as state or corporate coercion; otherwise, the media runs the risk of withholding important public information in lieu of protecting the interests of these powerful institutions (Hume 4). Mediated visibility makes it more difficult for states to carry out activities in secret, potentially rendering exercise of political power more accessible and accountable to the public (Thompson 147).

The second function the media serves in a democracy is to connect citizens with one another, increasing the solidarity of their social bonds within civil society. Citizens must be able to find one another and organize extrainstitutional activity to promote their interests in order to complement the shortcomings of formal institutional democratic processes. Media technologies strengthen the bonds of civil society via interconnection; they allow individuals to learn about and communicate with people in distant locales, and concordantly organize collective action even if they are not geographically proximate to one another. This mediated civic engagement is "the fuel of democracy" (Hume 5), because it is only through the media that the citizenry of a large society can effectively exercise the right to assemble and exercise political power.

Finally, the media must serve as a watchdog on institutional and extrainstitutional democratic processes, ensuring that the structures deciding issues that affect people's lives are held accountable for their actions and that "the troublesome aspects of society and the behavior of the holders of power are under constant supervision (Patterson 26). It is clear that governments historically have not always been willing to be transparent in fear of the consequences of public scrutiny. However, if a nation is to be governed by the will of the people, its institutions must be open to scrutiny by the people. A democracy cannot flourish unless there are mechanisms in place to ensure that its processes of reflecting and implementing the will of the people are carried out without corruption. A main purpose of the media, therefore, is to reveal to both political leaders and citizens the strengths *and* weaknesses of institutional activity:

> The unwritten rules of democratic political culture – which do assign a
> public service role to news media – command that they devote time and

space to the public policy agenda in order to reveal to political leaders and

citizens the strengths and weaknesses of various policy proposals.

Information should be available about the performance of politicians and

the qualifications of new aspirants to political office. Corruption, abuses of

power, and other misconduct in the handling of public affairs should be

reported, irrespective of the parties involved. (Graber, McQuail, and Norris

3)

Free and independent news media are the means by which criticisms and questions of as

well as public responses to political activity can be posed, and are essential tools in

holding a government accountable to the people; a government's accountability, after all,

is the ultimate source of its legitimacy.

Chapter 3
Power to the People: Blogs, Citizen Journalism, and Reclaiming the Media

In Chapter 2, I put forth the three main functions that the media is expected to fulfill in a democracy. In this chapter, I focus on the first of these main functions: providing equal access to both the means of production and content of political communication. Beginning with an overview of the rise of commercial media organizations and governmental policy concerning media ownership, I show how present state and media conglomerate activity centralizes power over communications and limits expression of and access to certain information and viewpoints. In the second half of the chapter, I explain how Web 2.0 technologies counteract suppressive tendencies within the mainstream media, through both the new platforms they create and their encounters with existing media outlets. Though Web 2.0 does not provide a complete alternative to ubiquitous media conglomerates, it provides a remedy for some of its more oppressive maladies.

Selling Out: Read All About It!

The commercialization of the press during the 19th century resulted in the proliferation of urban newspapers with strong local ties. Competition within urban newspaper markets improved the quality of content produced, as publishers lured readers by increasing stories about local events and printing more stories written by local reporters. As newspapers grew and more jobs were created, local media developed a beat system for regular coverage of key social institution. Indeed, "the great diversity and intensely local focus of modern American newspapers helped them earn the reputation as

watchdogs over the powerful political and corporate interests that shaped American cities"
(Klinenberg 21).

America has, in theory, carried this mentality into the 20th century. The
Communications Act of 1934 created the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as
an independent regulatory agency comprised of a handful of commissioners appointed by
the president and confirmed by the Senate (Klinenberg 19). Though the commission was
created to set media policy of all kinds, Congress charged it with generating rules to
ensure that local media markets would be competitive and diverse, setting an important
precedent for the government's approach to media regulation. Social media scholar Erich
Klinenberg writes:

Under the FCC's oversight, the government would formally treat the
airwaves as natural resources that… belong to the people. Over time, the FCC defined
the core goal of federal media policies as the promotion of "diversity," "localism," and
"competition" in American towns and cities, and it set strict ownership limits to maintain
a robust flow of ideas into the public sphere. (Klinenberg 19)

However, in recent years government media policy has shifted towards permitting
– and, in some cases, promoting – the concentration of media control into the hands of a
few select corporations. The Telecommunications Act of 1996, which was the first major
state media policy passed since the Communications Act of 1934, was designed to bring
media policy up to date with new technologies as well as amend outdated provisions from
the 1934 Act. Though proponents of the Telecommunications Act claimed that it would
foster more competition amongst existing media organizations, it eliminated most

preexisting media ownership regulations; communications scholar Fritz Messere elaborates:

> The [Telecommunications Act abolished] many of the cross market barriers that prohibited dominant players from one communications industry, like telephone, from providing services in other industries like cable. New mergers and acquisitions, consolidations and integration of services previously barred under FCC rules, antitrust provisions of federal law… will be allowed for the first time. (Messere 1996)

While these changes were created to afford media organizations more opportunity and flexibility, they also furthered the consolidation of the media industry. For instance, one FCC study found that the Act had led to a dramatic decline in the number of radio station owners, despite the fact that the actual number of radio stations in the U.S. had increased (StopBigMedia).

The U.S. Government battled over media policy again in 2003, bringing criticisms of media concentration into the public spotlight yet ultimately resulting in further concessions to media conglomerates. In June 2003, the FCC voted to substantially relax media ownership rules during a standard agency review of its regulatory practices. The decision, hailed as being "among the most far-reaching deregulatory steps taken during the Bush administration," reduced FCC restrictions on the ability of conglomerates to expand into different media markets. The new policy permitted media companies to own up to three television stations, eight radio stations, a daily newspaper and a cable operator in the largest cities. As a result, it also raised the proportion of TV households that the stations owned by one business could reach from 35% to 45%. (Labaton). Though a

bipartisan Congressional committee fought furiously to roll back these rules, their success was limited to lowering the broadcast cap from 45% to 39% - a move which still legalized the previously questionable acquisitions of media giants Viacom and NewsCorp (Scott).

Due to this trend of media deregulation, the size and frequency of acquisitions and mergers has increased over the past couple decades, resulting in the development of large media institutions. Media expert Ben H. Bagdikian details the scale of this change:

In 1983, fifty corporations dominated most of every mass medium and the biggest media merger in history was a $340 million deal… In 1997, the biggest firms numbered ten and involved the $19 billion Disney-ABC deal, at the time the biggest media merger ever…[but in the year 2000] AOL Time Warner's $350 billion merged corporation [was] more than 1,0000 times bigger [than the biggest deal of 1983] (Shah).

Today, there are only six giant media conglomerates from which most people get their news, entertainment, and information: General Electric, TimeWarner, Walt Disney, NewsCorp, CBS, and Viacom (StopBigMedia). These media giants have grown by expanding both horizontally – by acquiring as many organizations as possible within a given medium, such as television or radio – and vertically – by acquiring and integrating operations and businesses across various mediums and other industries, such as distribution networks and retail manufacturers (Shah). The resulting increased span of these media conglomerates is enormous. The three dominant television networks in the United States draw in 90% of the viewing audience in prime time for entertainment programming (Neuman 244). Roughly 80% of American newspapers are owned by one of

the six media giants listed above (Klinenberg 31). The Tribune Company's properties - which include The Chicago Tribune, Chicago Magazine, multiple radio and television stations, and a direct mail operation – have a combined weekly reach of over 90% of the Chicago media consumer market (Klinenberg 36). This mass concentration of media ownership has led media critics to question whether a handful of media companies owned by a minority elite can actually represent and be loyal to the interests of 300 million US citizens.

The concentration of media ownership results in the homogenization of information and ideas in media coverage, undermining the media's democratic function of providing diverse voices with a vehicle for expression. Most media conglomerates are comprised of organizations representing a variety of different mediums. In order to streamline their operations and avoid the duplication of labor, print, broadcast, radio, and other properties exchange information and stories and share or provide complementary coverage. What's more, independent news and feature syndicates have developed commercial firms to collect news and information to sell to conglomerates, or whatever media will buy (Picard 209). As a result,

> a large proportion of news and information comes from the same sources. It is merely packaged and reused by various media, creating a homogenization of material. Even when major commercialized media create their own material, they do so with the same ideologies of news and information. Thus, the perspectives and breadth of coverage are limited. (Picard 210)

With fewer independent voices heard in mainstream coverage, the media is prevented from fulfilling its democratic commitment to free political expression. Moreover, the streamlined ideologies of media conglomerates limit the spectrum of political views expressed. Strong commercialized media companies have wide audiences to pander to, and steer away from covering positions that may alienate readers, particularly views that fall outside of mainstream political discussion. Rather than give publicity to individuals with alternative viewpoints, mainstream media tends to express "accepted" political opinions of columnists provided by feature syndicates (Picard 210). Radical voices are suppressed as they cannot access a mainstream audience:

Media groups promote dominant or acceptable frameworks of society and politics by focusing on political debates among easily accessible political figures and dominant organizations while generally ignoring political concerns outside those familiar parameters. (Picard 210)

The limited breadth of political views covered by mainstream media undermines the media's democratic duty to provide the public with diverse political perspectives on which to base informed political decisions, as well as speaks to its inability to provide public access to political expression.

Perhaps the greatest problem associated with media conglomerates is that commercial concerns place more limits on what media conglomerates are willing to cover, further undermining the pluralism of viewpoints. The majority of funding for media outlets comes from advertising revenue. Media outlets tend to forgo stories that may offend their corporate sponsors out of fear that the advertiser may withdraw its business.

In some cases, organizations may even self-censor in order to avoid alienating a corporate partner.

A scandal involving news publication The Cincinnatti Enquirer and the Chiquita Banana Corporation provides a poignant example of the influence advertisers wield over their media clients. On May 3, 1998, The Cincinnatti Enquirer published a set of stories criticizing the Chiquita corporation for its poor labor conditions and revealing its participation in illegal activities such as bribery, tax evasion, and violence towards – and even the murders of – some workers (Shapiro). Although the allegations put forth in the story were true – the information came from internal Chiquita voicemails - the Chiquita corporation is a major advertising customer of Gannet Inc., the conglomerate owner of the Enquirer, USA Today, and several other newspapers, and pressured the newspaper to retract the story. Not only did the editors of the Enquirer comply, but they fired the reporters who broke the story and denounced the report for three days on its front page (Shah). This scenario demonstrates the unfortunate tendency for media conglomerates to place their loyalty towards corporate sponsors over their duty to inform the public.

Web 1.0: Media Pluralism, not Media Plurality

The rise of Internet communications provided a partial solution to the homogenization of news content by enabling individuals to access a wider range of news content. The early one-way technologies of Web 1.0 saw the migration of essentially all forms of specialized media – from news text to video broadcasts to audio recordings – to the interconnected digital network of the World Wide Web. As a result, individuals were,

for the first time able to access content from established media that they had not

previously been exposed to. New Media scholar W. Russell Neuman explains:

> The new digital media… permit communications unconstrained by the
>
> assumptions and technical limitations of fixed-format broadcasting… the
>
> economics of capture and transmission do not necessarily require large
>
> audiences and commercial production values (Neuman 241).

Internet technologies lift the logistical restraints that have historically limited the sources

individuals could access to gather news and information. In the past, individuals could

choose from no more than a handful of newspapers that circulated in their area. Now that

most major news publications post at least some of their content on the Internet,

individuals can read a wide variety of different newspapers from around the globe via

their home computers. Nor are radio and television audiences limited to only those who

"tuned in" at their exact broadcast time, as they once were; networks can post videos and

podcasts to websites for viewers and listeners to consume at their leisure. The traditional

media's use of Web 1.0 technologies increased flows of news across conglomerates'

markets as well as international boundaries, opening up new possibilities for individuals

to receive a wider range of news content.

