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Constructing a Framework to Enable an Open Source Reinvention of Journalism

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Abstract

This article builds upon open source/open content literature and applications to develop a framework from which academics, citizens, critics, journalists and the media industry can collectively develop a sustainable model or models to save quality journalism — possibly by reinventing journalism as it has traditionally been defined. This article provides that framework, not so much as a theoretical construct, but rather as an annotated checklist to guide those interested in reinventing journalism.

Contents

Introduction

When the *Los Angeles Times* unveiled its *Wikitorial*, an open source experiment in commons–based editorial writing, it was shut down within two days as malicious trolls began to fill it with obscene photos (Shepard, 2005). The editorial page editors apparently didn't understand how commons–based peer production works (Jarvis, 2005). Even a cursory reading of the commons–based literature, such as Yochai Benkler's (2002) "Coase's Penguin", could have predicted its failure. After all, the *Wikitorial* had no defense against malicious or incompetent contributions.

As journalism institutions consider commons–based peer production, known interchangeably as We Media, Open Content, Open Source Journalism, Participatory Journalism, Citizen Journalism and Citizen Media [1], they would be well advised to consider a framework built on the past experiences learned by commons–based peer production in other areas. This article will provide that framework, not so much as a theoretical construct, but rather as an annotated checklist to guide those interested in helping reinvent journalism.

First some context

Clayton M. Christensen's [2] phrase "disruptive technology", aptly describes what is happening to the mainstream news media today. "Products," he wrote "based on disruptive technologies are typically cheaper, simpler, smaller, and, frequently, more convenient to use." The traditional news media models are being disrupted by the likes of Weblogs, craigslist, Google, eBay, and Monster.com (American Press Institute, 2005).

However, the erosion of the mass news media dominance is not something that has suddenly occurred in the last few years. Philip Meyer (2005) has been warning the newspaper industry for years [3] that they were slowly losing audience to niche markets and youth was neither buying nor reading their products. The erosion can be traced back as far as World War II. Nonetheless, the mass media as local monopolies were enormously profitable. With the average profit range hovering around 20 percent, few were making major changes to confront the disruptions [4].

Suddenly though the message that the mainstream media might well be a victim of disruptive technologies was finally being heard loudly and clearly by late 2005. During a six–month period daily circulation at newspapers across the country dropped by 2.6 percent (Seelye, 2005) and during the year more than 2,000 jobs were lost (Fitzgerald, 2005). So many layoffs were announced by major newspapers during one week in September that Steve Lovelady (2005), managing editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review's* CJR Daily blog, would write: "All in all, it has been a bloody week for newspaper journalism. And it's starting to feel as if the bow of the ship is slipping beneath the water."

In the midst of the Judith Miller, Valerie Plame, CIA outing coverage, for which the *New York Times* was being severely criticized by the blogosphere, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr., publisher of the *Times*, would tell critics that these more temporal events are subservient to the digital transition. He said (Auletta, 2005), "My job is simple. My job is to work with ... all of our colleagues and turn this great company, this institution, into something that will flourish in a digital age. I'm going to be judged on that. I'm not going to be judged on this story or that."

Now what?

The economic pressures and the loss of audience have been excellent motivating factors in helping the news media realize that business as usual is not working very well.

Successful experiments in open source, citizen journalism such as South Korea's online *OhmyNews* have also drawn attention. Since it was conceived in 2000, more than 40,000 citizen journalists have written for it, with some writing more than 500 stories each (Yu, 2003; Min, 2005; *OhmyNews*, 2006).

Now adaptations of *OhmyNews* are being experimented with in North America and around the world. Some like *Northwest Voice* in Bakersfield, California, are adaptations affiliated with traditional newspapers and others like *BaristanetNJ* in Essex County, New Jersey, and *H2Otown* in Watertown, Massachusetts are tiny local start–ups serving their own small communities (*Northwest Voice*, 2006; *BaristanetNJ*, 2006; *H2Otown*, 2006).

If traditional news operations are standardized in their format and delivery systems, no such formulas as yet have evolved in the open content, citizen media movement. One site monitoring online journalism (*CyberJournalist.net*, 2006) counted almost 70 experiments, but they were being formed so quickly that even it has trouble keeping an accurate count.

