

uploaded to YouTube or another online host, or situated on its own blog page, the same as a podcast. But unlike the purely audio podcast, the video requires our visual attention and cannot be multitasked like the podcast. Watching a YouTube video while driving is no better than watching television behind the wheel; in either case, and unlike listening to an audio program, the driver's eyes are on a screen and off the road. The world of new new media is all about trade-offs, or pros and cons.

We conclude with three chapters that address elements and issues common to all new new media. The general position of this book is that new new media provide significant, often revolutionary, benefits to we who employ these media for work, play and education. But new new media, like all human tools, can be put to personally and socially destructive purposes, including criminal and lethal actions, and we explore some of these, as well as possible remedies that arise from new new media, in "The Dark Side of New New Media."

This book was conceived in the fall of 2007, when the campaign that elected Barack Obama as president of the United States was already under way. Obama has been called the first "cybergenic" president (Saffo, 2008; but see Levinson, quoted in Zurawik, 2008, for why I think this is a bit of an oversimplification)—or someone who made good on the political promise of the Internet initiated, unsuccessfully, by Howard Dean in 2004—and we look in the chapter on "New New Media and the Election of Barack Obama in 2008" not only to understand what helped elect Obama in 2008 but what will certainly play a significant role in his presidency.

A consideration of the hardware through which new new media operate—how the world at large tweets, reads and writes blogs, watches YouTube and visits MySpace and Facebook—serves as the departing anchor of this book. All media, old and new, are really media within media. We read an article (medium of writing) published in a magazine (medium of the press) that we buy on a newsstand (medium of the newsstand). Similarly, we read or write a blog post (medium of writing) published on a blog (medium of blogging) that we obtain on our laptop or whatever kind of computer (medium of personal computer). Hardware is usually the outermost vehicle, shell or packaging of the communication process—the physical device that we must hold, touch, see, hear or otherwise interact with in order to receive and sometimes send the media of information within (see Levinson, "Digital McLuhan", 1999, for more on media within media).

The iPhone most typifies the new hardware of new new media—a cellphone that provides easy access to all of the Web—but BlackBerrys and other mobile media are doing similar work. I expect that "New New Media" and its updates will be available not only on printed paper but in various forms on the Web, which means that many of you, perhaps most of you, who are now reading these words are doing so through your laptops, Kindles, iPhones and BlackBerrys. (I'm tempted to say "raise your hand now" if that is true.) I certainly hope this book generates discussion on Facebook, Twitter, perhaps Wikipedia... and blogs, which we consider in more detail in the next chapter.

Blogging

BLOGGERS ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "CITIZEN JOURNALISTS," to underline the fact that a blogger need not be a professional journalist to write and publish about the news. But the adjective "citizen" is still insufficient to convey the scope of liberation that blogging—and all new new media—has bestowed upon us. The truth is that one need not be a citizen of this or any particular country, one need not be an adult, one need not have any attribute other than being able to read and write in order to blog. Consider, for example, the following, and bear in mind that, although I am a professor of communication and media studies, I have no professional expertise in politics. I am just a citizen. But, even if I were not...

It was past one in the morning on May 7, 2008. Ninety-nine percent of the vote had finally come in from the Democratic presidential primary in Indiana. Hillary Clinton had won by just 2 percent. A few hours earlier, Barack Obama had won big in North Carolina. I wrote a blog post saying Barack Obama would be the Democratic nominee for president.

I posted it not only on InfiniteRegress.tv—my television review and politics blog—but on my MySpace blog as well. I put up links to it on Facebook, Digg, Fark and Buzzflash. My blog on Amazon automatically posted it via a "feed." A link to my post also automatically appeared on Twitter.

My various "stat counters" reported that thousands of people had read my blog within an hour of its posting.

Just a few years ago, the only possible recipient of my thoughts about such a decisive political development, moments after it had occurred in the middle of the night, would have been my wife. We could have talked about the results in Indiana. I also could have written about them and sent this to any number of online magazines, but my words would not have been automatically posted. Gatekeepers—otherwise known as editors, likely not at work until the next morning—would have needed to approve them.

From its outset, from the very first time that two people spoke, speech has been as easy to produce as to consume. We switch effortlessly from hearing to talking. But speech lacked permanence, and we invented writing to safeguard what our memories might lose. The written word was also almost as easy to produce as to consume—writing well is more difficult than being able to read, but to be literate was and is to be able to write as well as read. As long as the written words remained personal, individual and not mass-produced, the process of writing was as widespread as reading.

The printing press changed all of that. It opened many doors. It made Bibles, reports of Columbus's voyages and scientific treatises readily available to millions of readers. But it ended the equality of consumers and producers, and radically altered the one-to-one ratio in which every reader was also a writer. A sliver of the population contributes what goes into books, newspapers and magazines.

And now blogging has in turn changed and reversed all of that. Although there are still more readers than writers of blogs, any reader can become a writer, either by commenting on someone else's blog or, with just a little more effort, by starting a blog of one's own. Technorati tracked more than 112 million blogs in December 2007.

Although speaking is easier than writing, publishing of writing in digital form—online—requires much less production than online publishing of audio or audio-visual clips of spoken words. In fact, publication of a written blog requires no production at all beyond the writing and initial posting of the writing. Blogging, which has been known by that name, or “weblogging,” since 1997 (McCullagh & Broache, 2007) and has roots in the digital age in “computer conferencing” and message boards that go back at least 15 years prior (Levinson, 1997), thus became the first big player in the new new media revolution.

A Thumbnail History of Electronic Writing

Writing always had some advantages over speaking as a mode of human expression. Not only was writing permanent, in contrast to the instantly fleeting quality of speech, but writing also allowed for greater control of the message by the sender. An angry, very happy or extremely sad speaker can find disguising those emotions difficult in speech. But the same emotions can make no appearance at all in a written document, unless the writer chooses to make those feelings plain. This is one reason why texting surpassed speaking on cellphones in the hands of people under 45 around the world (Nielsen Mobile report, discussed in Technology Expert, 2008).