Yet these early Internet developments only partially remedied the problems posed

by media concentration. Though individuals had more news sources to choose from, the

available media content was still generally derived from the established media and

therefore subject to the criticisms listed above. Barlow writes:

> The commercial news media have tried to impose the models that led to
>
> their early successes onto the web, not really understanding that it takes an

entirely different perspective and a completely new model for Web

success… [most] news-media entities moving online saw the Web as

simply offering new means of distribution of product already offered

elsewhere. They did not understand that the Internet was going to be much

more than that – and quickly (Barlow 88).

Traditional media's early web forays served as one-way broadcasting tools for their parent

media organizations and provided little opportunity for new voices and opinions to

emerge. Though Web 1.0 technologies resulted in greater media pluralism, they did not

yield greater media plurality.

<div align="center">Web 2.0: Media Pluralism and Media Plurality</div>

However, Web 2.0 technologies and their ensuing interactions with both

traditional media and web 1.0 formats have provided a plethora of alternatives to – and

solutions for – established media coverage, enhancing media plurality and, concordantly,

the democratic functionality of the media. Web 2.0 technologies have significantly

lowered the costs and logistical difficulties of participating in political communications,

making access to the means of media production more equitable. These new technologies

produce user-friendly formats for responding to web content or creating new webpages,

allowing any individual with access to the Internet to participate in a two-way discussion

with media producers. As a result, there are more opportunities for individuals to pose,

and be exposed to, views not commonly expressed in the mainstream media.

First, the blogosphere provides a forum for citizen journalism, endowing citizens

with a far greater number of sources to choose from. User-generated news content

provide alternatives to the mainstream news, which often have different focuses or viewpoints from traditional media. Neuman writes, "As the cost and complexity of capturing and communicating news declines, new forms of community-based and special-interest communication can supplement traditional news forms and forums" (Neuman 241). Indeed, blog content often fills in the gaps of mainstream media coverage. The non-hierarchical structure of the blogosphere frees it from the constraints of corporate media; blogs are not subject to pressure from advertisers or financial considerations, allowing them to subvert the tendency towards political moderation found in mainstream coverage. Blogs are free to produce and free to access, and their authors are not influenced to dilute their opinions to avoid offending their audiences. Barlow elaborates on the differences between commercial media and the blogosphere:

> Discourse in the late twentieth century tended to fall more and more to chosen pairings of disparate views, generally represented by figures rasied from and by the news media. Before the blogs, these were on the way to becoming the representatives of a new authority, one representing the state but provided through commercial venues. The blogs are an overt rejection of this trend, an unconscious attempt to bring discussion back under popular (and not centralized) control. (Barlow 4)

The top-down, hierarchical structure of the traditional mainstream media enables the leaders of media organizations to "set the agenda" for their media outlets; editorial decisions originate with the higher roles and are transmitted to journalists as orders. However, the blogosphere provides an arena for ideas excluded by those agendas to emerge:

> Before the blogs, the topics for debate… were brought to the public rather than arising from the people. In the blogosphere stories arising through popular interest and exploration… develop cohesion and popular interest together, providing [enthusiasm for and coverage of perspectives] lacking in stories force-fed to the public by the commercial and news media.
>
> (Barlow 5 – emphasis added)

Blogs provide a means for individuals with radical or minority viewpoints – who normally would not gain exposure in the mainstream media – to voice their opinions. Nicholas Lemann, who heads the Columbia School of Journalism, writes that "the more ambitious blogs, taken together, function as… an open forum for every conceivable opinion that can't make its way into the big media" (Barlow 51). By increasing the amount of sources and diverse viewpoints available for information-seeking individuals, the blogosphere brings the media closer toward fulfilling its democratic purposes of providing a vehicle for free expression and responsibly informing the public.

But is the ability to access a diverse array of information sources as good as it sounds? Critics of Web 2.0 argue that individual filtering of unlimited information encourages users to build extremely limited informational worlds. Political theorist Cass Sunstein, for example, claims that "a communications system granting individuals an unlimited power to filter threatens to create excessive fragmentation" (Stodden). When users have the ability to filter out topics that don't interest them, he argues, they tend to filter in only information on topics that already interest them and limit their media interactions to topics they know and people who already share their viewpoints, undermining critical deliberation. Mediums over which individuals have no filtering

control, such as newspaper and television, force media consumers to receive information about a range of topics, many of which they would filter out on the Internet. If individuals simply flock to the "echo chambers" of likeminded thinkers for their information, they will not be exposed to contrasting viewpoints as they would be if they consumed mainstream media. Sunstein is concerned that decentralized control over media exposure will lead to the dissolution of a shared information base, or at least a shared awareness, amongst citizens that allows them to engage in critical political discussion.

While these concerns are reasonable, they do not provide a powerful argument for the rejection of Web 2.0 technologies. First, Sunstein fails to take into consideration the ways in which unfiltered media, particularly mainstream media, actively limits exposure to a range of topics. It could be argued, especially in terms of radical political viewpoints, that Web 2.0 *increases* exposure to diverse information by breaking out of the echo chambers of the mainstream media conglomerates. Second, there is little reason to believe that Web 2.0 users will filter significantly more than mainstream media consumers. Sunstein admits that conservatives are more prone to watch Fox News and that individuals regularly throw out entire newspaper sections which do not hold their interest. Moreover, it's likely that many Web 2.0 users will utilize the diverse info-matrix at their fingertips and expose themselves to a variety of topics and sources, mainstream or not.

Finally, and most importantly, Sunstein's argument speaks to a hypothetical world in which individual filtering have replaced unfiltered media, and is unrealistic given the developing role of Web 2.0 in communications media. It is important to note that the blogosphere is by no means a replacement for or threat to mainstream media institutions.

Rather, the citizen journalism it yields fills in spaces that commercial media ignores, supplementing mainstream journalism rather than competing with it. The interactions between these complementary news sources benefit both citizen and commercial journalism:

> The two journalisms will ultimately make each other better, each helping the other separate the wheat from the chaff. As Henry Jenkins writes: "The new political culture… reflects the pull and tug of these two media systems: one broadcast and commercial, the other narrowcast and grassroots. New ideas and alternative perspectives are more likely to emerge in the digital environment, but the mainstream media will be monitoring those channels, looking for content to co-opt and circulate. (Barlow 90)

Commercial journalism and the blogosphere have forged a symbiotic relationship. The blogosphere has provided mainstream media outlets with countless new sources for specialized information and opinions, which they can use as the basis for or content of news stories. Professional journalists are limited in number, and even the largest media conglomerates face significant gaps in newscovering, for "no matter how much they would like to, the press cannot find every story on their own – they have to let many come to them, so to speak" (Barlow 99). One method of filling these gaps is to draw upon research and content produced by citizen journalists and publicly accessible on the Internet.

In return, bloggers benefit from the increased exposure and reach that only commercial outlets can provide. Though the audience of the blogosphere is growing, the

fact still remains that news stories generally cannot enjoy sustained national attention unless they are covered by commercial media outlets (Barlow 99). However, perspectives, ideas, and information from the blogosphere can trickle their way into the mainstream media. Professional journalists cite blog content and opinions – and even feature bloggers as pundits – with increasing frequency. Neuman adds that information and ideas from the blogosphere have the potential to spread virally through various web communities and eventually trickle up into mainstream media coverage (Neuman 243).

The Wisdom of Mobs

One means by which this "trickling" occurs is a process that Wired reporter Jeff Howe calls "crowdsourcing" – the spontaneous generation and hyping of news stories from bloggers and by bloggers. A single notable blog post can be linked to by thousands of different blogs, significantly widening its audience. Now that many media outlets turn to popular blogs as a resource, posts which generate enough interest within their blogging communities are more likely to be noticed by professional journalists in their research – and therefore have a greater potential to be featured in mainstream coverage. Blog content that succeeds in generating significant popular interest becomes "newsworthy" enough to elicit mainstream media coverage.

A recent and particularly notable example of how crowd-sourcing can catapult blog content into mainstream media coverage is reflected in the story behind Sarah Palin's nomination for the Vice Presidential candidacy on the 2008 Republican ticket; the idea to nominate Palin originated with a college-age blogger Adam Brickley, gained momentum within the blogosphere and eventually the mainstream media, and ultimately led the RNC

to choose her as the Vice Presidential candidate. Brickley discovered Palin while doing research on potential vice presidential candidates in February 2007; convinced that she was a suitable match for all of the potential presidential candidates, he created a "Draft Sarah Palin for Vice President" blog (Noah) promoting her nomination. Brickley continued to update his blog with praises of Palin's record, character, and experience; before long, his blog attracted up to 5,000 visitors every day, some of whom started their own pro-Palin websites (Fitts). As the "Draft Palin" movement picked up momentum over the spring and summer, it found its way into mainstream media coverage with Weekly Standard columnist Frank Barnes' glowing article about Palin's gubernatorial popularity in July 2007 (Barnes).

The buzz over Palin continued to spread virally across the blogosphere as well as various traditional mediums; Rush Limbaugh began chatting up Palin on his radio talk show in February 2008 (Fitts), Fox News commentator William Kristol promoted her candidacy enthusiastically on Fox News Sunday from March 2008 onward, and various newspaper articles contemplating the possibility of a Palin nomination – such as the front page story in the March 9, 2008 Anchorage Daily News (Bolstad) soon followed. As more commercial networks picked up on the Palin Hype, Brickley was interviewed by several national newspapers and political talk shows, and his blog was even cited by the Associated Press. The months of buzz over Palin's candidacy, both within the blogosphere and the traditional media, played a significant role in the Republican National Committee's decision to nominate Palin as McCain's running mate; not only did they prove her to be the energetic political character they sought to balance the ticket, but

Kristol personally advocated for her nomination in the final days of the selection process (Mayer).

The transformation of the Palin nomination from a blogger's suggestion into political reality illustrates the power of the new "viral politics" engendered by the convergence of new and traditional media. Though Brickley's blog initially reached a rather small audience, it generated enough hype amongst readers and other bloggers to catch the attention of mainstream media outlets. The subsequent commercial coverage thrust Palin into the national spotlight as well as brought her to the attention of the Republican strategists who were frantically searching for a vice presidential candidate, ultimately resulting in her nomination. Palin's unusual rise to power proves that the power of the political discourse generated by a Web 2.0 tool is not necessarily limited to its own platform; rather, the promotional efforts of Web 2.0 participants combined with the exposure provided by commercial media coverage can push citizen discourse to the forefront of national debate, and even stimulate real-world political activity.

However, the crowd-sourcing process is not always amicable, especially when it puts pressure on media outlets to provide information that they have intentionally avoided covering. Crowd-sourcing is not always just a passive means of providing research content for mainstream journalists; rather, in its most extreme forms it can play an active role in shaping the agenda of mainstream news coverage. Crowd-sourcing in its most successful form, Barlow argues, actually "forces the commercial news media to find a way to present [a] story" (Barlow 99). Though generating attention for citizen-generated content is relatively difficult, the stories that do capture the public interest can eke their way onto – and thereby alter – mainstream news agendas:

It is hard to sustain a story to the point where the commercial news have to pick it up, but the persistence of a crowd-sourced story can make that happen much more often and more quickly now than ever before – even when the media feel that the story is trivial or just plain wrong." (Barlow 99)

This phenomenon is also relevant to the practices of media conglomerates. Crowd-sourcing can force commercial media outlets, which face external and internal pressures to produce certain content, to present information that they would not under normal circumstances present. Once a story generates enough hype, the mainstream media is obligated by professional standards to cover it; denying coverage to a newsworthy story is seen as irresponsible journalism, and doing so would reduce the outlet's credibility. Crowd-sourcing can undermine corporate bias in the media by forcing mainstream outlets to present stories that advertisers – or editors fearing advertiser backlash – would normally prevent outlets from covering.