Since journalism has never been practiced like this before, there is a lot of trial and error, and some experiments will work, others will fail. Dan Gillmor (2004), who literally wrote the book on citizen journalism — entitled *We the media: Grassroots journalism for the people, by the people* — learned just how hard it is to reinvent journalism. *Bayosphere*, his own citizen journalism experiment, faltered within one year. He would write (Gillmor, 2006a in *Bayosphere*), "Citizen journalists need and deserve active collaboration and assistance. They want some direction and a framework, including a clear understanding of what the site's purpose is and what tasks are required. (I didn't do nearly a good enough job in this area.)"

Just as with the *Los Angeles Times's Wikitorial* failure, the *Bayosphere's* poor showing could have been predicted by a close reading of the open source software and commons–based peer production literature. Beneath what might look like an open environment there usually is structure and someone with a vision actively providing guidance.

The open source and commons–based peer production literature provides enough clues to begin a framework or at least an annotated checklist to help all entities from individuals to large organizations develop constructs to reinvent journalism. Although they are listed here in numerical order, they are amorphous and can be mixed and matched to suit each individual case. As we will see below, one person trying to devise a big idea individually is usually no match for collective thought. So think of this as a release 1.0, a kernel of an idea, which can, and should be expanded upon.

Step 1 — Have an internal attitude check

The mainstream news media, as discussed above, are becoming victims of new disruptive technologies. Many of the experiments are aimed at getting audiences involved, moving from a lecture to a conversational model. The spirit of these experiments is captured by Gilllmor [5]:

> Instead of lecturing our audiences, let's ask for their help and offer ours. We can do great things together, and we should.

Yet getting substantial newsroom cooperation will be no easy task. Newsrooms, according to a Readership Institute (2000) study, operate largely in an aggressive/defensive mode. Not a great formula for welcoming change. The newsroom personnel have to see the larger picture. They have to dump yesterday's assumptions and look at today's realities. As Kevin Kelly (2005) writes in *Wired*:

> Everything media experts knew about audiences — and they knew a lot — confirmed the focus group belief that audiences would never get off their butts and start making their own entertainment. Everyone knew writing and reading were dead; music was too much trouble to make when you could sit back and listen; video production was simply out of reach of

amateurs. Blogs and other participant media would never happen, or if they happened they would not draw an audience, or if they drew an audience they would not matter. What a shock, then, to witness the near–instantaneous rise of 50 million blogs, with a new one appearing every two seconds.

Furthermore, newsroom skeptics have to understand the potential altruistic nature of audiences. Benkler (2004) points out that people share the very essence of life like sperm and blood with people they will never meet. They carpool with complete strangers and share their computers for scientific investigations. "Anyone," Benkler [6] writes, "who sits in a New York City playground can only marvel at the paradoxical phenomenon of Wall Street traders admonishing their children to 'share nicely,' and will appreciate our deep cultural commitment to sharing some of our private, rival possessions ... ."

The literature is rich and the results are everywhere that volunteers, hackers in the good sense of the word, are collectively able to build software programs that rival or are better than those produced by proprietary operations (Benkler, 2002; Raymond, 1998). Much of it is just intuitive. Ten carpenters can build a house faster than one, but only if certain conditions are met. They need to be motivated, they need a plan of action, and they need certain skill sets. Take away any of those elements and the end result could be another *Wikitorial* or *Bayosphere* gone bad.

Step 2 — Draw an ecosystem

Peter Hanappe (2005) while writing about open source music, notes that it is important for one to analysis the full "ecosystem" including all the exchanges and interactions among the authors, reviewers, audiences, producers and distributors. And so it should be wise for each news media company to try to determine its own ecosystem. Some newsrooms are already familiar with civic mapping, where they actually do a schematic drawing of their communities, including whom is in charge and how groups interact (Schaffer, 2002). The ecosystem might be put online as a visual representation for the public to see. Everyone could add new groups and subgroups, add comments about groups, and even move the groupings around to get a fuller understanding of the ecosystem's dynamics. Beth Simone Noveck (2005) argues that these visual representations, aided by technology already present in online community building games, produce new possibilities for getting citizens involved in deliberative exercises.