But after the enormous boost given to the dissemination of the written word by the printing press, the progress of writing in the evolution of media was slow. The telegraph in the 1830s gave the written word the capacity to be sent anywhere in the world—or anywhere connected by wires and cables—instantly. But the requirement of a telegraph operator to make this happen, as well as someone to deliver the

telegram, not only worked against the immediacy of this electronic communication but also made it far more impersonal than written letters. It was one thing writing to your lover in a letter and quite another to utter those words to a telegraph operator.

The telegraph, however, revolutionized news delivery by allowing reporters to file stories instantly with their newspapers. Baron Julius von Reuter started his news service with carrier pigeons, which could convey news more quickly across the English Channel than via boats and rails. The baron's news agency soon came to rely on the telegraph. Its successful descendant was bought by the Thomson Company for \$15.8 billion in 2008 (Associated Press, 2008).

Blogging takes the dissemination of news and opinion one big step beyond the telegraph by allowing “reporters”—that is, people, everyone—to file their stories instantly not with their newspapers but on their blogs and, therein, with the world at large. And because blogs are under the personal editorship of the writer, they can be about anything the writer pleases—unlike the newspaper or magazine.

This personalization or “de-professionalization” of communication is one of the signal characteristics of new new media. It was not until the deployment of the fax in the 1980s, and the advent of email around the same time, that the writer finally reclaimed privacy and control over the written word. But the fax was primarily for one-to-one communication—much like the telegraph. And even emails sent to groups were less than a drop in the bucket in the reach of mass media such as newspapers, radio and television. Blogging combines the best of both—the personal control of email and the long and wide reach of mass media.

Blogging About Anything, Forever

The personal control that the writer has over his or her blog means that the blog can be about any subject, not just news. On the evening of May 29, 2008, my blog received 20,000 “hits” on a page (views of the page) I had written the year before, about the previous season's finale of “Lost” (Season 3 finale: “Through the Looking Glass”). This development, something that happens on blogs all the time, highlights two significant characteristics of blogging, in particular, and new new media, in general. The first is that anyone can blog about anything—I'm a professor and an author, not a professional television critic. The second is that the impact of a blog post, including when it will have its maximum impact, is unpredictable. My blog post about “Lost” received thousands of online visits shortly after it was written in 2007, but these were less than half of the visits or hits it received on that one day a year later in 2008.

Permanence is one of the most revolutionary aspects of new new media and underlies all new new media—from YouTube to MySpace—as well as blogging. One of the prime characteristics of old electronic media, such as radio and television, was their fleeting quality. Like the in-person spoken word, the word on radio and television was gone the instant after it was spoken. This evanescence led Lewis Mumford (1970, p. 294) to critique the viewers of television as in a “state of mass psychosis” in which

“man” is confined to a “present time-cage that cuts him off from both his past and his future.” Mumford apparently was not aware of the professional video recorders and “portapak” video cameras which were already giving television some permanence in 1970 (see Levinson, 1997, for more of my critique of Mumford), but he was certainly not wrong that the electronic media of his day offered information that was far less permanent than that conveyed by print. The first wave of new, digital media—the Web of the mid-1990s—began to invest its communications with more permanence. But until the use of “permalinks” became widespread, a development that awaited the rise of blogging in the first years of the 21st century, items on the Web lacked what I call the “reliable locatability” of words on pages of books on shelves (see Levinson, 1998; Levinson, “Cellphone,” 2004 and Levinson, “The Secret Riches,” 2007, for more).

Blog pages still lack the complete reliable locatability of books—after all, a blogger can remove a post or his or her entire blog—but their instant availability to anyone, anywhere with a connection to the Internet may give them a greater net durability (pun intended), or durability to more people, than any book. In other words, if a text is available online for 10 years to millions of people, is it more or less durable to the culture than a thousand books available for a hundred years on library shelves? Indeed, it may well be that the ease of making permalinks, along with the sheer number of people who can easily access them, will make the contents of blogs more permanent, in the long run, than books.

The blog post is thus not only immediate and universally accessible, but it can last forever. Indeed, whether photograph, video or text, once it is committed to the Web, it is in principle impossible to completely delete. This is because anyone can make a copy and post it to his or her blog or Web page. The immediacy of new new media can disguise this permanence or make users think that anything posted on the Web is easy come, easy go. But in fact the indelibility of anything posted online may be, literally, its most enduring characteristic.

We might also say that the sovereignty that the blogger has over his or her blog—the freedom from foreign gatekeepers (“foreign” being anyone other than the blogger)—finds its limit in the capacity of anyone to copy whatever is in the blog, for saving or dissemination.

Comment Moderation

The blogger’s sovereignty also relates to gatekeeping in a different way: Although the blogger is not subject to anyone else’s gatekeeping, the blogger becomes a gatekeeper in deciding whether to allow comments by others on the blog and, if so, how to moderate them.

The pros and cons of gatekeeping or moderating comments on your blog are straightforward. Moderating comments, rather than allowing them to be posted automatically, allows the blogger to keep disruptive comments out of the blog. But such moderation also slows the pace of the blog. Unless the blogger is online every

minute of the day, an excellent comment, which could spark further excellent comments, could be left waiting for approval.

Is the protection of the blog from undesirable comments worth such a potential slowing and even stifling of worthwhile conversation? It depends upon what the blogger, and the larger world of readers, deem undesirable. Certainly we can see why even strong disagreement with a blogger’s political positions, or analysis of a television show, should not be barred from the blog. Indeed, a blogger can usually use such criticisms as a springboard for elaboration of the blogger’s initial opinion. “Don’t you think ‘Lost’s’ flashforwards were a cheap gimmick?” a comment could ask. “No, I do not,” the blogger could respond and go on to explain why the flashforwards in “Lost” were a brilliant gambit.