The Virtual Campfire

Aside from increasing access to the means of content production, the interactions between new Web 2.0 technologies and traditional media encourage citizen discussion and scrutiny of media content and current events, re-establishing something akin to the Habermasian public sphere where commercial media had hushed it. Web 2.0 technologies have introduced a new format of Internet news that incorporates tools allowing individuals to comment on and discuss news content, from both the blogosphere and established media websites. These tools, ranging from comment sections to news forums,

broaden access to political communication by giving individuals the opportunity to communicate with news producers and one another. These new formats "involve audience discussion and commentary not easily incorporated in the broadcast domain" (Neuman 242); they supplement traditional media content with citizen feedback as well as venues for group discussion of radical or minority viewpoints that the mainstream media generally does not provide.

In the past, citizen participation in the production of media content was generally limited to the letters-to-the-editor section of newspapers and public access television and radio stations with a limited broadcast range. With Web 2.0 tools, individuals can participate in the production of – and respond to – news content in a variety of ways. Media scholar Aaron Barlow writes,

The 'democratization' of discussion broadens debate far beyond what can be found in traditional news media, where the only venue for most   people's expression is a letter-to-the-editors ghetto. Were a group blog… a newspaper, it would have a front page of featured opinion pieces, a body   of nothing but letters-to-the-editor, and a reference section consisting of things like AP wire stories. (Barlow 4) Whereas traditional news media generally maintains a one-way relationship with its audience – even letters to the editor are carefully selected and edited by the editorial staff – web 2.0 technologies allow audience members to engage in two-way interactions with news sources and one another, from commenting on established media content to responding to opinionated blog posts to engaging in discussion forums.

Each of these three interactions converges with traditional media content in various ways to significantly increase the diversity of viewpoints incorporated in

established media coverage. First, commercial media outlets have reformatted their websites to incorporate web 2.0 technologies that provide greater opportunities for individuals to respond to and discuss content as well as present their own ideas in a public forum. The articles, videos and podcasts made available on established media websites are usually followed by a comment section, in which audience members can post reactions, questions and opinions regarding the content. Although media outlets maintain a degree of editorial authority over their web content – they have the power to delete comments retroactively – comment sections feature a broad and rather colorful spectrum of individuals' political perspectives. User-generated comments provide alternative opinions and information to supplement the original content, and can supply pertinent and important evidence or news that the author overlooked or could not access. Comment posters rarely simply agree or disagree; rather, their reactions often provide new content. Moreover, comment sections are forums in which participants can respond not only to the original content but to one another, fostering critical discussion and illuminating the tensions between different relevant ideologies. Finally, commercial media outlets' incorporation of web 2.0 tools results in greater exposure for these additional views; anybody who views the original content can access its comments. The interactive aspects of this new hybrid journalism broaden access to political communication as well as enhance its quality by creating spaces for alternative ideas and new information.

The comment sections on political blogs as well as Internet discussion forums similarly engage authors and readers in political discussions featuring a wider range of viewpoints which, when incorporated in mainstream coverage, likewise diversify traditional media content. As Barlow mentions above, group blogs and web forums are

comprised primarily of posts presenting political perspectives with links to relevant evidence and information, comments and discussions regarding those posts, and references to pertinent established media web content. There is even less editorial censorship on these websites than on mainstream media websites; though some group blogs and discussion forums have moderators that screen posts that contain obscene, offensive, or irrelevant content, regulation is generally very loose and posters have great freedom in their political expression. The subject material of these sites ranges from general political discussion to specialized focus on specific issues; there are Internet communities based around virtually every political ideology one can imagine. At the same time, participants of these communities are constantly questioning and redefining the boundaries of the political spectrum by voicing new ideas and bringing them into a public forum.

Though some group blogs and forums reach a wide audience on their own – for instance, leftist blog DailyKos attracts over 20 million unique visits per month (Brown) – most sites' audiences are far smaller than those of established media outlets. Here again, Sunstein might argue that these forums are mere echo chambers, in which individuals only interact with like-minded thinkers and reinforce pre-existing ideologies through their communications. However, due to the increased utilization of user-generated content as a source for traditional media content as well as web-based phenomena such as crowdsourcing, group blogs and discussion forums do not devolve into self-perpetuating "echo chambers." Quite the contrary, the content produced on these websites is increasingly cited – and sometimes even serves as the basis for – mainstream media coverage. Neuman explains:

The 'open microphone' of Web-based discussion groups generates ideas   and

perspectives that bubble up into such 'official media' as talk radio and

ultimately traditional media commentary and reportage. (Neuman 243)

Here again we observe the relationship of mutual dependence between user-generated and

traditional media; the latter feeds off of the fresh opinions put forth in Web 2.0 forums in

order to make its coverage timely and relevant to public opinion, while the former thrives

off of the increased exposure of mainstream media coverage. When Web 2.0 content is

featured in commercial media coverage, individuals' political expressions are conveyed

not just to the members of their virtual communities, but to a wide national audience that

probably would have never discovered the original website.

Neuman's comparison of user-generated content to an "open microphone"

illustrates this point well. Imagine that a town holds a political "open-mike night" in

which citizens are invited to publicly voice their political views for the purpose of

enhancing democratic discussion. Allowing individuals to use the microphone gives them

an opportunity to widen the audience of their political communication beyond their

family and friends, but that audience is still limited to those within earshot of the

microphone; anybody beyond the range of the amplifier will not be able to hear what the

speaker is saying. Though the open microphone increases access to the means of political

expression, it does not guarantee increased access to its content. Then imagine that the

commercial media catches wind of the open-mike night, and decides to cover it. They

broadcast footage of the event on television networks, summarize the event in a

newspaper article, and post the video and transcript of the entire event on the Internet.

The content then reaches not only those who can hear the microphone, but also the vast

audiences of each of the mediums utilized by the commercial outlet. The broadcasting power of commercial outlets increases the public's ability to access the alternative citizen viewpoints voiced on the microphone, creating the broad forum necessary for truly democratic discussion. Yet this forum could never exist without the open microphone; truly diverse political discussion cannot be simulated by the ideologically diluted commercial media, but must originate organically with the individuals' varied experiences and viewpoints. We thus see that the actualization of a truly democratic media, which requires diverse inputs as well as diverse outputs, relies on the *interaction* between user-generated content and mainstream media outlets.

E-Habermas and the Virtual Coffee Shop

The vibrant critical debate enabled by and contained within the comment sections of commercial media websites and blogs as well as Internet discussion forums suggests a modern renewal of the Habermasian public sphere. We can recall from Chapter 1 that Habermas conceived of the public sphere as a citizen force to hold social institutions accountable and enrich public knowledge through critical discussion and deliberation. The public sphere emerged simultaneously with the rise in print journalism; indeed, in many ways the public sphere provided the initial agents for the democratic functions of the media by empowering individuals to engage in political discussion. However, the growth of centralized communications media decreased access to the means of media production,

> leaving much of the public only as passive observers on a commercial
>
> stage. When the laws of the market governing the sphere of commodity

exchange and of social labor also pervaded the sphere reserved for private

people as a public, rational-critical debate had a tendency to be replaced by

consumption, and the web of public communication unraveled into acts of

individual reception, however uniform in mode. (Barlow 3)

As a result, the activities of the public sphere were limited for much of the nineteenth and

twentieth century.

However, the advent of Web 2.0 technology has yielded countless free, easy-to-

use, and accessible venues for public discussion, providing a solution to the commercial

domination of the public sphere. Though Web 2.0 technologies do not themselves

constitute a new virtual public sphere, they "reestablish the public sphere much in the

way that the coffeehouses, salons, broadsheets, and pamphlets first established it three

hundred years ago" (Barlow 5), endowing individuals with the means to participate in the

same sort of interactions fostered by the Habermasian public sphere: social intercourse

that disregards status, political discussion that raises alternative critical viewpoints, and

collaborative production of meaning and culture (Barlow 3-5).

First, blogs, comment sections, and web forums create a public space akin to

Habermas' coffeeshops in which individuals from all social strata can interact with one

another regardless of professional status. Barlow explains:

Status (professional or otherwise) doesn't matter on the blogs… in terms

of access. Reputation, of course, is as important on the blogs as it is

elsewhere, but status coming *into* the blogs can only take one so far.

(Barlow 3)

Indeed, due to the user-friendly format of these internet tools, individuals from virtually any profession or class can post content without any formal training or instruction. As a result, individuals who do not normally encounter one another in the real world because of geographical distance or social conventions – the average CEO does not tend to rub shoulders, much less engage in political discourse, with the average McDonalds employee – have an opportunity to transcend these boundaries and participate equally in critical debate. In the blogosphere and other Web 2.0 arenas, individuals are not judged based on their professional, economic, ethnic, religious, or any other background – indeed, the anonymity afforded by virtual mediation enables individuals to conceal this information if they so desire – but rather on their words and ideas. These forums, like the Habermasian salons and other meeting places, promote a social intercourse between diverse participants that is not generally supported by other social and media institutions. While the new Virtual Coffeehouses are far from ideal – the public sphere is still highly fragmented – they are far more inclusive than any arenas of discourse to date.

Second, Web 2.0 forums are a new means by which to convey the critical discourse generated by deliberation within the public sphere, for which commercial media has failed to provide a voice. Whereas commercial media promotes a political discourse dominated by the ideological duality of the conservative right and liberal left, the blogosphere and other citizen discussion platforms allow individuals to make political statements that fall outside of, or somewhere between, those two categories. Just as the Habermasian public sphere was united by the "common concern" of challenging the state and church monopolies of interpretation, Web 2.0 communities too challenge the hegemony of the mass media conglomerates that are now the primary producers of

political and cultural meaning by giving the public access to – and thus agency over – the means of political expression and cultural production. This gives individuals the chance to present alternative viewpoints and challenge the authority of existing power structures, fulfilling what Habermas envisioned to be the very purpose of the public sphere. Indeed, the reclamation of the public sphere through web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, comments, and discussion forums is reminiscent of and even marks "a return to the type of debate and journalism practiced in the United States before the tremendous growth of the commercial news media starting in the 1840s" (Barlow 3).

Chapter 4
The Human Network : Web 2.0, Connectivity, and Extrainstitutional Organization

In Chapter 4, I turn to the second of the media's three democratic functions, connecting individuals with one another in civil society to enhance their ability to organize extrainstitutional activity. I trace the ways in which Web 2.0 technologies increase connectivity, both on their own and in tandem with other mediums, by providing individuals with virtual forums in which to realize the full potentials of their social capabilities and encouraging participatory mindsets. In the second half of the chapter, I discuss various methods by which individuals and organizations can combine Web 2.0 technologies with traditional resources to achieve their political objectives.

Hyperconnectivity

It is clear that Web 2.0 technologies significantly increase individuals' abilities to connect, communicate, and share ideas with others over the Internet. Unlike traditional one-way media, such as television, radio, and newspapers, Web 2.0 platforms permit individuals to produce as well as receive content, Social networking websites enable individuals to search for and link with people with whom they share interests. Bloggers not only provide links to other blogs within their posts, but can also join group blogs in which they share resources and webspace with other likeminded writers. Group forums and chat rooms allow individuals from across the globe to engage in real-time discussion about a myriad of a/political subjects unconstrained by geographical location, social status, and other factors which normally limit interpersonal communication in civil society.