Step 3 — How free Is free, how open is open? Do a philosophy, mission check

Every news operation will have its own culture, philosophy and mission. In the past, for example, some newsrooms opted for a public journalism approach to newsgathering, which meant, in part, they worked with audiences as citizens, who wanted to solve problems, and not just as consumers. Other newsrooms wanted to remain aloof professional gatekeepers, who decided what is the news, then reported it and let the masses cipher it and use it as they may. However, the new technologies have even changed the dynamics of basic philosophies as the public is storming the gates and forcing former gatekeepers to rethink their roles (Witt, 2004).

The open source software movement grew with competing philosophies, which have similarities to the philosophies emerging within the We Media, open content movement. Marianne van den Boomen and Mirko Tobias Schäfer [7] compare the early open software pioneers' philosophies. For Richard Stallman, founder of the Free Software Foundation: "Free software is not about money, but about principles. The four principles of freedom include: the freedom to use, the freedom to redistribute copies (either gratis or for a fee), the freedom to modify, and the freedom to distribute modified versions without needing to ask for anyone's permission." van den Boomen and Schäfer

add, "Anyone who uses the term 'open source' instead of 'free software' is suspect in Stallman's eyes."

On the other hand, Eric Raymond, author of *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* and another high credibility hacker [8], "can be seen as Stallman's opponent in the open–source paradigm battle. His focus on open source is not ethical but financial ... So it is necessary to get rid of the notion of 'free software', as this is too ideological and anti–business."

Finally there is Linus Torvalds, who beginning with a kernel, got volunteers from around the world to write the code for the successful Linux operating system. van den Boomen and Schäfer [9] write:

> Stallman, the ethical purist; Raymond, the libertarian business–model organiser, and Torvalds, the pragmatic hacker and benevolent leader. All three are necessary to keep the open–source actor network alive and kicking, each enlisting his own allies (sometimes overlapping with the others), and each transforming and speaking for different flavours of open–source products, whether they be pure or hybrids of 'free' and 'non–free' software.

In new open content journalism paradigms, some want it all to be bottom up, community–oriented journalism. Their first mission is to serve the public then worry about the profits. Others will demand that financial stability take precedence and then address the other pieces. Others will want a pragmatic mix of both. The BBC is already moving toward a more free approach, coming closer to Stallman's four principles of free software. In December, 2005, it began a trial experiment of opening its archives for the first time for the U.K. public. Its Web site (BBC, 2006) states: "You are welcome to download the clips, watch them, and use them to create something unique."

In the United States, the Public Broadcasting Service's Digital Future Initiative report (Barksdale and Hundt, 2005), advises PBS to also open its extensive archives. However, Jacoba "Coby" Atlas (2005), PBS' co–chief program executive, says "there are many obstacles ... that are often not in our control or our producers' control — including copyright issues, Guild issues, third–party rights issues, etc. All of this has to be sorted out before you can provide content anywhere, anytime for free."

Of course, it is easier for a non–profit to give away its content than it would be for a for–profit entity. Still choices can be made, and thanks to the work of people like Lawrence Lessig in the copyleft movement, an individual or an organization has choices. For example, the Creative Commons Web site (at http://creativecommons.org/) says it, "offers a flexible range of protections and freedoms for authors and artists. We have built upon the 'all rights reserved' of traditional copyright to create a voluntary 'some rights reserved' copyright." So each new organization must decide how much it wants to be keep proprietary and how much it wants to make fully available to the general public or, at least, to its open source contributors so they can remix or build upon the content for their own use or for the use of the news entity. Of course, those questions of how open and how free a news entity will be are at the very heart of reinventing journalism.

Step 4 — Come to terms with objectivity and other professional journalism ethics

Just about 40 years ago James Carey [10] wrote that in the latter part of the nineteenth century reporters were trained to be objective and,

> In this role they principally use not intellectual skill as critics, interpreters, and contemporary historians but technical skill at writing, a capacity to translate the specialized language and purposes of government, science, art, medicine, finance into an idiom that can be understood by broader, more amorphous, less educated audiences.

Carey [11] continues that the journalists received a technical education that stressed objectivity. However, he writes, as

> ... reporters mediate between the audience and sources, they are pulled in two directions: serving the interests of the

sources or the interests of the audience, which are rarely identical. Often, if not usually, reporters develop contempt for both parties they serve: the audience because it is so often apathetic and uninterested, the source because it is so often dishonest.