But this is all a matter of the blogger’s opinion. A comment deemed disruptive by one blogger might be deemed conducive to valuable, multiple discussions by another blogger. Or a given blogger might want no comments at all, preferring the blog to be a one-way rather than an interactive mode of communication.

Bloggers can also install a CAPTCHA system (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart), which requires commenters to answer a computer-generated question (for example, reproduce a blurry sequence of numbers and letters) designed to distinguish human commenters from automated spam. A CAPTCHA, of course, will not get in the way of a human being bent on entering a nasty or disruptive comment in a blog.

In general, bloggers who want to encourage comments might keep in mind the following principle: Only block or remove comments if you believe they will discourage other comments from you and your readers. A blog without comments is like a flightless bird: The blog may make important contributions or bring satisfaction to its writer, but it will be lacking one of the signature social characteristics of new new media, interaction with the audience. (But see the discussion of Kathy Sierra in the “Online Gossiping and Cyberbullying” section of Chapter 11, “The Dark Side of New New Media,” for what can happen when comments become abusive.)

Commenting on the Blogs of Others

As easy as blogging is, writing a comment in someone else’s blog, or any online forum, is even easier. All the commenter needs to do is enter the comment in a blog that already exists.

Indeed, entering a comment on someone else’s blog can be a very effective way of promoting your own blog. If your comment is about an issue that you are blogging about and your comment is signed by you—not anonymous (see discussion below)—then readers of your comment can easily find your blog. You can encourage this discovery of your blog by including a link to it in your comment, but some bloggers may see this as use of their blog for promotion of other blogs and object (either by entering a comment that says “please don’t use my blog to

promote yours” or by removing your comment—see “Further Tensions Between New New Media and Older Forms” later in this chapter for details).

As a blogger, I welcome comments with links—as long as the comments and links are relevant to the discussion at hand and not spam for gold sold at low prices or whatever. Because, whatever the motivation of the commenter, comments that are not spam serve to further what Comenius centuries ago called “The Great Didactic” (1649/1896).

Given that blog entries on new media systems such as Entertainment Weekly or USA Today regularly draw hundreds of comments—and on new new media amateur blogs (such as mine) anywhere from none to a few to occasionally hundreds of comments per entry—the comment is clearly the most frequent form of sustained written discourse in the new new media world. At their best, comments serve not only as a voice of the people but as conveyors of truth and correction to a blog post, epitomizing the democratic alternative to expert-driven information that is one of the hallmarks of new new media (and has been developed to a fine art on Wikipedia, which we will examine in Chapter 4). At their worst, comments can be vehicles for trolls to grab attention and can mar or derail an online conversation (see Chapter 11 for more). In between, comments are the ubiquitous Greek chorus not only of blogs but of YouTube videos, Digg’s listing of articles from all over the Web, and most new new media.

“Is it a fact—or have I dreamed it—that, by means of electricity, the world of matter has become a great nerve, vibrating thousands of miles in a breathless point in time?” Nathaniel Hawthorne’s character Clifford asks about the telegraph in “The House of the Seven Gables” (1851/1962, p. 239). It was indeed a fact back then. But not as much as when Marshall McLuhan talked about the “global village” in “The Gutenberg Galaxy” in 1962. And by no means as much as now, when Hawthorne’s and McLuhan’s visions have achieved their fullest realization in blogs that buzz with hundreds of millions of comments on more than 130 million blogs worldwide (as per Technorati) at any instant.

Comments as Correctors

Most of my posts on Infinite Regress are either about politics or are reviews of television shows. In the case of the television blogs, I try to get my reviews up within a few minutes of the conclusion of the show’s episode on television; making reviews available as close as possible to a show’s conclusion maximizes the number of people who will read my review.

But such a tight schedule does not always make for a review that is perfectly factual. I make it a point of mentioning the names of actors and actresses, if they play important roles in a show I am reviewing, but sometimes these may not be available online, either on the show’s Web site or on IMDB (Internet Movie Database).

On October 12, 2007, I reviewed the 12th episode of the first season of AMC’s “Mad Men” on my blog. It was an excellent episode, and I mentioned in my review that “my favorite sex/romantic scene in this show was Harry (Isaac Asimov!) (played

by Rich Sommer) and that secretary (played by xxxx).” The “Harry” was Harry Crane, who, in my opinion at least, looks a lot like science fiction author Isaac Asimov did in the 1950s and 1960s. (You can see their two photographs side by side at my “Interview with Rich Sommer,” 2007.)

But to return to comments as correctors, the reason I wrote “played by xxxx” above is that, in my original blog post, I had listed the wrong actress. I had looked at IMDB and every site of relevance I could find on the Web. I could find no actress credited with playing beside Rich Sommer on the couch. So I had pored over whatever photos I could find of actresses who played secretaries on “Mad Men” and came up with the wrong actress as having played “that secretary.”

The first I learned of my mistake was via a comment in my blog, written about 30 minutes after I had posted my review. It read, “Hey, Paul. I read your reviews every week. Thanks for the kind words, and for helping to get the word out. We really appreciate it! An important correction: Hildy is played by Julie McNiven. She deserves full credit for her amazing work!”

And it had been entered by none other than Rich Sommer!

We exchanged emails after that, and I interviewed Rich on my Light On Light Through podcast—the “Interview with Rich Sommer”—by the end of the month.

But, aside from the coolness of blogging about an actor and then being contacted by him on the blog—something which has happened to me more than once and which is a good example of the equalization of new new media, in which famous and not-so-famous people can more easily be in touch—the comment by Rich Sommer, with a correction of my misidentification of the actress in his scene, spotlights the important role that comments can serve as correctors in blogging.

