

Traditional media provide more comprehensive news than citizen media and blogs, researchers find

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COLUMBIA, Mo. -Researchers from the University of Missouri School of Journalism recently completed a comprehensive comparison of citizen journalism sites (news sites and blogs) and traditional media Web sites. They found that despite ongoing reports of financial troubles and cutbacks, legacy media are more comprehensive and more technologically advanced than citizen media and bloggers.

"We found that legacy sites offered almost double the percent of news (89 percent) in comparison with citizen news sites (56 percent) and three times that of blogs (27 percent)," said Margaret Duffy, faculty chair in strategic communication in the Journalism School. "The topic coverage on blogs and citizen new sites is generally narrow and the sourcing is light."

Duffy and Esther Thorson, associate dean for graduate studies at the school, along with Steve Lacy, professor at Michigan State University, and Dan Riffe, professor at the University of North Carolina, analyzed citizen news sites in 47 towns and cities across the United States. They found an average of fewer than two citizen news sites per city. Two-thirds of the sites were blogs, and the other sites contained news content.

"One of the biggest surprises we found was that mainstream [media](#) Web sites were almost as welcoming to citizen participation as citizen journalism sites, and they were far more welcoming than blogs,"

Thorson said. "Many industry professionals hope that citizen sites will democratize news media, but that hope has yet to be realized."

Results from second phase of the two-part study revealed that many of the citizen sites and blogs examined in the first phase had become dormant or disappeared. While some citizen sites and bloggers are doing well, many are struggling to survive and support their efforts, Duffy said.

Other key findings from the report include:

- Blogs were less likely than citizen news sites to permit posting comments or emailing the site.
- The majority of mainstream sites provided rules and policies for contributing stories and photos.
- Blogs and news sites were more likely than legacy media to post links within stories to outside sources. However, citizen sites linked to legacy news sites twice as often as legacy sites linked to citizen sites. Citizen sites used legacy sites as news sources.

More information: The study, "Tracking and Analyzing Community News Models," was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Knight Foundation. It recently was published in the State of the Media 2009 report by the Project for Excellence in Journalism. The study can be viewed by visiting: www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/

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