But in the end Carey [12] believed that since the reporters were closer to their sources than their audiences, they turned their sources into their "ultimate audience," and became more "allied structurally if not sympathetically with the persons and institutions," about which they reported.

Carey's expanded arguments were among the seeds of the public journalism movement [13], which in part asked reporters to work closer with their audiences and to dig deeper into communities (Public Journalism Network, 2003). It was a controversial movement, and this is not the place to revisit those arguments. However it is the place to remind newsrooms that getting closer to audiences, if that is a route that will be taken, will change the dynamics of reporting. The consequences of those new relationships, for good and bad, should be considered as a re–invented journalism takes place.

Indeed, they are being considered and debated. Samuel Freedman (2006), a professor of journalism at Columbia University, reflecting on the citizen journalism movement, wrote: "To treat an amateur as equally credible as a professional, to congratulate the wannabe with the title 'journalist,' is only to further erode the line between raw material and finished product."

In rebuttal Gillmor (2006b) wrote: "Citizen journalism and professional journalism are not mutually exclusive concepts. We're actually heading toward an ecosystem that will support a variety of journalistic endeavours."

Should the citizens be treated as journalists or as Freedman advocates as mere producers of raw material which is later turned into finished journalistic projects? Or will the citizen journalists provide the bulk of the news as they do at *OhmyNews* in South Korea? Or as not to confuse the lines between professional and amateur should subsidiaries like *Northwest Voice*, which was developed as an independent subsidiary of the larger mainstream Bakersfield *Californian*, be developed? What will the ethical code look like for a news organization that begins to lower its gates and allows an open content model? What will be the legal obligations?

Step 5 — Determine a citizen involvement model that fits your newsroom

One model for getting outsiders to help contribute to the news media has been in place for decades. A reporter gets a story idea, she does some preliminary research and eventually gets on the phone and begins to interview people. Some interviewees may be part of the news audience, some reliable sources, and some are complete strangers, but as any reporter knows the vast majority are willing to share their time and information. None are paid, indeed, pocketbook journalism is considered unethical by reputable journalism enterprises. The interviewees' motivations differ. Some share their time and expertise out of civic duty; public relations officers because its part of their job; consultants or academics because it enhances their reputation; hobbyists out of passion for the subject matter; social activists out of passion for a cause and some just for the hedonistic pleasure of seeing themselves in the paper or on TV or heard on radio. In the free and open source software literature [14] similar motivational words recur: reputation, career benefits, fun, community and recognition.

In addition for some audience members there is the sheer pleasure of creating, which allows the journalistic operation to ask these citizens to participate in content development. Money may play a part, but as with the software hackers, money is not always the necessary element. Benkler's (2004) main premise is that "sharing nicely" is so prevalent that it should have a place in economic theory. Linus Torvalds (1998), the founder and master motivator behind Linux open software, said in an interview about developers, "The first consideration for anybody should really be whether you'd like to do it even if you got nothing at all back. And if you answer 'yes' to that question, then it is probably a project you'd enjoy doing, and one where concerns like how much you'd get out of it personally really are rather secondary."

Since we mentioned Linux it is important to remember when each version of the program was released, two groups played very important parts. The program users discovered bugs or had opinions on how the program could be improved to meet their individual

needs. Then the hackers rewrote the code to both fix the problems or to meet the user needs. Often, but not always, the users and the hackers were one in the same. Having users involved was critical to making a robust program. Torvalds (1998) said, "The thing that makes 'real users' so interesting is that they have so different usage patterns from most developers, which is why a product that is *solely* targeted to developers usually lacks a certain stability and finish."

An enduring criticism is that reporters and editors write for other reporters and editors and not for the audience — or the users. An open source content model should consider serving both users and possible content producers with the aim of producing a more robust product.

Finally, von Hippel [15] demonstrates that, "It is becoming progressively easier for many users to get precisely what they want by designing it for themselves," adding [16], "In the case of information products, users have the possibility of largely or completely doing without the services of manufacturers."

Individual users with just a little understanding of RSS feeds and other simple to use technology or ready–made platforms can have build their own customized online news pages. News operations can ignore what these individual innovators are doing, or they can solicit ideas for product improvement from them or provide toolkits to help the users customize content. Other industry manufacturers are doing so with positive results, in part because active users suggest changes that meet their needs, and thus are more apt to be grounded in real user needs. von Hippel [17] writes, "Given access to a user–developed prototype, manufacturers no longer need to understand users' needs very accurately and richly. Instead they have the much easier task of replicating the function of user prototypes that users have already demonstrated are responsive to their needs."