What sets these technologies apart from traditional modes of interpersonal communication is their unique capability to foster interactions that transcend geographical limitations and operate beyond the realm of institutionalized communications. Whereas the capabilities of traditional media generally limited human social life to face-to-face interactions – along with mediated communications such as telephone calls, which normally only occur between intimates, the world of Web 2.0 platforms

> extends well beyond its physical expression though Web sites. It is a world that even rises above physical locality, at least to some degree, allowing like-minded people to find each other online. (Barlow 50)

As a result, individuals have the opportunity to build communities – or at least virtual ones – with people they would otherwise likely never physically encounter or interact with.

Moreover, Web 2.0 technologies give individuals the tools to communicate, form groups, and organize outside the framework of traditional institutions and organizations. Whereas large-scale human cooperation has historically relied upon the managerial oversight of institutional structures, the ability to communicate instantaneously with other Internet users makes it possible for virtual communities to collectively engage in extrainstitutional interactions. Shirky explains:

> By making it easier for groups to self-assemble and for individuals to contribute to group effort without requiring formal management (and its attendant overhead), these tools have radically altered the old limits on the size, sophistication, and scope of unsupervised effort. (Shirky 21)

This transition is evident in the explosion of user-generated consumer guides on the Internet, which provide reviews and ratings for almost any product imaginable. For instance, while in the past travelers relied heavily upon published travel guides to learn about their destinations, Web 2.0 platforms have yielded a bounty of websites containing useful information provided by other travelers – from hotel reviews to sightseeing tips to restaurant recommendations – as well as web forums in which fellow travelers can share stories and ask and answer questions. Citizen journalism within the blogosphere acts according to the same principles; now that individuals have the ability to self-publish, they need not completely rely on mainstream media outlets to share their content with others.

The individually-motivated cooperation illustrated in these examples speaks to a critical issue of present human interaction: traditional institutional methods for getting things done, be they publishing travel guides for world explorers or providing news via mainstream media outlets, do not sufficiently realize the full potential of human social capabilities. If they did, individuals would not feel the need to create new forms of organization to supplement them. While past barriers to group action – such as the difficulty of finding and assembling likeminded members – limited the scale of extrainstitutional activity, Web 2.0 technologies give individuals the tools as well as a forum with and in which to organize without the assistance and oversight of traditional structures. Shirky writes,

> The old limits of what unmanaged and unpaid groups can do are no longer in operation: the difficulties that kept self-assembled groups from working together are shrinking, meaning that the number and kinds of things

groups can get done without financial motivation or managerial oversight

are growing. (Shirky 22)

Free from the constraints of traditional forms of organization, humans now have new

opportunities to fulfill their social potential.

It is important to note, however, that these new kinds of group-forming do not –

and almost certainly will not – replace existing institutional structures; rather, they

supplement traditional methods by giving individuals the ability to compensate for

organizational deficits resulting from institutional limitations. Shirky writes:

None of the absolute advantages of institutions like businesses or schools

or governments have disappeared. Instead, what has happened is that most

of the *relative* advantages of those institutions have disappeared – relative,

that is, to the direct effort of the people they represent. (Shirky 23)

These self-assembled groups do not threaten the *existence* of traditional institutions, but

rather their *hegemony* over production. Web 2.0 tools compete with traditional methods

of collaboration by providing alternative venues for action, especially in areas in which

traditional frameworks have failed to provide an adequate organizational framework to

meet citizens' objectives. Once again, we see that the *interactions* between Web 2.0 and

existing institutions, including traditional and mainstream media, increase individuals'

ability to find – or create – organizations which can help them meet their needs.

To Have a Second Life, You Must Have a First Life

It is clear that Web 2.0 technologies have made it easier for individuals to self-

organize, and the proliferation of virtual communities indicates that individuals are taking

advantage of their new capabilities to connect with one another. But can Web 2.0 participation translate into or stimulate real-world political action?

Let us turn to the ways in which the interactive characteristics of Web 2.0 technologies – specifically, content production and user control – nurture a participatory mindset that motivates users to engage in real-world political action. First, Web 2.0 platforms, which provide individuals with the tools and webspace to create and share their own content, transform users from passive media consumers to media analyzers and producers, empowering them as active participants within society. Traditional one-way media create a "mass culture" in which "the ideas are picked from the many and shaped – and only then are they presented to 'the people'" (Barlow 47). Web 2.0 technologies, on the other hand, permit individuals to participate in the production and dissemination of ideas, fostering a "massed culture" in which

> the individuals, generally possessed of many fewer ideas, but with [a] clearer idea of them… present those ideas individually. Yet they do so in significant enough numbers so that no one person's ideas or presentations are alone – and the aggregate can become something of great complexity and nuance. (Barlow 47)

The mass media's incorporation of Web 2.0 technologies on their websites illuminates both the distinction and connection between mass and massed culture; the new possibilities for interactivity create the different forums in which a user can be either a consumer or producer, and simultaneously encourage individuals to participate in shaping and negotiating these boundaries:

Though there is a great deal from mass media that passes to the web, its use is intrinsically different from the passive receptivity associated with movies, radio, and television appreciation. The ability to *create* at the same "station" where one receives changes both perception and interaction, bringing the web into a new realm of "massed media" where resources extend to all of the once-separate media and more, where the user can manipulate the multiplying available items in ever-increasing fashion. (Barlow 45)

Empowered by their ability to produce their own media content, Web 2.0 participants realize their agency over their media experience as well as their social worlds in general; Barlow points out that Web 2.0 tools

strengthen their users' and creators' self-image, one that they are trying to establish by and for themselves, doing so against the pressure from what they see as the cultural arbiters who try to force them into categories chosen for them… [Web 2.0 users] now do have a means for creating their own definitions and have been learning how to use it effectively, breaking out of outside attempts to marginalize them. (Barlow 67)

Once individuals see themselves as agents over their own social realities, they are in a much better position to engage in real-world actions to influence their political and social experiences.

The rise of Web 2.0 is a very new phenomenon, and as of yet there are no conclusive studies detailing the correlation between virtual participation and actual participation. However, several studies have been published on the ways in which Web

2.0 use influences learning, which shed light on these technologies' potential to stimulate individual and group activity. For instance, a study published in the academic journal Communications Research, which investigated the variation in user control over various types of media and its influence on audience education, found that the more control users have over the mediums they are using to inform themselves, the more likely they are to want to seek further information:

> Providing control of the pace, order, and content of instruction to a learner can increase the amount of learning… [and] increase the motivation of the learner. Especially in informal learning contexts such as the use of mass media, motivation to continue learning is central to learning itself. If one becomes bored with a topic, that individual is likely to stop reading or seeking information, precluding future learning. Thus, the control provided by hypermedia systems such as the Web to follow the paths of most interest and value and the paths that are at the appropriate level of expertise for the learner can increase motivation to learn, one's self-efficacy, and thus learning itself. (Eveland and Dunwoody, 2001)

Web 2.0 platforms such as blogs and user-generated webpages – which multiply the amount and type of information sources available – combined with the interactive format of the Internet – which permits users to choose their sources by typing in a web address or clicking on hyperlinks - give users more control over their media consumption, thereby increasing both their motivation to become more informed citizens and their senses of self-reliance and efficacy.

The former of these impacts has clear benefits for democratic participation; the more that citizens inform themselves – and the more they desire to inform themselves – the better prepared they will be to make responsible political decisions. For instance, a citizen who is educated about political issues and actors is in a much better position to vote for proposals and candidates who accurately represent their views than a voter who is uninformed about the contents of the ballot. Web 2.0 technologies not only provide citizens with greater means to inform themselves, but also perpetuate their desire to utilize the new resources available to them. Additionally, the more that citizens learn about the issues that matter most to them, the easier it is to encounter and organize with likeminded individuals. The blogosphere, social networking sites, and other Web 2.0 platforms beget virtual communities based on specific interests, which foster common understandings amongst their members and, concordantly, make group organization easier:

> The ability of many different people and groups to understand a situation, and to understand who else has the same understanding… allows otherwise uncoordinated groups to begin to work together more quickly and effectively. (Shirky 163)

Interactive web technologies thus not only motivate individuals to actively seek information and connect with others with common interests, but provide actual forums in which these activities can be carried out; moreover, these forums enable the members of virtual communities to develop shared awareness, which is an essential element of group action.

It is important to note, however, that although Web 2.0 technologies actively increase the motivation to learn and potentially organize, they are not by any means the original cause of this drive; rather, the human drive to act collectively is a native social instinct, and Web 2.0 technologies are merely tools through which to channel existing motivation. Shirky explains:

> The desire to be a part of a group that shares, cooperates, or acts in concert is a basic human instinct that has always been constrained by transaction costs. Now that group forming has gone from hard to ridiculously easy, we are seeing an explosion of experiments with new groups and new kinds of groups. (Shirky 54)

Web 2.0 technologies matter because they dramatically lower the barriers to organization, allowing humans to realize the full potentials of their social drive.

But do the social exchanges that take place in these virtual communities have an effect on real-world interactions? This question is extremely relevant to the aforementioned self-reliance engendered by increased user control. The interactive nature of Web 2.0 technologies, in allowing individuals to participate in the production of media, likewise empower individuals to play a more active role in shaping their own realities. Web 2.0 scholar Tan Liang Soon illustrates this point with the influence of Web 2.0 technology on student activity:

> With the emergence of Web 2.0… students are not just consumers of technology but creators and participants of it. They may be producing and hosting podcasts on social issues or engaging on process writing using wiki engines. Such participatory learning is characterized by students'

artistic expression and engagement in communities of learning, where

creations are shared, peer critiqued and peer learnt… Web 2.0 tools situate

students' learning to real world contexts as well as real world processes in

the creation of solutions and ideas. (Soon)

Indeed, virtual interactions enabled by Web 2.0 technologies give individuals the

opportunity to develop social skills that they can then apply to real-world situations.

Moreover, the growing tendency of individuals to seek information and social encounters

over the Internet speaks to a similar desire to connect with others in real life. Barlow

notes that this phenomenon is observable within the blogosphere:

Though the blogs are often depicted as isolating, many of the group

blogs… are reflections of desire to bring people together, physically as

well as online. Bloggers can, and do, come together in many ways.

(Barlow 41)

Indeed, many bloggers organize meet-ups in real life, and even hold huge conventions

stemming from their online activities with thousands of attendees (Barlow 67). Some

group blogs, such as Daily Kos and Moveon.org, have formed actual political

organizations that engage in real-world activism from canvassing to protesting.

Don't Fight Forces, Use Them!

In addition to promoting political participation, Web 2.0 technologies provide

countless tools and resources for the development and operation of political

organizations. The rise of instantaneous two-way communications removes logistical

barriers that formerly limited the scope of grassroots organization. Awareness campaigns

of the past relied heavily upon cost-heavy printed material such as pamphlets and posters to spread their message; now, with the click of a button, organizations can present their platform on a globally-accessible website and disseminate information instantly through email. While political organizations have traditionally had to spend significant resources on door-to-door canvassing and benefit events in order to raise money for their cause, Web 2.0 platforms allow groups to receive donations directly through their website, from anywhere in the world. In the past, the scope of grassroots movements was limited by geographical proximity; the organization of group action required physical presence at meetings. Now, Web 2.0 platforms have made it so easy to publish and access information that the coordination of group activity no longer requires face-to-face interaction; social networking sites, mass emails, and group forums provide arenas in which participants can discuss and plan collective action.

> The Internet has provided a whole new medium of political
> communication for use by… party organizations, non-governmental
> organizations, lobby groups and all forms of political collectivity,
> including terrorist organizations and insurgent armies. (McNair 133)

Indeed, the flexibility of Web 2.0 technologies makes them useful to a variety of different kinds of organizations.