The whole world, in principle, is not only reading what you write when you blog but is waiting there as a potential safety net and source of correction for any mistakes you might make. Of course, not all comments are helpful, and some might be hostile. But the correction of your review by the very subject of your review, within half an hour of its posting, is something new under the sun of media, unless your review was on a live television broadcast, and the subject of the review happened to have your phone number.

As for Rich Sommer’s helpful correction (his comment is still on the page), I changed the wrong name to Julie McNiven as soon as I finished reading—and taking in the larger significance of—Rich Sommer’s comment.

MySpace Message from Stringer Bell of “The Wire”

Everyone is a fan of someone, usually more than one actor, actress, singer, musician or author. As exciting as it was to hear from Rich Sommer after blogging about him, his was not the most extraordinary and unexpected comment I received from an actor, or from a member of an actor’s family, after blogging about the actor. In addition to Rich Sommer, I heard from Len Cariou’s wife (via a comment still on

the page) after I had blogged in 2007 about how much I had enjoyed his performance in two seasons of “Brotherhood” on Showtime (the character died at the end of the second season) and from the father of Aaron Hart (via email), one of two actors who played Don Draper’s little boy in the second season of “Mad Men” in the summer of 2008. But as fortunate as I was with “Mad Men”—hearing from two actors or relatives of actors on the series—and as much as I enjoy both “Mad Men” and “Brotherhood”, neither achieved the extraordinary quality of “The Wire”, which ran for five seasons on HBO, from 2002 to 2008.

Paramount among “The Wire”’s characters, dominating every scene he was in for the first three seasons (his tenure on “The Wire”) was Stringer Bell, second in command of the drug operation under investigation by the police. An attendee of night classes in economics, a copy of Adam Smith’s 1776 “The Wealth of Nations” on his shelf and as ready to kill if necessary as worry about inflation, Stringer Bell was no ordinary drug chief in the ghetto.

In August 2006, when the only blog I was writing was the very occasional Twice Upon a Rhyme on MySpace (named after my 1972 album of the same name), I wrote a piece about “The Wire”. The little knowledge I had then of blog promotion led me to post a link and brief summary of the blog post on HBO’s “Community” forum about “The Wire”.

A few months later, in the wee hours of a late October morning, I was quickly reading through a batch of “Friend” requests on MySpace. It was late. I was tired. I was not thinking at all about “The Wire”, and although the name Idris Elba seemed familiar enough for me to accept his Friend request without looking at his page, I went on quickly to the other Friend requests and promptly forgot about Idris’s.

Until I received a message from Idris Elba about a week later, which read as follows: “Hi Paul, I read your comments on my acting in “The Wire” some time ago. Cheers for the support! I see you have been involved in the music biz for some time now and just wondered what you thought of my music? I’ll be buying your latest book, because it looks like just my sort of read. Idris.”

I liked his music, especially his hip-hop version of “Johnny Was,” so much so that I played it on a special episode of my Light On Light Through podcast, “The Wire Without Stringer,” on November 4, 2006. I received another message on MySpace from Idris Elba a few days later: “Paul, I just had to take the time out to drop you a line to say, that it is an absolute honour to have such a scholar like yourself dedicate an entire podcast to me, my music and my role as Stringer Bell. Incredible dissection of what made followers of The Wire gravitate towards my character. My music is about giving that same heart, but with my very own script.... Cheers, Idris.” (This message is currently posted on the right-hand column of my Light On Light Through podcast page.)

In the realm of new new media that we all inhabit, it is that easy for someone, anyone, watching television, computer at hand, to strike up a relationship with the star of that television show.

Changing the Words in Your Blog After Publication

The blogger’s absolute authority over the blog pertains not only to the comments but to the blog post itself, not only before it is posted on the blog but for as long as it remains on the blog, which could be forever after.

Writing used to be the archetypically immutable medium. Writing with ink or whatever chemical or dye on papyrus, parchment or paper gave those words life as long as the papyrus, parchment or paper survived. The words could be crossed out or obliterated, of course, but the obliteration was still observable. Even erasing the marks of a pencil on paper leaves signs of the erasure.

The printing press heightened this immutability. Under pressure from the Roman Catholic Church, Galileo recanted his views that the Earth revolved around the sun. But the thousands of copies of books expressing his original opinion were not changed with the recantation. The Church won a Pyrrhic victory, and the Scientific Revolution continued (see Levinson, 1997, for more).

That happened in the first decades of the 1600s. This immutability of published writing was still very much in effect at the end of the 19th century, at the end of the Victorian age of printed literacy, when Oscar Wilde famously is said to have observed about the process of authoring that “books are never finished, they are merely abandoned” (the quote more likely originates a little later with French poet Paul Valéry in 1933 and is about creating art or writing poetry). Whether of book, poem or painting, the abandonment was as real as a loved one moving out of the home. Once published, a book or a newspaper article was beyond being changed by the author, except via the unlikely means of a new edition or an editor willing to publish an amending note by the reporter in the newspaper. But that was to radically change with the advent of “word processing” and then online publishing by the end of the next century (see Levinson, 1997). And in the 21st century age of new new media, bloggers may be seen to have the reverse problem: The easy revision of a blog means it is never really finished and all but impossible to abandon if the blog is on a site under the blogger’s control.

Here is how that came to be: In the last two decades of the 1900s, word processing for the first time in history gave writers the capacity to change their written words with no tell-tale evidence of the original. Spelling errors could be corrected in email prior to sending and ideas could be sharpened in manuscripts with no one other than the writer the wiser.

But email and manuscripts submitted to editors were by and large one-on-one communications. Once a manuscript was printed and published, it was as immutable in the 1980s as were the words wedded to the paper of Galileo’s books in the 1600s.

Bloggging has made the publication as easy to alter as the initial writing. The most innocuous result is that spelling errors are easily correctable, as are missing words. There is no downside to such correction, nothing nefarious. But what about

the capacity of any blogger to easily change the material wording and meaning of a blog post after it has been published?