Step 6 — Determine citizen contribution size and effort — Sharing Nicely meets citizen journalism

As mentioned earlier there is no agreed upon terminology in the We Media, open source, open content, citizen journalism, citizen media world. However, in this new interactive world where many of the news media are making the online transition from one–to–many to a many–to–many model, I would suggest considering two overreaching categories. The one is the open content, citizen journalism model, but the other is the Sharing–Nicely model, a term which I borrow from and which is discussed in great length by Benkler (2004). They can be the same thing, but if you look at the open source software literature, the hackers, the really hard workers, were a fairly discrete group–one authoritative survey [18] indicates that 90 percent were males under 35 years old and only one percent were women — and most projects [19] were worked on by a rather small cadre of people. On the other hand, as Benkler makes clear, almost everyone shares nicely. They give blood, sperm, help friends move, carpool, allow scientists to share their home computers when idle, give directions, share toys, cook elaborate meals for friends, and, I would add, spend time talking to the media. Given the right conditions, people will share. However, one consideration is contribution size — what's being asked of them. A stranger asking directions to a bus stop will get a lot more positive responses than one asking for a ride downtown. Although, given the right conditions either could be fulfilled, the former has the bigger chance of fulfillment.

Benkler [20] writes, "... when a project of any size is broken up into little pieces, each of which can be performed by an individual in a short amount of time, the motivation to get any given individual to contribute need only be very small. This suggests that peer production will thrive where projects have three characteristics ..." 1.) "They must be modular. That is, they must be divisible into components, or modules, each of which can be produced independently of the production of the others. This enables production to be incremental and asynchronous, pooling the efforts of different people, with different capabilities, who are available at different times." 2.) "For a peer production process to pool successfully a relatively large number of contributors, the modules should be predominately fine–grained, or small size. This allows the project to capture contributions from large numbers of contributors whose motivation levels will not sustain anything more than small efforts toward the project ... In addition, a project will likely be more efficient if it can accommodate variously sized contributions. Heterogeneous granularity will allow people with different levels of motivation to collaborate by making smaller — or larger–grained contributions consistent with their levels of motivation." 3.) "... a successful peer production enterprise must have low–cost

integration, which includes both quality control over the modules and a mechanism for integrating the contributions into the finished product," while defending "itself against incompetent or malicious contributors."

Benkler's "heterogeneous granularity" could help the news media define their projects. Sharing Nicely might include the fine–grained contributions, like answering an occasional e–mail, while the large–grained contributions, which demand more time and higher motivation might be closer to a citizen journalism model, which could mean researching, reporting and writing a story for a publication or producing one for broadcast.

Minnesota Public Radio's Public Insight Journalism project fits the more finely grained Sharing Nicely paradigm. People volunteer to share information with reporters and editors on all sorts of topics, related to their hobbies, jobs, war experiences or whatever. With some 13,000 people already participating, it has a deep pool from which to work with each individual giving small time commitments. The Public Insight Journalism Web page (at http://minnesota.publicradio.org/publicinsightjournalism/) which was recently updated initially told the audience, "What you can expect if you sign up: About one e–mail a month asking for your insight on issues in the news. Occasional invitations to small–group meetings and other MPR news–related events. Opportunities to tell MPR what stories are most important to you, your family and your community."

OhmyNews (Yu, 2003), a citizen journalism model, which asks contributors to write stories is much more labor intensive. The modular size is greater, and motivation to contribute is larger. So a newsroom should decide upon the level of commitment it wants — and might receive from its audience. It could be fine grained as with the Public Insight Journalism or more granular as with citizen journalism or it could contain heterogeneous granularity.

Step 7 — Decide who gets invited and who gets excluded

It is called the World Wide Web for a reason. A news organization can decide whether its target audience includes just the folks on Main Street and or the folks on Shum Wan Pier Drive in Hong Kong. Plus there can be interest group boundaries as well. Do we want dog lovers or cat lovers or both? Next, someone must make the decisions on who gets to participate and who does not — that filtering can be a task of the news organization, the audience or they can work together. Remember Gillmor's (2005) mantra: "Instead of lecturing our audiences, let's ask for their help and offer ours. We can do great things together, and we should."