Of the many groups that use Web 2.0 platforms for organizational purposes, the most effective are those that combine interactive web technologies with the resources provided by the traditional media. By using a diverse array of methods and mediums to disseminate information and coordinate action, these groups are able to communicate with and influence a wider audience than groups that rely solely upon Web 2.0 or

traditional media. The viral impact caused by a recent flash mob – "a group that engages in seemingly spontaneous but actually synchronized behavior" (Shirky 165) – in Belarus is a particularly poignant example of this phenomenon. As a response to the repressive Belarusian government's restrictions on independent media and free assembly, members of an online community on the group blog site Livejournal coordinated a flash mob in which participants would gather in the main square of Minsk, the capital city, and eat ice cream. Police officers considered the mob to be an illegal assembly and forcibly removed the ice cream eaters, as other participants snapped pictures on their digital cameras and cell phones, eventually using Web 2.0. software to upload them to the Internet. Once the photos were online, they circulated throughout the blogosphere and eventually caught the attention of the mainstream media. The sheer ridiculousness of the image of police hassling a bunch of teenagers eating ice cream thrust Belarus into the global spotlight, and ultimately generated negative publicity for its restrictive policies (Shirky 166-9).

This incident illustrates how a group can, by utilizing a complex network of both Web 2.0 and traditional media technologies, transform a singular political event like a flash mob into media phenomenon with a global audience. Web 2.0 technologies played a crucial role in the planning and organization of the flash mob; Belarus' restrictions on other media as well as physical assemblies limited the efficacy of traditional methods of organizing, but Livejournal provided a virtual space in which activists could coordinate beyond the reach of institutional oversight. Moreover, the anonymity provided by Internet mediation prevented the state from seeking legal retribution from the party responsible for the mob. Documentation of the event was provided through the traditional means of photography, but the distribution of the documentation was made possible by Web 2.0

platforms' capacity for self-publishing and viral circulation. By virtue of crowd-sourcing, the eventual mainstream media coverage of the event enabled its influence to reach beyond the limits of blogosphere into the global eye. Shirky observes,

> Political action has changed when a group of previously uncoordinated actors can create a public protest that the government can neither interdict in advance nor suppress without triggering public documentation. (Shirky 171)

Indeed, the ability for citizens to function as institutional watchdogs as well as extrainstitutional organizers simultaneously puts pressure on governments to act responsibly towards citizen organizations and increases the efficacy of covert action. And yet, both of these functions require *combined* usage of Web 2.0 technologies and traditional media in order to maximize their efficacy.

The Web 2.0 platform TXTMob similarly demonstrates how employing diverse media aids individuals in coordinating action. TXTMob is a free service that allows individuals to share text messages by signing up for various groups, organized around a range of various topics, in which they can send and receive messages to and from other members. Upon registering with groups on the TXTMob website, users have the ability to instantaneously communicate with countless other group members. Launched in 2004, TXTMob was originally developed by the Instituted for Applied Autonomy, a collective of artists and activists, as a tool for protestors at the Democratic National Convention in Boston and the Republican National Convention in New York City. The technology enabled the hundreds of people who signed up for the service before the two conventions

to spread word of their observations and to coordinate their movements. According to the New York Times,

> when members of the War Resisters League were arrested after starting to march up Broadway, or when Republican delegates attended a performance of "The Lion King" on West 42nd Street, a server under a desk in Cambridge, Mass., transmited messages detailing the action, often while scenes on the streets were still unfolding. Messages were exchanged by self-organized first-aid volunteers, demonstrators urging each other on and even by people in far-flung cities who simply wanted to trade thoughts or opinions with those on the streets of New York. Reporters began monitoring the messages too, looking for word of breaking news and rushing to spots where mass arrests were said to be taking place.
>
> (Moynihan)

By making immediate communication among and between groups possible, the protestors' utilization of TXTMob enhanced their ability to achieve their objectives, from coordinating physical meetups on the fly to sharing the location of police offers in order to avoid arrest.

The TXTMob example illuminates multiple benefits of utilizing a combination of old and new media to organize political action. Like other Web 2.0 platforms, TXTMob permits users to form groups and interact with one another on its website, making it easier for activists to find and organize with other activists. However, its essential strength lies in its alliance with the traditional medium of telephones. By giving individuals the tools to connect with one another on their cell phones, the web service

extends its reach beyond the virtual sphere; its advantage over similar Web 2.0 technologies, such as electronic group mailing lists, is that it enables communication which does not depend upon computer access but can occur anywhere with cell phone access, granting users the same organizational faculties but with far more mobility. Whereas protestors have traditionally only been able to organize collective action *beforehand* through meetups – be they physical or virtual – the one-to-many and many-to-many instantaneous interactions made possible by TXTMob allow activists to coordinate spontaneously, or revise previous plans in accordance with new developments. Moreover, reporters' use of TXTMob as a source of breaking news gives activists and their causes increased media visibility while simultaneously improving the thoroughness, timeliness, and overall quality of mainstream news coverage.

Chapter 5
The Inverted Panopticon: Web 2.0 and Transparency

In my fifth and final chapter, I focus on the third democratic function of the media: promoting state and corporate transparency to ensure that other democratic institutions are held accountable for their actions. I argue that Web 2.0 technologies and their interactions with mainstream media enhance both new and old media outlets' ability to fulfill their democratic role as watchdogs. I illustrate how Web 2.0 technologies have provided new avenues for the visibility and analysis of institutional activity which mainstream media fails to cover, including citizen journalism and crowdsourcing movements. In the second half of the chapter, I discuss specific Web 2.0 watchdog platforms that supplement traditional mediums of transparency and provide forums for criticisms of the media itself.

Is Citizen-Vision 20:20?

Increasing the visibility and transparency of state and corporate activity has been a key mission of the media since news media originated with merchants' correspondences. Unlike the city-states of Ancient Greece, in which citizens were present at the public assemblies that decided state policy – and thus enjoyed high visibility of their government – the modern nation-state, due to geographical expansion, centralizes government activity to state institutions that are significantly less visible to the public. What's more, this centralization allows governments to exercise some control over how much of their information is accessible to the public. It should be noted that states are not the only institutions that withhold information from the public; corporations, media organizations, and intelligence agencies also tend to have their own "secrets" that they

don't want the masses to be privy to. Knowledge is power, and centralizing knowledge enhances centralized power. Conversely, to keep secrets one must have a decent amount of power. Thus those who have secrets tend to be the powers that be.

Why do these institutions intentionally withhold information from the public? The simple answer is to protect their interests. Sometimes information is withheld in the name of public interest; for example, a state may be unwilling to release its counterterrorism strategies because they do not want to jeopardize national security – and the well-being of the population – by giving terrorists information that will allow them to prepare to defend themselves. However, in many cases institutions withhold information because they have an interest in preventing the public from obtaining specific information that may threaten the institutions' ability to achieve their objectives. In these circumstances, the public has some stake in the withheld information, often due to the fact that the interests of the institution are at odds with the public interest. In order to maintain power and stability, institutions withhold information that they fear will undermine their authority or provoke a negative reaction by the public.

If knowledge is power, then visibility – the decentralization of knowledge – is key to checking that power. The rise of user-generated content as well as the interaction between Web 2.0 technologies and mainstream media outlets ultimately enhances the ability of both new and old media to fulfill their democratic role as institutional watchdogs. User-generated technologies, especially the blogosphere and whistleblowing platforms, provide new avenues for the visibility and analysis of institutional activities which, for various reasons, are not covered by the mainstream media. They also provide a forum in which to voice criticisms of the established media, turning the media's

watchdog function in on itself to hold it accountable to its democratic purposes. In turn, established media outlets both widen the audiences of web 2.0 by incorporating user-generated content into their own coverage and widen their own audiences by utilizing web 2.0 platforms to transmit content.

I, Reporter

Let us first turn to the ways in which the blogosphere and other citizen journalism Internet platforms have improved the media's ability to act as a public watchdog. First, these new media outlets allow ordinary citizens to promote – and publish content regarding – institutional accountability. The advent of Web 2.0 technology has yielded countless new forums in which individuals can publicly scrutinize government and corporate activity. The blogosphere bypasses many of the barriers to visibility found in the established media by allowing individuals to communicate directly and immediately with one another and the citizenry at large:

> Now with blogs, discussion boards, e-mails, and electronic video postings, a… watchdog's message is not limited to the discretion of a newspaper letters column or a broadcaster's switchboard operator. Consequently, citizen's… abilities to put pressure on their targets have increased substantially, to a level unprecedented in history, because they now can present their cases directly to the public. (Hayes 5)

These Internet services not only expand the reach and audience of existing "watchdog" actors, but also provide opportunities for citizens to publicize information that enhances transparency. More eyes are watching – and now their patrons have mouths, too.

Blogs don't merely expand the quantity of avenues for transparency. Rather, their unique non-hierarchical structure permits the publication of content that mainstream media outlets cannot obtain or report, thereby correcting various biases in established media. Certain conventions of mainstream journalism often prevent the mass media from fulfilling their duties as a watchdog. Threats of government subpoenas and lost advertising revenue tend to preclude mass media outlets from releasing sensitive or controversial information in a timely fashion. What's more, established media has a reputation to protect, which preclude mass media from publishing content that may jeopardize their standing. Mainstream news media outlets can face serious backlash for controversial or hasty reporting, and are therefore less likely to "take risks" in their reporting. As a result, some media outlets engage in self-censorship, omitting content out of fear or deference to the sensibilities of others even absent direct pressure from an authority to do so.

For example, the mainstream media has been repeatedly criticized for its allegedly "muzzled" coverage of the War on Terror; many journalists and pundits charge that the news media, fearing a government backlash, followed the Bush Administration's lead in the tone of their coverage of the war and failed to aggressively question the evidence and motives behind the invasion. CNN's top war correspondent Christiane Amanpour, one of the most prominent media figures covering the War on Terror, stated during a CNBC panel:

> I think the press was muzzled, and I think the press self-muzzled. I'm
>
> sorry to say, but certainly television and, perhaps, to a certain extent, my
>
> station was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox

News. And it did, in fact, put a climate of fear and self-censorship, in my

view, in terms of the kind of broadcast work we did. (Johnson)

Amanpour went on to say that her superiors actually discouraged her and her coworkers

from questioning the US government's claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass

destruction. Regardless of whether or not the state was applying direct pressure on news

outlets to muffle criticisms of the invasion of Iraq, the very threat that they could deterred

CNN from rigorously questioning the administration's policy.

Additionally, mass media outlets will often self-censor their content in the name

of taste and decency. Images or footage of murder, terrorism, war and massacres often

upset media consumers, which undermines media outlets' reputations by inviting

complaints and accusations of prurience and shock tactics. This is the reason that no

major media news outlet broadcast footage or images of Saddam Hussein's hanging in

Baghdad on December 30, 2006. Officially released footage of the event stopped short of

the actual execution, and pictures of his body wrapped in a shroud were later broadcast

on television (BBC News). An amateur video of the execution shot on a camera phone

surfaced on YouTube almost immediately, and remains in circulation to this day.

The blogosphere is free from these constraints and often publishes points of view

that the established media is too timid to tackle, as "many of the news blogs have little or

no reputation to protect, and feel free to publish and be damned" (McNair 127). As a

result, the blogosphere is able to compensate to some extent for the shortcomings of the

established media, complementing mainstream news coverage with content that

previously had no access to the public eye. The freedom from the external and internal

pressures of the mainstream media paired with the expanded scope of citizen reporting

gives the blogosphere a unique capacity to "reveal information that no established media have in their possession, or are able and willing to publish" (McNair 127). Moreover, the very infrastructure of the blogosphere encourages investigative reporting, because posts that relay breaking news or challenges to convention are reliable methods of attracting readers.