If no one or few people have seen the original, such alterations pose no problem. But what if many people have read the original and commented upon it, in whatever media available?

On the one hand, changing a text already extensively commented upon can certainly generate confusion. What is Reader “C” to make of a blog post and comment in which Blogger “A” changed the wording of the blog to reflect and remedy a critique made by Commenter “B”? One way Blogger “A” can eliminate any ensuing confusion is to put a postscript in the blog post, appropriately dated, which explains that a change was made in response to a comment made by Commenter “B.” But what if the blogger neglects or decides not to do that?

On the other hand, the greater the number of people who have read and commented upon a text, the more difficult for the author to surreptitiously alter the text and pretend the altered text was in the blog post all along. The audience for the initial text thus serves as protection against the changing of the text for purposes of deception, just as the same audience can be a safety net for the blogger by pointing out errors in the blog that can be corrected.

The social group as a guarantor of truth—or, at the very least, accuracy—is a factor we will encounter in other new new media, particularly Wikipedia and Twitter.

Long-Range Blogging and Linking

The duration of blog posts for months, in some cases years, after their posting allows for another kind of self-promotion, in which the blogger keeps abreast of comments about his or her post in other blogs on the Web and adjusts the links in the original post to take advantage of these new comments.

Here is an example: In August 2007, I wrote a short item in one of my blogs with four pieces of advice to would-be writers. The item drew many readers (see “Gauging the Readership of Your Blog,” later in this chapter, for how bloggers can keep track on a daily or even more immediate basis of the number of readers). A few months earlier, I had begun a podcast—Ask Lev—with brief, three- to five-minute bits of advice to writers. At some point a few months after my August 2007 posting, I got an email from a reader saying he was trying to locate my “My Four Rules: The Best You Can Do to Make It as a Writer” blog post but could not find it and instead had discovered my Ask Lev podcast, which had answered his questions.

The first improvement of my August 2007 “Four Rules” then occurred to me: put a link in that post to the Ask Lev podcast, since readers of the post would be likely to find the podcast of interest. Of course, that could and should have occurred to me when I first wrote the post. But the infinite perfectibility of any blog allowed me to recover and to put in this link months later.

The story continues: In December 2007, I interviewed Dr. Stanley Schmidt, editor of Analog Magazine of Science Fiction and Fact (the leading science fiction magazine), for my Light On Light Through podcast. That interview drew many listeners, including those on Analog’s online site, AnalogSF.com, where it became a topic of conversation. I, of course, kept a happy eye on these online discussions and noticed in October 2008 that someone said one of the best parts of the interview was the advice it gave to writers who wanted to get published in Analog.

This immediately set off another insert-a-link bell, and I proceeded to put a link to the August 2007 “Four Rules” blog post in the text accompanying my podcast interview with Stan Schmidt. (By the way, you can find the URL to “My Four Rules,” 2007, in the Bibliography at the end of this book in case you, too, are desirous of advice on how to become a published writer.)

You can see where this is going: Once you begin to look at not just your blog but the whole Web as your oyster for blog promotion, you have entered a realm in which your words do not deteriorate but can improve with time, as you draw ever more readers from different places to your blog. The key is that, although blogging is usually a solitary process, its promotion is inherently social and thrives on the easy linking of the Web.

Of course, if you are not interested in large numbers of readers, or any readers at all, you can always make your blog private and admit only those readers who meet your criteria. This would deprive your blog of many of the social advantages of new new media, but the preeminent principle is nonetheless that the blogger has complete control over his or her online work.

Usually, the blog will be the continuing creation of an individual. But sometimes the very blogwriting itself can be a group activity.

Group Blogging

Entries or articles on Wikipedia are edited by everyone, which is also an option for any blogger who might want to open one or more blog posts to other authors. Such group blogging would be a good example of readers literally becoming writers of the very text they are reading.

Writing has traditionally been and usually is an individual effort, in contrast to talking, which usually entails two or more people (it could be argued that talking to yourself is not really talking since no interpersonal communication takes place unless someone overhears you, in which case you are no longer talking only to yourself). The advent of group blogging thus can be seen as a further erosion of the difference between writing and talking, which began when word processing made correction of the written word almost as easy as the spoken and in some ways more effective, since the digitally corrected written word can leave no trace of the original, in contrast to the listener’s memory of a spoken error.

But group writing has at least one disadvantage: Unlike a spoken conversation, in which each voice is identifiable as belonging to a separate person (even if we do not know who that person is), there is nothing in the written word that intrinsically connects it to any author. Wikipedia addresses this problem by providing detailed “histories” of every article, in which every edit is clearly identified. Group blogs are usually less sophisticated and often do nothing more than list everyone who has written or edited a given post.

The main benefit of group writing of blogs is that it can increase the sum total of expertise brought to the blogwriting. For example, in December 2008, I started a blog titled *Educated Tastes* about food, drink, restaurants, recipes and groceries. Because my expertise in food pertains mostly to consumption, I had a choice of either leaving recipes out of the mix or bringing another writer on board who knew how to cook and write about it. Because my wife excels in both, I invited her to join the blog as a writer.

Whether blogwriting or songwriting or scriptwriting, the same calculus of collaboration applies. If it adds more to the project than any frustration you might feel from sharing your creative control, then it is worth trying.

Monetizing Your Blog

The commercial essence of the Web has always been that it’s free—“only suckers pay for content,” as David Carr observed about what succeeds most on the Web in *The New York Times*, back in 2005. That still holds true, and more so than ever, as newspapers such as *The New York Times* have made much more of their content available for free on the Web, in order to encourage links back to their articles in other blogs (a link in a blog post to a site that requires payment would displease most blog readers) and to be competitive with totally online and free blog newspapers such as *Daily Kos* and *The Huffington Post*. (See “*Blogging for Others*,” later in this chapter, for details on these and other blog newspapers.) But none of this means that you cannot earn money from your blogging or other new new media activities.