However, people can get quite rude and crude as the *Wikitorial* folks learned at the *Los Angeles Times* and the ombudsman learned at the *Washington Post* (2006), when online commentators screamed a wide array of profanities. Tolerance standards best be in place, decided upon either by the institution itself of by the whole community. There are many filtering possibilities — far too many to cover in total here, but Benkler [21] provides four options for quality controls: 1) a hierarchically managed review as in the Linux open software development; 2) peer review as in Slashdot; 3) norms–based social organization as in Wikipedia; and, 4) aggregation and averaging of redundant contributions as in Mars Clickworks program. The latter works because so many people were involved that malicious contribution and incompetents were easily identified because their input deviated so much from the norm.

Step 8 — Timing

A key lesson from the free and open software movement was one of timing, including when to release a product for public consumption. Raymond (1998) writes:

I believed that the most important software ... needed to be built like cathedrals, carefully crafted by individual wizards or small bands of mages working in splendid isolation, with no beta to be released before its time.

Linus Torvalds's style of development — release early and often, delegate everything you can, be open to the point of promiscuity — came as a surprise. No quiet, reverent cathedral–building here — rather, the Linux community seemed to resemble a great babbling bazaar of differing agendas and approaches ... out of which a coherent and stable system could seemingly emerge only by a succession of miracles.

The fact that this bazaar style seemed to work, and work well, came as a distinct shock.

The news media is experiencing its own paradigm shift. Simon Waldman (*The Australian*, 2005), director of digital publishing at Guardian Newspapers in the United Kingdom, said, "We are getting the whole organisation ready for a digital future," adding, that the newspaper operation in about six years will be 80 percent digital as compared to 20 percent now.

In the past, no story was released before it time. You turned on the nightly news at an appointed hour or got the newspaper first thing in the morning that was produced at an appointed time the night before. Now, news can be retrieved almost immediately, and with new handheld devices, it will be retrievable not only at any time, but at any place.

The Sacramento *Bee* public editor (Acuña, 2006) recently wrote: "With little fanfare, The *Bee* has embarked on the road to its future — a digital, multimedia, interactive, around–the–clock news universe. Everyone knows the final destination. It's the place where newspapers aren't on paper anymore but still provide readers with news and information, and make a profit, too."

That's the Sacramento *Bee's* decision. Other publications might decide on a model that dictates fewer, but more comprehensive stories.

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Step 9 — Transparency

Prior to the open source software movement, as Raymond (1998) made clear, the model to success was to toil secretly and then release the final product. Linux — on the other hand — is open for all to see and for many to alter. Media companies have to decide how much of the inner workings they want the public to see.

CBS News decided to institute its Public Eye (CBS) weblog (at http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/08/30/publiceye/main805566.shtml)

... to bring transparency to the editorial operations of CBS News — transparency that is unprecedented for broadcast and online journalism.

And what, exactly, is transparency? It has several aspects, but most simply it is this: the journalists who make the important editorial decisions at CBS News and CBSNews.com will now be asked to explain and answer questions about those decisions in a public forum.

The Spokane (Washington) *Spokesman–Review* provides a Daily Briefing Weblog (at http://www.spokesmanreview.com/blogs/briefing/) saying:

Each weekday morning and afternoon, the editorial staff of *The Spokesman–Review* meets to discuss that morning's paper and the coverage planned for tomorrow. We'll use this blog to help involve you in that process.

The *Wisconsin State Journal* (Foley, 2006) invites readers to chose one of five possible stories for front page play the next day. If in the past, audience access meant a letter to the editor or contacting an ombudsman, now each organization has a wide range of posssibilities as the model changes from lecture to conversation [22].

Step 10 — Determining an appropriate ownership model

News ownership models run the gamut from private to public to nonprofit. Now, some of the old models might simple have to be scraped. More competitive models need be constructed. Disruptive innovation has that effect. Christensen [23] writes that sometimes, "Creating an independent organization, with a cost structure honed to achieve profitability at the low margins characteristic of most disruptive technologies, is the only viable way for established firms to harness this principle."

