

*Topic presentation:*

# Shared Values, Clashing Goals: Journalism and Open Government

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## News and Information as Digital Media Come of Age

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# Article Overview

*News and Information as Digital Media Come of Age* by Persephone Miel and Robert Faris

- Changes in the media with the development of online sources
- Redefining the concept of news
- A lot of new players in journalism (bloggers)

*Shared Values, Clashing Goals: Journalism and Open Government* by Sarah Cohen

- Investigative reporting relies on publicly released government data
- Data may not be accurate, which would produce incorrect findings



# Obstacles

1. Lower prevalence of traditional print media
2. Online media sources do not appropriately fill in the gaps of traditional media
3. Many popular online sources for news are neither thorough nor reliable
4. Certain populations and groups are underrepresented in the news media
5. Types of journalism do not have sustainable models in the online media environment
6. Lack of knowledge about how distribution of news affects the public



# Reporting

## *Accidental Journalists*

- “Being at the right place at the right time”
- Limited to extraordinary events: weather and accidents

## *Activist Media and Almost-Journalists*

- Media created by nonprofit organizations is especially powerful in conflict zones and other areas uncovered by traditional news agencies

## *Citizen Journalism*

- It is difficult to recruit amateur reporters to work with no pay on time consuming stories
- Using volunteers that select their topics results in a material of lower quality
- A hybrid approach can result in a brief coverage of fast-breaking events, but the detailed reporting is left for the traditional media



# Reporting (cont'd)

## *Crowdsourcing*

- Volunteers can be professionals/amateurs; large/small entities using simple or sophisticated technologies
- Challenges:
  1. How to divide the reporting and assign the small tasks; how to motivate the public to volunteer
  2. It is hard to ensure the objectivity of the volunteers such that their views will not skew the results

## *New Genres: Multimedia, Multiplatform, Interactive*

- Though they are becoming ubiquitous on the web, these are still an experimental setting for the traditional news rooms
- These new formats can present better certain types of news (that do not fit the traditional “story” mold), but journalists need to learn how to take advantage of them



# Target Audiences

## *Hyperlocal*

- Focus on issues within small communities
- Goal is to be sustained by the local district
- Many challenges to be successful