Here are five general ways of making money from your own blog:

1. Google AdSense is the grandparent of revenue-making by individuals (you and me) on the Web. You sign up, get “code” to put on your blog and you’re in business. Text, image and/or video ads, the size and subject and placement of your choosing, appear on your blog. The work required to set this up is easy and less demanding than the writing of most blog posts.

That is the good news. The not-so-good news is that you won’t make much money—not only not enough to retire on or earn a living from but not enough in a month to buy a decent dinner in New York. An average of 500 to 1000 visitors a day is likely to earn you no more than about \$10 per month from Google AdSense, which pays on clicks and impressions, meaning you get paid for the number of people who click on the ads (clicks) or view them (impressions). As is the case with

many online ad services, Google AdSense only pays you when your ads have earned a minimum amount of revenue—in the case of AdSense, \$100.

You will likely find that ads about certain topics—usually those that relate in some way to the subjects of your blog posts—attract more clicks on your blog than ads that have nothing to do with the subject of your blog. AdSense automatically runs ads, when available, that relate to the subjects of your posts. Unfortunately, this selection process is keyed only to the subject and can miss the tone or opinion of your blog post. A post on my blog that criticized John McCain in the 2008 presidential campaign attracted Google ads in support of McCain. If such ads are not acceptable to the anti-Republican blogger, Google AdSense provides a means of filtering out any ads on specified unwanted subjects. Unless this is done when the ad code is first created, however, an unwelcome ad can nonetheless appear on the blog. But the code can be revised at any time.

You may find that video and image ads attract more clicks than text ads. Placement of the ads can also increase your revenue. A text ad at the top of a blog can generate far more hits than attractive image and video ads in the sidebar. But ads placed at the top of the blog give the blog a more commercial look than ads placed in the sidebar. The blogger thus has a choice: Which is more important, appearance of the blog or income earned? Of course, if you want your blog to look as commercial as possible, then your course of action is clear.

The key point in all cases is that you have complete control over the kinds of ads (text, image, video) and where on your blog they are placed, as well as some control over the subject of the ads. You can learn via experiment which combinations look best and which produce the most revenue.

2. Amazon Associates has a different approach. You place ads for Amazon’s books and other products on your blog page and get paid a percentage every time someone clicks on the ads and buys something from Amazon. The percentage, as of January 2009, starts at 4 percent for the first 6 sales, increases to 6 percent when sales number 7 or more, increases to 6.5 percent when there are 33 or more sales, and so forth. As an author, I find it valuable to have numerous Amazon ads on my blogs for my own books. But the more general guiding principle for this kind of monetization is not that you need to be an author of books sold on Amazon but a blogger willing to do the little research required to see which books on Amazon relate to subjects of your blog posts.

For example, in a review of an episode of “*Lost*” in its fourth season, in which time travel played a major role, I not only placed Amazon ads for my own time travel novel, “*The Plot to Save Socrates*”, but for such time travel classics as Isaac Asimov’s “*The End of Eternity*” and Robert Heinlein’s “*The Door into Summer*”.

Because Amazon sells far more than books, you can use its Associate services to sell a wide range of products on your site. For example, if have a blog about food, you could put Amazon ads for foodstuffs, beverages, cutlery, etc. on your blog.

CafePress operates in a somewhat similar way. You design a logo, which can be placed on coffee mugs, T-shirts, etc. You place an ad for the item on your blog.

CafePress produces an item every time one is ordered—publishing on demand—at no cost to you. CafePress sets its price, and you can add whatever you like, above that price, for your commission. If your logo is some sort of advertising for your blog, you earn not only a commission but also good publicity for every sale.

Unlike Amazon, however, you either need sufficient talent to design an attractive logo for CafePress or will have to hire or persuade someone to design it for you. In contrast, Amazon supplies images of the book covers and all of its products in the ads for your blog.

3. In the case of Google AdSense and Amazon Associates, nothing is changed in the writing of your blogs—the ads are placed at the bottom, the sides, the top or in the middle (if you prefer) of your text. PayPerPost, one of several different such operations, offers another kind of approach to making money from your blog: You are paid to write posts on given subjects.

PayPerPost pays anywhere from \$5 to \$500 or more for blog posts requested by its clients. Your payment depends mainly upon the popularity of your blog—how many readers the advertiser can expect will see your post about the advertiser's subject.

The great advantage of this kind of blog monetization is the money you see in hand from your blog posts. The leading earner on PayPerPost in 2007 earned more than \$12,000 for her written-to-order blog posts.

The disadvantage is you may be tempted to write about subjects you otherwise might not want to write about in your blog. This can undermine one of the crucial benefits of new new media and blogging: writing whatever you want, with no gatekeepers to approve or disapprove of your output. The fine line to be walked is writing reviews of products you already know about and like. But this could be difficult: Would you pass up \$500 to write a positive post about a product you thought was just OK, not great?

The principle of being honest with your readers can also come into conflict under this kind of monetized blogging. PayPerPost insists as standard operating procedure that all of its assigned posts have a clearly displayed notice that the blog post was purchased. As a further safeguard, PayPerPost also requires all participating bloggers to publish at least one nonassigned post for every purchased post, which further makes clear to the reader which posts were hired. But several other “blog for money” organizations want otherwise—reasoning, probably correctly, that readers would take the post more seriously if they thought the post came from the blogger's mind and heart and not the advertiser's paycheck. Indeed, even PayPerPost offers a few of these “nondisclosure” opportunities, with the proviso that it did not endorse the approach but would be willing to serve as broker if that is what the advertiser and the blogger both wanted.