<div align="center">Part of the Disease</div>

The advent of what <u>New York Times</u> columnist Frank Rich calls the "viral politics" of the Internet has significantly increased the transparency of political life and, as a result, the ability to hold political actors accountable for their words and actions. The new visibility offered by the tumultuous marriage between politics and television in the 1960s forced politicians to plan their every move as if everybody is watching; because even if everybody wasn't watching, somebody who has the capability of making everybody watch would be. In essence, politicians have to watch themselves because you are watching them. Over time, political actors have learned to manipulate the medium in order to convey a calibrated image of themselves suitable for public appeal. One only need turn to the 2008 presidential campaign for evidence of this phenomenon. Candidates routinely orchestrate "photo-op" media appearances at venues such as pancake houses or sports events in order to appear more down-to-earth and connected with the citizens. Vigilance over public image is exercised down to the smallest detail, and is customized strategically on specific issues. For instance, the Obama/Biden campaign took steps to maintain control of Barack Obama's image by tightly managing his public appearances. In order to ward off rumors that Obama is Muslim – when in reality, he is Christian – campaign aides prohibited two Muslim women from sitting behind Obama during a June

2008 rally because they were wearing headscarves, which the campaign did not want to appear in news photographs or live television coverage (Rutenberg and Zeleny).

However, in the post-broadcast present, the unregulated forces of the Internet have weakened politicians' ability to control their public perception. Web 2.0, which has opened up countless new "watching" venues for the public – from the grassroots reporting of the blogosphere to the ever-recording eye of YouTube – has only exacerbated this phenomenon. By means of crowdsourcing, which I explained in detail in Chapter 4, documentation of even the most obscure political actions can be conveyed to a national or even global audience. More people are watching than ever, and politicians are experiencing henceforth unseen levels of scrutiny. It is easier to vindicate them when they're telling the truth, and easier to catch them in a lie.

Several politicians have learned the harsh reality of viral politics the hard way. For instance, in September of 2002, political bloggers broke a story concerning racially sensitive remarks former Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott made at the 100th birthday party of South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond. Though the story disappeared from the mainstream press within forty-eight hours, bloggers kept researching the story – including Trent Lott's history of alluding to Thurmond's former racial segregation platform – until the story broke back into the mainstream press. The ensuing mass media scandal ultimately caused Lott to resign from his position as Senate Republican Leader on December 20, 2002 (Lessig).

This example illuminates several advantages the blogosphere wields over established media. First, the blogosphere was able to continue to pursue Lott's record on Thurmond's platform long after the established media because it is free from the

constraints of journalistic standards of timeliness or limited broadcast capacity. Second, the interactive quality of blogs – that is, the ability to connect to other blogs or webpages through hyperlinks embedded in a post's text - provides a user-friendly format in which information supporting the argument is readily accessible; in this case, bloggers could insert links to records of Lott's past comments and writings in order to support their arguments. The Internet is a virtual archive of politicians' rhetorical history, and there is an entire generation of active bloggers willing to dig through it for evidence. As a result, this "new bottom-up media culture is challenging any candidate's control of a message" (Rich). Now that almost anybody can publish anything on the internet for free, there is no longer any such thing as "off the record." As long as somebody hears it (and can prove that they heard it), it's fair game.

Hillary Clinton similarly underestimated the viral power of the blogosphere during her recent campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. In several of her stump speeches in early 2008, she relayed an anecdote about getting shot at on the tarmac while traveling as the first lady to Tuzla, Bosnia in March 1996. Soon after, newspapers such as The Cleveland Plain Dealer and The Washington Post ran stories that provided evidence indicating that Clinton's Bosnia anecdote was fabricated; the Bosnian conflict had already subsided by the time she visited, and comedian Sinbad, who accompanied her on her trip, said himself that the event did not occur. Additionally, CBS Evening News found and broadcast a video from Clinton's 1996 foreign trip validating the newspapers' claims. Yet the Clinton campaign continued to insist that the story was true; Clinton camp aide Howard Wolfson phoned in to MSNBC's "Morning Joe" to quote several news stories that he claimed supported her account. Though multiple mainstream

media outlets had proof that her anecdote was false, they did not succeed in getting her to admit that they were false – therefore failing at holding her accountable to the public (Rich).

What the Clinton campaign did not forsee was the ensuing eruption of the Bosnia scandal on the Internet, which incited so much public criticism that the Clinton campaign ultimately revoked its statements. Popular news blog "The Drudge Report" featured a link to a YouTube video of the CBS Evening News story the day after it was broadcast, reaching far more viewers than the news networks' nightly audience. The video became something of a cultural phenomenon, drawing more viewers than even celebrity Britney Spears' TV comeback video. Viewers posted angry comments on the YouTube page and began applying direct pressure on the Clinton campaign to reveal the truth. Days later, Clinton rescinded her statements, blaming sleep deprivation for having "misspoken" (Rich).

The Clinton campaign's mistake illuminates the ways in which the media climate has changed in transitioning from traditional media structures to the multifaceted matrix of new and old media, as well as the political sphere's difficulties in adapting to these changes. It is likely Clinton's risky strategy would have succeeded prior to the rise of the Internet; the criticisms voiced in The Cleveland Plain Dealer and The Washington Post as well as on CBS News would have not reached much further than the limited audience of their reader- and viewership, and so would not have incited enough negative publicity to lead Clinton to address the issue. However, as Rich argues, "that Mrs. Clinton's campaign kept insisting her Bosnia tale was the truth two days after The Post <sic> exposed it as utter fiction… shows the political perils of 20th century analog arrogance in

a digital age" (Rich). In the media climate of the present, it is much harder for politicians to take rhetorical risks like Clinton's because almost anyone – from professional journalists to ordinary citizens – has the ability to make incriminating evidence available to the wider audience of the Internet. Posting mainstream news content on popular user-generated web platforms like YouTube vastly expands media outlets' reach as well as their impact on public opinion. This example reinforces my argument that Web 2.0 platforms compensate for the shortcomings of the mainstream media – in this case, their limited audience – and enhances media outlets' ability act as a watchdog. The "smoking gun" video broadcast on CBS News failed to hold Clinton accountable for her statements on its own, but became "an unstoppable assault weapon once harnessed to the Web" (Rich). The efforts of the traditional media outlets (newspapers and television) as well as new media outlets (YouTube and the blogosphere), and the interaction between the two, enabled the media as a whole to better fulfill its democratic functions.

<div align="center">Meta-Media</div>

In addition to compensating for the shortcomings of the established media, Web 2.0 technologies have also played a positive role in improving the quality of the mainstream media. For one thing, established media now utilizes Web 2.0 technologies both as a source for mainstream coverage and as a means of broadening its audience. As the Trent Lott example shows, the mainstream media sometimes uses the blogosphere as a source for its own material. The New York Times now reprints blog posts from the previous week in its Sunday issue. Many mainstream news broadcasts and publications now feature prominent bloggers as pundits or commentators. News media also tends to

cover – and thereby expand the audience of – sensitive information leaked on watchdog-specific Web 2.0 platforms, which I shall explore in greater detail below.

Mainstream media outlets have also begun to produce content with and for Web 2.0 platforms, thereby expanding their modes of communication as well as the amount of media consumers they are able to reach. Most major media outlets have websites where they repost their content, so that individuals can access it even if they missed its original publication or broadcast. Additionally, many reporters maintain blogs in which they can provide additional content or expound upon their mainstream coverage.

Moreover, Web 2.0 platforms provide a means for citizen and professional journalists to act as a watchdog of the established media itself, providing a solution to the question of who is guarding the vanguards:

> The blogosphere has become a source of independent scrutiny of the establishment media... Blogs feast daily upon articles written by journalists, linking to each article and adding their own comment and perspective. In doing so, weblogs provide yet another valuable function: filtering and fact-checking articles by journalists. (McNair 133)

Bloggers turn the same scrutiny they exercise on politicians onto the mainstream media, checking its every claim against a massive database of information. In this way, Web 2.0 helps ensure that the media stays "on track" in fulfilling its democratic obligations. Additionally, many blogs serve as agglomerations of mainstream news pertaining to a specific topic or worldview, sifting through massive amounts of media content to customize news sites for readers' specialized interests.

Beware of Watchdog

Aside from the blogosphere, Web 2.0 technology has also yielded new user-created formats specifically crafted to serve as watchdogs for a certain sector. These new tools and services foreshadow a renaissance in activism, as vanguards of a new level of public oversight on a variety of issues: state transparency and accountability, environmental and social performance, green marketing, political contributions, corporate governance and more (Makower). The interactive format of Web 2.0 platforms allows users to link countless pieces of information together, making it possible to archive and track institutional activity; environmental media specialist Joel Makower writes:

> As information about companies from a myriad of sources and interests is amassed, synthesized, and broadly disseminated, it will enable those that haven't traditionally communicated or collaborated to connect the dots about companies'… promises and performance (Makower).

These websites rely on user participation to filter through massive amounts of information to provide an access point for information that the public should know, but is not otherwise readily available. They are essential intelligence agencies for the people, by the people. Because the majority of these platforms are user-generated, they are less susceptible to the pressures to self-censor faced by established media.

One of the most prominent of such watchdog websites is Wikileaks.org, a website that publishes anonymous submissions and leaks of sensitive governmental, corporate, or religious documents while attempting to preserve the anonymity of its contributers. It is an uncensorable Wikipedia that archives untraceable document leaking and analysis. According to its website, Wikileaks' primary interest is in exposing oppressive regimes in

Asia, the former Soviet bloc, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East; indeed, the site

was originally developed by Chinese dissidents seeking a way to bypass the Great

Firewall of China, in order to publicize information that the state withholds from the

public. However, it is dedicated to promoting the transparency of government activity

worldwide and provides "assistance to people of nations who wish to reveal unethical

behavior in their governments and corporations" (Wikileaks.org). **Whistleblowers can**

submit sensitive documents anonymously using advanced encryption software to keep

their identity secret from even the Wikileaks webmasters. Anybody can comment on

submissions; the open wiki format allows participants to post information supporting or

denying a document's claims, providing a forum for public debate on controversial

issues.

Wikileaks, and other sites like it, enhance the watchdog capacity of the media by

opening new avenues for principled leaking of sensitive information of public interest

which, due to pressures from various institutions, does not tend to be covered by the

established media. Many of the documents posted on Wikileaks contain sensitive

information about governments or corporations, and those who provide this leaked

information often face severe risks, be they political repercussions, legal sanctions or

physical violence. Wikileaks uses advanced cryptographic technologies to minimize these

risks, making principled leaking easier. Since government subpaeonas, threats, and legal

aggression are all dependant upon knowing the contributeo's identity, they are not an

issue for the Wikileaks contributor. Wikileaks seeks to promote good government and

expose corruption via increasing the transparency of institutional governance; at the very

least, it provides knowledge that the public can use as a tool to hold institutions more accountable to their actions and make better-informed political decisions.

Additionally, Wikileaks' public editing format opens leaked documents to the scrutiny of a worldwide community of wiki editors, providing both a forum for public debate on issues that are not covered by the mainstream media and a safeguard against fabricated or irrelevant information. Anybody can comment on Wikileaks submissions, and the open-source wiki software allows participants to post information supporting or denying a document's claims. The Wikileaks website explains:

> Wikileaks provides a forum for the entire global community to examine
> any document relentlessly for credibility, plausibility, veracity and
> validity…. and explain their relevance to the public…. Better principled
> and less parochial than any intelligence agency, it is able to be more
> accurate and relevant. (Wikileaks)

It is up to the public to interpret and develop opinions about these documents, encouraging critical thinking as well as providing a forum for public discussion. The collective wisdom of the community of users is harnessed to provide fast and accurate dissemination and analysis of leaked information, further enriching the knowledge available to readers.