An excellent example is the citizen–written *Northwest Voice*, which was developed as a independent subsidiary of the larger mainstream *Bakersfield Californian*. This citizen journalism project does not infringe upon the construct of the established model.

Furthermore ownership structure and perceptions can affect audience levels of participation. Benker [24] writes that if people are perceived to be suckers they are apt to abandon their willingness to share nicely. He uses as an example the early AOL discussion board leaders, all volunteers "left when they began to realize that their contributions were effectively going to increase the value of the company." Indeed, some felt so aggrieved they sued for back wages (Margonelli, 1999). However, as Benkler points out, this is all complicated stuff. He writes [25], "Why academics, for example, are willing to accept the bizarre system in which they contribute to peer review journals for free, sometimes even paying a publication fee, and then have their institutions buy this work back from the printers at exorbitant rates remains a mystery."

Step 11 — Leadership

Old styles of top–down leadership must be reappraised to see if they fit the new open source, collaborative paradigms. Here is insight into how Torvalds (1998), the leader of the Linux project, sees this new world:

> Imagine ten people putting in 1 hour each every day on the project. They put in one hour of work, but because they share the end results they get nine hours of 'other peoples work' for free. It sounds unfair: get nine hours of work for doing one hour. But it obviously is not.

Raymond (1998) writes:

> While cheap Internet was a necessary condition for the Linux model to evolve, I think it was not by itself a sufficient condition. Another vital factor was the development of a leadership style and set of cooperative customs that could allow developers to attract co–developers and get maximum leverage out of the medium ... .

> But what is this leadership style and what are these customs? They cannot be based on power relationships — and even if they could be, leadership by coercion would not produce the results we see ... .

Step 12 — Reporters in here or out there?

When Torvalds got people from around the world to develop the Linux code, he proved that Internet workers could produce great things without coming to the office everyday — or ever. Journalism organizations will have to decide how important bricks and mortar are for them.

Yahoo hired journalist Kevin Sites (see http://hotzone.yahoo.com) to travel globally covering all the world's hot spots. Everything he needs to be a multimedia reporter — a laptop, cell phone, and digital audio, video and still cameras — fit in his backpack. He is a Solo Journalist, a SoJo, with no need for office space. Gannett's *News–Press* in Fort Myers, Florida (Marymont, 2006) is experimenting with mobile journalists or MoJos who spend half their time in the field showing citizens how to produce media. The new technologies mean that reporters as MoJos or SoJos can file print, audio and video content from anywhere. Newsrooms will have to decide if their staffs are better stationed in newsroom offices or in places like barbershops, community centers and other places where their audiences, who also might be their collaborators, congregate.

Step 13 — Experimentation and tolerance for failure

Much has been made of the phenomenal success of the Linux, the open source developed software. However, Noveck (2005) makes clear, "It is easy to launch an open source software development project where the collective mind of dozens of programmers are channeled into a common task, but most of those projects are never completed. In the end, those that do get done are largely the work of a handful of people."

von Hippel [26] reminds us that false starts are not just experienced by the open source software world when he writes: "It is striking that most new products developed and introduced to the market by manufacturers are commercial failures." He argues manufactures which work with what he calls "lead users," those who modify the product to meet their individual needs, will be better informed than manufacturers who rely solely on internally produced predictions.

This means going beyond the traditional focus groups. Remember Kelly (2005) wrote, "Everything media experts knew about audiences — and they knew a lot — confirmed the focus group belief that audiences would never get off their butts and start making their own entertainment." However, if they had paid attention to "lead users," the innovators, they would have, using von Hippel's arguments, had a better understanding of what was coming in the world of commons–based peer production. Today we know that with their blogs, vlogs, and podcasts there are hosts of "lead users" in the world of citizen produced and modified media. The media industry should be looking to them for leadership as well as to their traditional audiences to increase the chances of successful experimentation.

Step 14 — Distribution systems

The days of three national television networks and monopoly newspapers are gone or waning. Distribtuion platorms can include special interactive computer sites, but also mobile phones, PDAs, iPods and all the other gadgets that audiences have or will have access to in the future. However, with those platforms come practical questions about design, information accessibility, and levels of interactivity. With interactivity comes questions of filters for quality control, and perhaps automated trust and ranking system.