Another, related problem can arise from the general topic of the blog post. Favorably reviewing a movie you already saw and liked, or even expected that you would like, is one thing. But what about accepting PayPerPost blogging assignments for political or social issues, in which the assignment requires you to write on behalf

of the issue or candidate? Even if you support the issue, and even with the PayPerPost disclosure advisory on assigned posts and no advisory on everything else, taking on such political assignments can cast doubt among your readers that you mean what you say in your nonassigned posts. If you want your readers to be 100 percent sure that the political analyses they read on your blog are 100 percent yours, the safest course of action may be to avoid doing any PayPerPost or assigned blog posts on political and social subjects. (See also “Bloggers and Lobbyists,” later in this chapter.)

4. You can put a PayPal donation widget—a digital money tip jar—either on your overall blog or on any specific blog post. PayPal is in effect an online banking service, which receives payments from other PayPal accounts, as well as traditional credit cards, and makes payments to other PayPal accounts. PayPal account holders can transfer funds from PayPal to their traditional bank accounts.

How much money can a PayPal donation button generate on a blog? Shaun Farrell's 2007 podiobook of my 1999 novel “The Silk Code” provides an instructive example. A podiobook is an audiobook available free, online, in weekly installments, from Podiobook.com (see Chapter 10, “Podcasting,” for details). “The Silk Code” podiobook placed in the top 20 of podiobooks downloaded in 2007 (its exact placement in the top 20 was not revealed). More than a thousand people downloaded all or part of the novel. Farrell received about \$100 in the PayPal donation box on his blog page.

But a podiobook is not a typical blog. Because a podiobook appeals to an audience that might otherwise purchase an audiobook, donations to the author (and, in Farrell's case, the narrator) make some sense. In contrast, authors of written blogs tell me they are lucky to receive even a few dollars a year from their tip jars.

5. A fifth way of making money from one's blog draws upon the oldest form of advertising and predates new new media by centuries: You can accept and place ads on your blog, paid for directly by the advertiser. You can make far more money than via Google AdSense—you can charge whatever the market for blog ads will bear, based on the number of people who read your blog—but the price you pay for not going through the Google AdSense middleman is you have to find the advertisers, or they have to find you.

This kind of advertising goes back to the advent of newspapers in the 1500s, 1600s and 1700s—they were called “pamphlets” back then—and developed as follows: Originally, printers were funded and supported by the monarchs of Europe, and especially fortunate printers were designated “royal presses.” But monarchs expected printers to publish stories favorable to the monarchs, and eventually some printers began to chafe under this arrangement.

Merchants with ships laden with goods from the New World provided a way out and indeed a solution that provided the economic basis of democracy. Merchants paid printers to run announcements of their products, what we today call “ads.” Other than printing these announcements, the presses could print

whatever else they pleased. Printers thereby gained the economic freedom to break free of royal purse strings and political reins. This worked best first in England and then America, which enacted the First Amendment to ensure that the government, even in a democracy, could never control the press. (As I detail in my “The Flouting of the First Amendment,” 2005, the First Amendment has not always been adhered to in America; see the “First Amendment” section later in this chapter. See also “The Soft Edge”, Levinson, 1997, for more on the advent of advertising and its political consequences.)

The advertising symbiosis, however—merchants get publicity, printers get money, both are beneficiaries—became a bedrock of American media and continued in the age of radio and television, which went a big step further than newspapers by providing content free of charge to their listeners and viewers. Consumers paid for the receiving equipment—radio or television set—but received the content free. Radio and television stations and networks made money by attracting consumers of the free programming and then selling airtime, or exposure to the audience numbers, to sponsors. The free blog, though it is written like a newspaper article, is therefore more like the traditional broadcast media in terms of being free. And, although one of the hallmarks of new new media content is that it costs the consumer nothing, this characteristic began not with new new media but with older broadcast media. Ironically, although free radio and television continue to flourish, the number of network television viewers has been declining for almost two decades, with paid cable and free new new media drawing away audiences (Associated Press, 2008; but see also Cheng, 2008, for a report that 64 percent of viewers between ages 9 and 17 go online when watching television, which suggests a mutually beneficial relationship between the two media for young viewers).

In all such classic cases of paid advertising, the ad is paid for on a cost-per-thousand basis—how many thousands of people will see or hear the ad. Television lives or dies depending on the number of its viewers, as reported by the Nielsen ratings. These ratings are based on statistically valid samples of the total television viewing public. The new new medium of blogging on the Web offers direct counts, not samples, of blog visitors (see “Gauging the Readership of Your Blog,” later in this chapter).

The blog also offers opportunities to refine the circumstances for payment for an ad, not available in print or broadcast media, where the reader or viewer can not only see the ad but click on it and purchase the product. The blogger is then paid a percentage of the sale. The additional possibility of seeing an ad and clicking on it, but not buying the product, is used as one of the payment criteria by Google AdSense, as we saw in the first example of monetization described above.

Television, radio and newspapers charge flat rates for their ads, based on how many people can be expected to see or hear the ad (the cost-per-thousand formula). In contrast, although blog ads that come directly from advertisers can also work on such a flat-rate basis, the blogger also can be paid based on the number of impressions, clicks, or actual purchases resulting from an ad. When payments are made

based on flat rates or numbers of impressions—or on factors other than number of purchases or clicks, which can be recorded by the advertiser—then methods of gauging the readership of one’s blog are crucial.

These five ways of earning money from your blog—Google AdSense, Amazon ads, PayPerPost, PayPal donations and direct ad purchases—all pertain to blogs completely under the blogger’s control. In the “Blogging for Others” section later in this chapter, we will consider the opportunities for remuneration when you blog for someone else. But, first, let’s consider in a little more detail the degree to which any way of monetizing your blog may be incompatible with the communicative and democratizing ideals of blogging.

Is Monetization Incompatible with the Ideals of Blogging?