Wikileaks has succeeded time and time again at anonymously releasing documents before or in lieu of mainstream coverage that have held institutions accountable for their actions. For example, in November 2007 Wikileaks released a never-before-seen military manual from 2003 documenting the daily operations of the U.S. Military's Guantanamo Bay detention facility. The leak of the manual, called the

Camp Delta document, exposed several previously classified policies regarding the treatment of detainees, including using dogs to intimidate prisoners, shackling detainees into stress positions, and other forms of psychological manipulation (Singel) . The manual also revealed that some prisoners were designated as off-limits to the International Committee of the Red Cross, a policy that the U.S. military had repeatedly denied in the past. Though the Bush Administration insisted that their policies had evolved since 2003, they refused to provide further details for national security reasons. The Guantanamo Bay detention facility is still in operation, but public approval of its existence has declined drastically (Sutton).

Once again, a Web 2.0-enabled structure – in this case, Wikileaks' ability to release user-generated content anonymously – demonstrates its unique ability to "fill in" informational gaps in established media coverage. Ryan Singel, a columnist for popular technology magazine Wired, writes:

> The disclosure highlights the internet's usefulness to whistle-blowers in anonymously propagating documents the government and others would rather conceal. The Pentagon has been resisting -- since October 2003 -- a Freedom of Information Act request from the American Civil Liberties Union seeking the very same document.

Moreover, no mainstream news outlets covered the Camp Delta document until after it had been released on Wikileaks. It is likely that established media simply did not have access to the document, due to the Pentagon's refusal to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests from a plethora of organizations. Given the highly sensitive nature of the document – it was stamped "classified" and "for official use only" – it was

probably leaked by somebody with close ties to the Guantanamo Bay operation who would, therefore, face serious consequences if identified. Since government subpoenas can force established media to violate their contract to uphold the confidentiality of their sources, it is safer for whistleblowers to release sensitive information to outlets, like Wikileaks, which can guarantee their anonymity. And even if the established media had access to the Camp Delta document, external pressures from government officials and corporate advertisers would have at least delayed – if not totally prevented – media outlets from releasing its contents to the public. However, once the manual had already been broken on Wikileaks, the news media was able to report on the story of the leak; because their coverage took the more objective format of news reporting instead of the highly politicized nature of whistleblowing, it did not pose a threat to their reputation. In fact, the mass media played an essential role in further publicizing the Camp Delta document. Here again we see the symbiotic relationship between Web 2.0 and established media; the former is able to communicate sensitive information which mainstream media outlets cannot obtain or release, while the latter makes it possible for this information to reach a wider audience. Transparency requires both possession of knowledge and the ability to spread it, and can best be promoted by new and old media working together.

Let us turn to another poignant example of the influence Wikileaks' coverage has on the institutions it targets – and the dangers of the backlash it can incite. In February 2008, Wikileaks released a series of documents implicating the Cayman Island branch of Swiss bank Julius Baer in illegal activities. The documents allege that the Cayman Islands bank participated in money laundering and tax evasion, as well as helped customers hide assets and wash funds. Fearing the allegations would cause their patrons

to lose confidence in their bank and withdraw their assets, Julius Baer sued Wikileaks and the wikileaks.org domain registrar Dynadot in the California court system. Judge Jeffrey White in the U.S. District Court for Northern California granted Julius Baer a permanent injunction ordering that Wikileaks be shut down. Dynadot complied with the injunction and disabled the Wikileaks.org domain name. Such a court ruling, sanctioning a broad agreement with questionable implications for free speech, was virtually unprecedented in the modern media age; one attorney noted that "it's like saying that Time magazine published one page of sensitive material so (someone can) seize the entire magazine and put a lock on their presses" (Julie Turner quoted by Zetter in Wired). However, the website remained accessible through its numeric IP address, and internet activists expanded the means to access the site by mirroring it off of other websites (Zetter). Wikileaks' ability to survive – and flourish – despite direct censorship by the state speaks to the new weapons with which technology has endowed the media in its struggle to protect First Amendment rights.

Indeed, it seems that traditional tactics of state censorship are insufficient to suppress Web 2.0's new methods of spreading knowledge. Moreover, new and old media have come together to demand their freedom of the press. Following the Wikileaks injuncion, both the American Civil Liberties Union and the Electronic Frontier Foundation filed motions protesting the censorship of Wikileaks. The Reporters' Committee for Freedom of the Press assembled a coalition of media and press, including major U.S. newspaper publishers and press organizations, that filed an amicus curiae brief on Wikileak's behalf (Zetter).

Several other sites modeled similarly to Wikileaks focus on specific issues or disciplines and act as platforms for specialized whistleblowing. One example is the Center for Media and Democracy's project Sourcewatch.com, a collaborative directory of people, organizations, and issues shaping public life. Its main focuses include tracking the activities of PR firms that specialize in manipulating public perception, profiling think tanks, nonprofits, and other political organizations, and documenting the other various actors (such as media outlets, pundits, and politicians) involved in public debate. Its side project, Congresspedia, profiles members of Congress, keeps tabs on legislation in the Senate and House, and pays special attention to members of Congress who are under investigation. Both sites are wiki-formatted and rely on contributions of research and reporting by organizations, journalists, and citizens. These sites make government activity visible in a way that is easily understandable to the public, and advance public reasoning by sustaining and encouraging discussion on journalism and the public sphere, as well as allowing participants to synthesize the amassed information in a collective forum.

One website, theyrule.net, promotes the transparency of financial institutions by collecting user-contributed information on corporate activity and collaboration. Users can research the connections between different organizations, create a visual map that traces these connections complete with annotations, and send the map to themselves and others. Yet another site, Secrecy News, focuses specifically on revealing government policy regarding secrecy and classifications – put another way, de-secretizing the politics of secrets. Secrecy News is a meta-watchdog of sorts, endowing journalists and the public with the tools to understand what information they do not know and why they do not

know it. Yet with the continued proliferation of specialized whistleblowing sites itching

for dirt to uncover, who knows? Perhaps, before long, there won't be hardly any secrets

left to reveal.

Conclusion: The Future of Knowledge

In the past three chapters, I have illustrated various ways in which Web 2.0 technologies, and their interactions with preexisting mediums, improve both old and new media outlets' ability to fulfill their democratic purposes of providing access to the means of production and the content of political communication, connecting individuals in civil society, and acting as an institutional watchdog. It is clear that Web 2.0 technologies can and do actively improve the democratic functionality of the media – as is evident from my numerous examples – and have a great potential to continue to enhance media institutions in the future. As I noted in my introduction, there is no easy way to gauge how much or how well Web 2.0 affects media institutions; there are no measuring units for democracy. And trying to predict the future of the internet is as arbitrary as gazing into a crystal ball with an untrained eye. What we can do is take advantage of the new tools and technologies that are available to us, use them to engage in political citizenship, and observe how our combined forces cause the future of the internet to unfold.

So, too, will it be fascinating to see not just how we will shape our evolving technologies and networks, but how they will shape us. Up until now, the human experience of knowledge has been mainly, if not completely, informed by local context. Yet now that the boundaries of our quest for knowledge have been severely delimited by the Internet and Web 2.0, will the ways in which we conceptualize knowledge, and our search for knowledge, change? If knowledge is power, how will the information revolution affect existing institutions and authorities?

Fortunately, or unfortunately, I've spent way too much time thinking about the answer to this question. Contrary to one of my personal life mantras - "please keep your

destination in mind" (the motto of Norton Juster's logical opus of a children's book The

Phantom Tollbooth) - when I started my thesis research, I had a very firm idea of the

topic I wanted to study - web 2.0 technology and the evolution of the media - but didn't

really know where I was going to go with it.

My early research focused on developing a theoretical history of the media, which

induced me to read philosophers such as Habermas and Kant. Kant is the epitome of

enlightenment philosophy. Writing in a period of great scientific and technological

advances - the advent of modern medicine, for one - Kant had great faith in rationality

and the ability of humans to reach an objective understanding of the world through the

use of practical reason. He believed that the rational order of the world as known by

science is not a result of the fortuitous accumulation of sensory perceptions, but rather a

product of synthesis, a rule-based activity of deliberation. Sensibility supplies the mind

with intuitions, and understanding allows individuals to judge these intuitions and place

them into different a priori categories. As Kant believes these categories, like the laws of

nature and other methods we use to organize knowledge, are objective, being able to

place our subjective perceptions within the categories yields objective, universal

knowledge. By this method, Kant predicted that the human race would eventually reach

enlightenment. This, of course, is a very hierarchical view of knowledge; his a priori

categories had to have been developed by a scientific and academic elite, who basically

crafted the framework by which all perceptions were to be submitted. Individual,

subjective observations which did not readily fit into an a priori category were given far

less credence than those which made it into the canon.

Habermas, about a century later, revisited Kant's theories in light of his historical account of the growth of of communications media and its role in the development of communities over time. Habermas argued that the rise of newspapers, novels, and other publications raised public awareness and education, as well as introduced them to critical viewpoints they may not otherwise have been exposed to. This intellectual shift spurred individuals to develop public reason, akin to Kant's practical reason, whereby individuals refined their ideas and realized new ones via discussions within public forums; the media provided both content and venue for public reasoning. And though it hinted at a more democratic canon (as long as you could get people to agree with you, your views were considered) than Kant's a priori principles would allow, Habermas' view of knowledge was still hierarchical and top-down in nature; objective knowledge was a product of deliberation amongst educated individuals. Indeed, Habermasian public reason held headquarters in new coffeehouses and pubs, maintaining a sense of elitism; who really had the luxury time to read and argue about art criticism in the 18th century?

In terms of liberal-democratic theory, the more informed a citizenry is, the more fruitful the democracy; as a democracy is rule of the people by the people, the most well-run democracy is the product of people having the knowledge and wisdom with which to use public reason to arrive at the best form of governance. The media is a means by which to distribute information to the masses as well as conduct debate over public issues. Thus, the more access citizens have to diverse media sources as well as mediated outlets by which they can express their own voices, the more healthy the democracy will be.

When I first began developing the actual argument of my thesis, I focused identifying the ways web 2.0 would affect the way the media operates within a democracy. Namely, I studied ways in which the internet has made more information accessible to individuals, from the proliferation of news sources thanks to e-magazines and the blogosphere to the advent of whistleblowing websites like Wikileaks to Wikipedia, the first attempt to document the knowledge of the entire human race instead of just its scientific and academic elite.

It was this last point that caused me to stop in my tracks. I realized that liberal-democratic theory is contingent upon the liberal conception of knowledge - the canon, if you will. The scholars I had been reading were all very optimistic about the internet's capability of transmitting the intellectual fruits of the academic elite to all corners of the globe. Yet this model did not seem to fit the Web 2.0 technologies I was studying, which allowed any non-expert with a keyboard to promote their own beliefs on the web and, in doing so, threw into question the nature of knowledge and how it is derived.

Wikipedia is a perfect example of this departure. I had previously conceived of Wikipedia as a project that could one day yield a comprehensive survey of human knowledge, always edging towards completion. Yet the "truth" that Wikipedia has delivered is not objective knowledge at all.

If there is anything that globalized communications has taught us, it's that the world - and the ways in which people see and categorize the world - are vastly more complex and diverse than we imagined. Postmodernism has by and large rejected the Kantian conception of objective knowledge; as our awareness of other cultures and ideals grows, so does the sentiment that knowledge is subjective and often relative to those

cultures. Of course, some knowlege is more objective than other knowledge - the findings of the scientific and academic communities are often more broadly accepted than, say, political and social views. But this knowledge is still the result of deliberation within these communities and between these communities and the general public. Knowledge is not a decree; it is a conversation. Wikipedia is a constant work in progress; its entries are always being revised and added to as new events arise and as new members join to express their views. But this speaks to a critical aspect of the nature of knowledge. Wikipedia entries are always changing because the way we see the world is always changing because the world is always changing. If everything is in a constant state of flux, then how can there be objective knowledge?