In addition to the practical systems considerations, there are philosophical questions too. For example, Noveck (2005) writes, "Far too little attention has been paid in the traditional literature to the impact of technology on the power of groups ... We focus on the individual experience with tools rather than on the 'shared, social meanings'." For Noveck technology goes beyond just e–mailing back and forth or to chat, she wants programs that make it easy for participants to join in collective action as might happen in face–to–face action. Should

newsrooms be the facilitators for these collaborative projects?

Conclusion

It is fitting to quote from Benkler and Raymond, whose essays have helped frame the social and economic impact of the open source software and open content movements. First from Benkler [27]:

> Commons–based peer production presents a fascinating phenomenon that could allow us to tap substantially underutilized reserves of human creative effort. It is of central importance that we not squelch peer production, but that we create the institutional conditions needed for it to flourish.

Eric Raymond (1998) helped many non–believers in the software business see how people, often complete strangers, working together loosely, almost in a bazaar–like atmosphere, were able to produce a better product than the hierarchical workings of the Cathedral. Here are two of his ideas worth taking away from Raymond's essay:

> It's fairly clear that one cannot code from the ground up in bazaar style. One can test, debug and improve in bazaar style, but it would be very hard to originate a project in bazaar mode. Linus didn't try it. I didn't either. Your nascent developer community needs to have something runnable and testable to play with.

In other words, some idea, some concept must be produced with which the open content community can work with. It will be up to those who care about the future of journalism to produce those ideas.

Second and probably more important for this essay's audience, Raymond wrote:

> When you start community–building, what you need to be able to present is a plausible promise. Your program doesn't have to work particularly well. It can be crude, buggy, incomplete, and poorly documented. What it must not fail to do is convince potential co–developers that it can be evolved into something really neat in the foreseeable future.

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Notes

1. They are all based on the dual premises that news media audiences know more than individual journalists and that "commons–based peer production" allows audiences to become more involved in journalism projects, or on a grander scale of improving the quality and

depth of journalism. Although journalists don't commonly use the term "commons–based peer production," Benkler (2002, p. 375) does and it is a useful term to discuss the wide range of peer production from open source software to Wikipedia to Slashdot, all of which are well known examples of commons–based peer production.

2. Christensen, 1997, p. xii, xiv.

3. Philip Meyer made these comments at the conference "A Wake Up Call: Can Quality and Trust Save Journalism?" (9 August 2005), San Antonio. For a more in–depth discussion on this topic see his book *The vanishing newspaper: Saving journalism in the information age* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

4. Media consultant Tim Porter reported at *First Draft* that as late as April, 2005 a show of hands at the American Society of Newspapers Editors (ASNE) annual convention indicated that only a smattering of the vast majority of editors had heard of Craig Newmark and his interactive craigslist, which was siphoning millions of dollars from their classified ad base. Last accessed 20 January 2006 at http://www.timporter.com/firstdraft/archives/000438.html.

5. Gilllmor, 2005, p. 13.

6. Benkler, 2004, p. 305.

7. van den Boomen and Schäfer, 2005, pp. 44–46.

8. van den Boomen and Schäfer, 2005, pp. 46–49.

9. van den Boomen and Schäfer, 2005, pp. 49–50.

10. Carey, 1997, p. 137.

11. Carey, 1997, p. 139.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Rosen, 1999, pp. 67–71.

14. Ghosh, *et al.*, 2002, section 4; Lerner and Tirole, 2005, pp. 102–105; Rossi and Bonaccorsi, 2005.

15. von Hippel, 2005, p. 2.

16. von Hippel, 2005, p. 14.

17. von Hippel, 2005, p. 109.

18. Ghosh, *et al.*, 2002, section 2.1.

19. Noveck, 2005, note 123.

20. Benkler, 2002, pp. 378–381.

21. Benkler, 2002, pp. 441–443.

22. Gillmor, 2004, pp. 14, 132–133.

23. Christensen, 1997,, p.xx.

24. Benker, 2002, pp. 440–441.

25. Benker, 2002, p. 441.

26. von Hippel, 2005, pp.106–109.

27. Benkler, 2002, p. 446.

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Editorial history

Contents **Index**

Constructing a framework to enable an open source reinvention of journalism by Leonard Witt
First Monday, volume 11, number 6 (June 2006),
URL: http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_6/witt/index.html