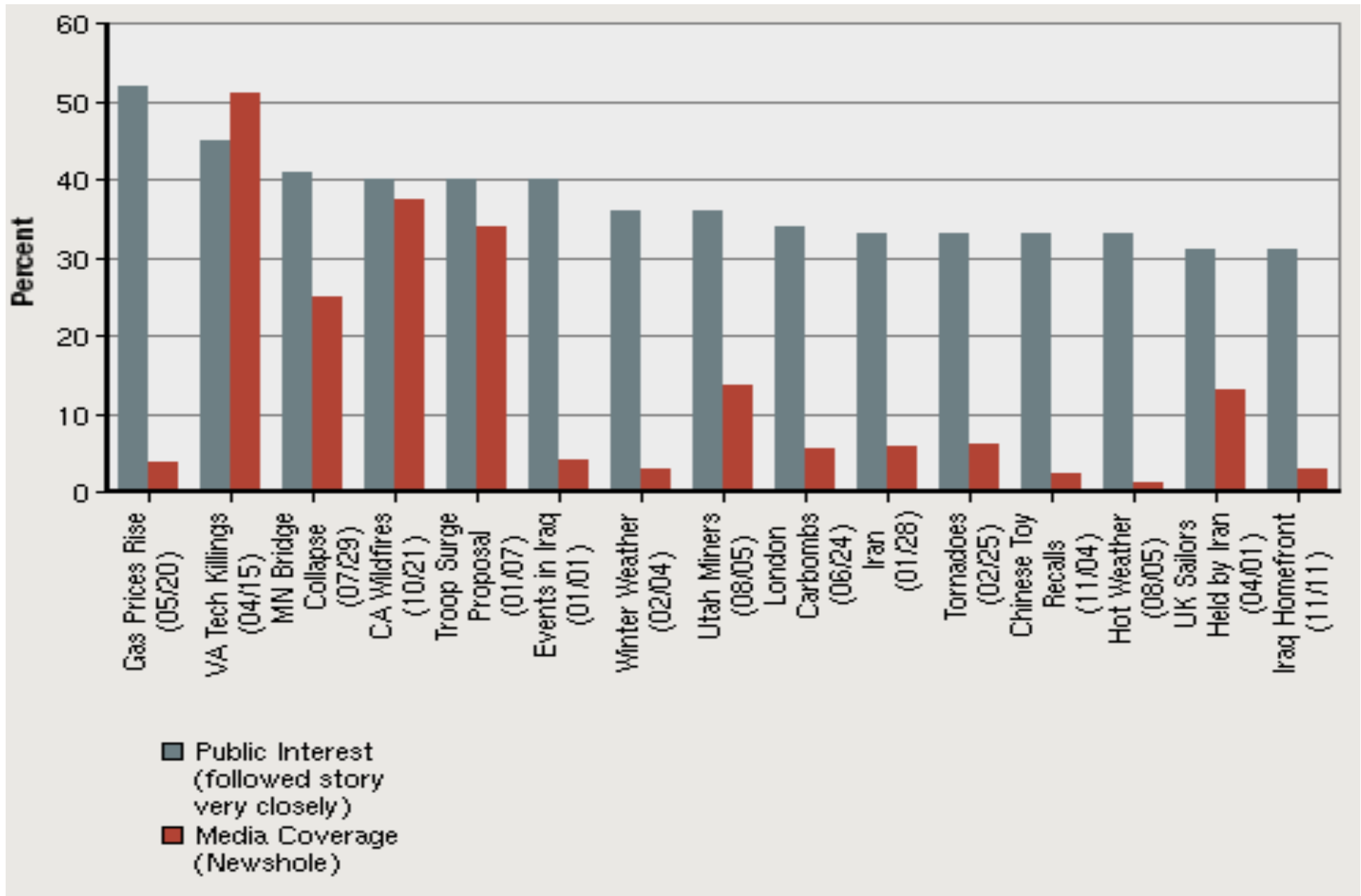
## *Highly Specific Niches*

- Technology
- Partisan politics

Audiences are now more connected by interests and backgrounds as opposed to geography.



# Public Interest and Media Coverage



# Redefining Editors

Traditional editors' decisions impact the entire audience

- Mostly involves revising journalists' articles

New Types of Editors:

- Aggregation of legacy media
- Search engines
- Crowd - large groups
- Network - interactive way of receiving news

The role of an editor is no longer static and generalized for the entire audience





# New Challenges

- Serious journalistic investigations and comprehensive news gathering are difficult with an all-volunteer staff
- News credibility derives from the author's and publisher's accreditation
- Due to ad-based business model editorial decisions can be distorted in favor of "what the public wants", instead of "what the public needs"
- Journalism's function as an educator and democracy watchdog
- Nonprofit journalism might be a solution but most promising seams to be collective mechanisms that take advantage of both experienced journalists and engaged volunteers



# Credibility

With a higher number of sources available from a more diverse group, validation of the information becomes increasingly difficult

Standards of Verifying Articles:

1. Trust between the audience and the author
2. Referrals to the article from third party sites
3. Public scrutiny - reviews of the article through comments, ratings, etc.



# Data Quality

Investigative journalism now uses publicly released government data to make reports

- Avoid working with activist groups

Issues with Public Data:

- Streetlamp Effect - data may not lead to findings
- Inaccurate
  - USASpending.gov requires workers to enter information into two separate databases
- Privatization of Public Records
  - Information about corporations available to the public



# Conclusions

- The watchdog function of journalism is threatened and the new web-native participatory media are filling only some gaps (certain type of subjects or certain regions)
- Many are not reached by the actual important news due to the new dissemination mediums
- Segments of the population are underrepresented
- There is still little data that can actually show the size of this phenomenon
- Sustainable business models are yet to be developed



# Comments? Project Ideas?



\* <http://georgieflower.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/journalist.gif>

\* <http://ijpc.org/uploads/images/Hat%20with%20Press%20tag.jpg>

# Topics

- How to benefit from crowdsourcing? How to avoid its pitfalls?
- How to give the people what they need to know?
- How to identify and equally represent smaller groups?
- How to bring together the experienced journalists and the power and knowledge of the willing public? What are the challenges?
- How to use the knowledge of the communities for problems that relevant to them? What are the issues?
- The article talks about scenarios that combine traditional and online media, trained and amateur journalism, profit and non-profit journalism. How do you see such scenarios?