Web 2.0 has illuminated this phenomenon in many ways. Wikipedia is a particularly interesting case study, because it provides a way for these conversations to be recorded and preserved in the form of Wikipedia edit histories and the forums that house debate over said edits. It has become a primary battleground for the semantic and cultural wars of our generation. It allows individuals from a variety of cultures to edit articles, and observing which types of opinions come from different types of backgrounds illuminates the cultural differences in opinions of public issues. Case in point: compare the Wikipedia article on Cuba written in English to the one written in Spanish - they have vastly different approaches. When we can clearly delineate the different aspects of a cultural conflict, we can better understand its nature and thus have a better idea of how to resolve the conflict - or at least reach a compromise.

Web 2.0 has ushered in the era of hyperconnectivity. For the first time in the history of civilization, mediated communications has fallen completely out of power

structure's control. The human network forged by the internet and other new media has certainly been utilized by governments, corporations, and other authorities, but their attempts to regulate it have been futile. Even the Chinese government has admitted that their "Great Firewall" is ultimately useless in the face of the vast loopholes the internet - and its army of hackers - have to offer. Until now, knowledge has mainly been transmitted via one-way media - that is, it has been broadcast from a centralized source to the general public via mediums such as radio and television. But today, Web 2.0's promotion of user-created content has forged two-way media for information transmission - instead of coming from a centralized source generally controlled by the elite, a hierarchical structure of knowledge, information comes from and travels to millions of different sources. Certain discourses which were once privileged under one-way media are not so privileged anymore. The intellectual hierarchy which was once vertical is now horizontal; different information nodes are interconnected via new media, and the entire structure is in constant flux. To use Deleuze and Guittari's terminology, this is a rhysomatic thinking.

While I do not mean to suggest that these musings undermine the project of my thesis by rendering our current understanding of truth obsolete – after all, many issues concerning the news are grounded in real world action that is well documented – I believe that recognizing the subjectivity inherent in the transmission of information will become more widely recognized as we continue to expand our global network. Will the continued use of Web 2.0 technologies bring this new conception of knowledge into our worldviews? And if so, what does that mean for our conception of democracy? I think I'll save these questions for my Ph.D.

Works Cited

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of
        Nationalism.   2nd. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

Barnes, Fred. "The Most Popular Governor," The Weekly Standard 16 Jun 2007. Web.
        16 Sept 2008.
<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/013/851orcjq.asp?pg
=1>.

Barlow, Aaron. Blogging America: The New Public Sphere. Westport, CT: Praeger,
        2008. Print.

BBC News, "Saddam Hussein Executed in Iraq." BBC News: Middle East. 30 Dec
        2006. BBC News. 10 Aug 2008 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/
        6218485.stm>.

Bolstad. Erika. "All Abuzz About Palin," Anchorage Daily News 09 Mar 2008. ADN.
        Web.15 Sep   2008. <http://www.adn.com/front/story/339587.html)>.

Briggs, Asa, and Peter Burke. A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the
        Internet. 2nd. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007. Print.

Brown, Floyd and Mary Beth. "Daily Kos Founder Enjoys Celebrity Status while
        Helping Obama."   Townhall. 24 Jul 2008. Townhall. 26 Aug 2008
        <http://townhall.com/columnists/FloydandMaryBethBrown/2008/07/24/daily
        kos_founder_enjoys_celebrity_status_while_helping_obama>.

Croteau, David, and William Hoynes. The Business of Media: Corporate Media and
        the Public Interest.   Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2001. Print.

Curran, J. "Rethinking Media and Democracy." Mass Media and Society. Ed.. J. Curran
and M Gurevitch. London: Arnold, 2000. Print.

Eveland, William P., and Sharon Dunwoody. "User Control and Structural
        Isomorphism or   Disorientation and Cognitive Load? Learning From the
        Web Versus Print." Communication Research Vol 28 No 1(2001): 48-78.
        Print.

Fitts, Alexis. "On a Mission on the Blog," The Colorado Springs Gazette 13 Jun 2008.
        BNET. Web.28   Sep 2008.
        <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4191/is_20080613/ai_n27938598>.

Flew, Terry. New Media: An Introduction. 3rd. Melbourne: Oxford University Press,
        2008. Print.

Graber, Doris, Denis McQuail and Pippa Norris. "Introduction: Political Communication in a Democracy." The Politics of News, the News of Politics. Ed. . Doris Graber, Denis McQuail, Pippa Norris. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1998. Print.

Greenemeier, Larry, and Gaudin, Sharon. "Amid the Rush to Web 2.0, Some Words of Warning." InformationWeek May 28, 2007. 26 May 2007. 10 Sep 2009.

Habermas, Jurgen. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere : An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989. Print.

Hayes, Arthur S.. Press Critics are the Fifth Estate: Media Watchdogs in America. 1st. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008. Print.

Herman, Edward, and Robert McChesney. The Global Media: The Missionaries of Global Capitalism. 1st. New York: Cassell, Print.

Hume, Ellen. "Freedom of the Press." EJournal December 2005Dec 2005 Web.27 Oct 2008. <http://www.ellenhume.com/articles/freedom.htm>.

Internet World Stats, "World Internet Usage and Population." Internet Usage Statistics. 31 Mar 2009. Miniwatts Marketing Group, Nielsen Online. 14 Apr 2009 <http://www.internetworldstats.com/ stats.htm>.

Johnson. Peter. "Amanpour: CNN Practiced Self-Censorship," USA Today 14 Sep 2003. Web.30 Oct 2008. <http://www.usatoday.com/life/columnist/mediamix/2003-09-14-media-mix_x.htm>.

Kellner, Douglas. "New Technologies, TechnoCities, and the Prospects for Democratization." Illuminations. Jul 1997. Illuminations. 12 Jun 2008 <http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell25.htm>.

Klinenberg, Eric. Fighting For Air: The Battle to Control America's Media. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007. Print.

Krimsky, George. "The Role of the Media in a Democracy." A Free Press: Rights and Responsibilities. 24 Jun 1997. United States Information Agency. 10 Jan 2009 <http://usinfo.org/media/press/essay3.htm>.

Labaton, Stephen. "Deregulating the Media: The Overview; Regulators Ease Rules Governing Media Ownership," New York Times 03 Jun 2003. New York Times. Web. 14 Nov 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/03/business/deregulating-media-overview- regulators-ease-rules- governing-media-ownership.html>.

Lessig , Lawrence . Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity . New York: Penguin Press , 2004. Print.

Lutz, Donald S.. Principles of Constitutional Design. Cambridge: Cambridge
        University Press, 2006. Print.

Makower, Joel. "Web 2.0 and the New Corporate Watchdogging." Huffington Post 24
        Jan 2006 Web.14   Apr 2009. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joel-
        makower/web-20-and-the-new-corpo_b_14399.html>.

Mayer. Jane. "The Insiders: How John McCain Came to Pick Sarah Palin," The New
        Yorker 27 Oct   2008. Web.14 Sep 2008.
        <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/10/27/081027fa_fact_mayer?
        printable=true>.

McNair, Brian. Cultural Chaos: Journalism, News and Power in a Globalized World.
        1st. London: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Moynihan. Colin. "City Subpeonas Creator of Text Messaging Code," New York
        Times 30 Mar 2008.   Web.23 Oct 2008.
        <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/30/nyregion/30text.html

Noah, Timothy. "Sarah Palin, Web Invention." Slate 29 Aug 2008 Web. 14 Sept 2008.
        <http://www.slate.com/id/2198949/)>.

Neuman, W. Russell. "The Global Impact of New Technologies." The Politics of
        News, the News of   Politics. Ed. . Doris Graber, Denis McQuail, Pippa Norris.
Washington DC: Congressional   Quarterly, 1998. Print.

O'Reilly, Timothy. "Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of
        Software." *What   Is Web 2.0?*. 30 Sep 2005. O'Reilly. 23 Nov 2008

Picard, Robert G. . "Media Concentration, Economics, and Regulation." The Politics
        of News, the   News of Politics. Ed. . Doris Graber, Denis McQuail, Pippa
        Norris. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1998. Print.

Rich. Frank. "Hillary's St. Patrick's Day Massacre," New York Times 30 Mar 2008.
        Web.30 Sep 2008.
        <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/30/opinion/30rich.html?scp=2&>.

Rutenberg, Jim, and Zeleny, Jeff. "A Delegator, Obama Picks When to Take Reins,"
        New York Times 16 Jun 2008. Web.24 Sep 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/
        2008/06/16/us/politics/16manage.html?_r=1&scp=7&sq=zeleny
        %20rutenberg&st=cse>.

Ryan, Jenny. "A History of Mediating Communications Technologies." The Virtual
        Campfire: An Ethnography of Online Social Networking. 15 May 2008. The
        Virtual Campfire. 12 Feb 2009

Schumpeter, Joseph A.. Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy. 2nd. New York:
	Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008. Print.

Scott, Ben. "The Politics and Policy of Media Ownership." The American University
	Law Review Apr(2004): 645-677. Print.

Shah, Anup. "Media Conglomerates, Mergers, Concentration of Ownership." Social,
	Political, Economic, and Environmental Issues that Affect Us All. . 02
	Jan 2009. Global Issues. 14 Oct 2009
	<http://www.globalissues.org/article/159/media-conglomerates-mergers-
	concentration-of-ownership>.

Shapiro, Bruce. "Rotten Banana." Media Circus. 08 Jul 1998. Salon. 24 Oct 2008
	<http://www.salon.com/media/1998/07/08media.html>.

Shirky, Clay. Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without
	Organizations. 1st. New York: Penguin Press, 2008. Print.

Singel, Ryan. "Sensitive Guantanamo Bay Manual Leaked Through Wiki Site." Wired
	14 Nov 2007 Web.13 Apr 2009.
	<http://www.wired.com/politics/onlinerights/news/2007/11/gitmo>.

Soon, Tan Liang. "Flexible Learning Environment." A Day in the Life of Web 2.0. 21
	Mar 2007. 27 Apr 2008 <http://fletls.blogspot.com/2007/03/day-in-life-of-
	web-20.html>.

Stodden, Victoria. "Cass Sunstein and Yochai Benkler at MIT - Our Digitized World:
	The Good, the Bad, the Ugly." [Weblog Internet and Democracy Blog] 14 Apr
	2008. Internet and Democracy Project. Web. 27 Oct 2008.
	<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/idblog/2008/04/14/cass-sunstein-and- yochai-
benkler-at-mit-our-digitized-world-the-goo/>.

Sunstein, Cass R.. Republic.com 2.0. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
	Print.

Sutton, Jane. "Guantanamo Operating Manual Posted on Internet." Reuters News. 14
	Nov 2007. Reuters. 13 Apr 2008
	<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSN1424207020071114?
	pageNumber=1>.

StopBigMedia. "What's At Stake." Stop Big Media. 14 Mar 2008 . Free Press. 13 Dec
	2009 <http://stopbigmedia.com/ =atstake>.

Strickland, Jonathan. "Is There a Web 1.0? ." How Stuff Works. Discovery. 10 Jan
	2009

Thompson, John. The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media. Palo
      Alto, CA: Stanford   `University Press, 1995. Print

Wikileaks. "Wikileaks: About." 23 Nov 2008. Wikileaks.org. 10 Apr 2009 <
      http://wikileaks.org/>.

Zetter, Kim. "Cayman Islands Bank Gets Wikileaks Taken Offline in U.S.." Wired 18
      Feb 2008 Web.13   Sep 2009.
      <http://blog.wired.com/27bstroke6/2008/02/cayman-island-b.html>.

Zolo, Danilo. Democracy and Complexity: A Realistic Approach. 1st. University
      Park, PA: PSU Press, 1992. Print.