Not everyone in the blogosphere is happy about the monetization possibilities of blogging. Jeff Jarvis, creator of Entertainment Weekly and the well-known BuzzMachine blog, put the “problem” he saw with the PayPerPost model as follows: “The advertisers are trying to buy a blogger’s voice, and once they’ve bought it they own it” (Friedman, 2007).

David Sirota, senior fellow at the Campaign for America’s Future, sees a different kind of harm arising from advertising in blogging. Criticizing a report that Jonathan Martin gave on Politico.com about President-elect Obama’s December 7, 2008, appearance on “Meet the Press”—that Obama was “backing off” (Martin’s phrase) his campaign pledges on taxes and Iraq—Sirota concluded with the following: “I’m not linking to [Martin’s] story because the entire reason the Politico made up this outrageous lie is to get people to link to the story and build up traffic which it then uses to attract ad revenue” (Sirota, 2008).

Jarvis, then, sees money as putting literal words in bloggers’ mouths—or via their fingers in their blogs—while Sirota sees the desire to increase the number of readers, to increase advertising revenue, as leading to the writing of blogs of “outrageous lies.”

Both concerns may be warranted. But let’s try to put the pursuit of money by the press in historical context. Why and how did advertising as a source of income for the press arise in the first place? And what damage, if any, has resulted to a free press from this?

As we saw in the previous section, advertising was adopted by the press in the first place as a means of freeing the press from economic and thus political reliance on the monarchies of Europe. And as far as we know, there have been but three sources of income for the press, and for media in general, in history.

One is government support, which has always translated into government control of the media. Whether Pravda in the Soviet Union or the BBC in Britain or the royal press hundreds of years earlier in that country under Henry VIII, government

financing of the press has always made the press an organ of government. In a totalitarian society this hardly matters, because the government controls everything anyway. In a democracy, government control of the press can undermine the democracy, because it can obstruct the press from being a critic of the government and reporting to the people what the government might be doing wrong. During the Falklands War, to cite just one example, the British government controlled and censored the BBC's reporting on that war (see Levinson, 1997, for details). Indeed, one of the reasons that democracy was able to arise and flourish in England is that printers were able to break free of royal control. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and James Monroe understood the crucial role of a free press in a democratic society, which is why they insisted on the First Amendment to our Constitution and its guarantee of a press unfettered by governmental fiat.

A second source of income for media is the purchase or rental of the media by the public. Sale of newspapers, magazines, books, DVDs, CDs and movie theater tickets (a form of rental) has worked well for many media. But they have not worked very well for newspapers, especially in recent years. The New York Times thus loses money on every paper it sells, and The Village Voice dispensed with its price per copy altogether and has been distributed at no charge for the past decade. Newspapers do this because they want to keep their number of readers as high as possible, to attract advertising revenue.

Furthermore, or maybe first of all, to charge for reading of a blog would cut far more deeply against the ideal of blogging, and new new media in general, as available to the public for free, than would advertising, if needed to keep the blog free. (But in May 2009, Amazon—a new, not a new new medium—began offering monthly subscriptions to blogs for a dollar or two for Kindle users, in addition to electronic books. [See Brown, 2009.] This might make sense, given that Kindle devices can receive content from the Web without the usual wireless connection, and therefore can make blogs available when would-be readers are away from their laptops or cellphones with Internet access.)

Which brings us to the third source of income for media for the past hundreds of years: advertising. In a Platonically ideal world, perhaps we would not need it—not for blogging or older media such as newspapers and magazines. Independently wealthy bloggers with the best of motives would write just the truth as they saw it and would not contaminate it in either reality or appearance by taking any money for their work. But we do not live in such an ideal realm—in our world, bloggers and people in all media need to eat. I love teaching, but I would never dream of doing it for no payment, because I do have to pay my mortgage and my electricity bill, and, although our children are now adults, we like to help them out with a little money too, from time to time.

And what, specifically, is the evidence of damage done to blogging, either by the PayPerPost approach or the pursuit of advertising? Sirota's post is titled "Politico's Jayson Blair"—after the infamous New York Times reporter who made up stories and plagiarized (Levinson, "Interview about Jayson Blair," 2003)—and unintentionally brings home a telling point: The "newspaper of record," The New

York Times, was plagued by "outrageous lies" on its pages by Jayson Blair. Was that because it, too, was pursuing advertising revenue?

The more likely explanation is that there is no cause-and-effect between advertising and faulty reporting, which arises from the frailties of all human beings, including reporters (though see Nissenson, 2007, for Dorothy Schiff, New York Post publisher, killing a story in 1976 because her advertisers objected to it). Nor is there any evidence that PayPerPost blogging has deluded the public with lies. If a post is clearly identified as written to someone else's specification, right before and after posts that are clearly written only to the blogger's specifications, the reader is no more likely to perceive the paid-for post as the blogger's "voice" than the reader of a newspaper is to confuse an ad with the paper's editorial opinion.

Dressing Up Your Blog with Images, Videos and Widgets

Ads on blogs come in text, images and video. Amazon.com ads have images of the books for sale, and Google AdSense offers options for text, image or video ads, as discussed previously. But images and videos also can be placed on blogs just to make the blogs more interesting, colorful and spiffy—to illustrate blog posts or just attract viewers—with no ad revenue earned from them.

Many blog platforms (such as Blogspot, see "Different Blogging Platforms" later in this chapter) allow the writer to upload images and videos directly to the blog. In the case of videos, they also can easily be embedded by code available from YouTube.

Photobucket is an example of a free site that hosts images. HTML code is generated for every hosted image and can be edited to change the size and placement of the image on your blog. You can align images to the left or right, and the text will wrap around them. Links can also be easily placed in the image code, so that when readers click on the images, they will be taken to the page on the Web in the link. This is the way Amazon and Google image ads work.

Flickr not only hosts images but works, in effect, as a photographic blog, or a photographic equivalent of YouTube, which attracts viewers to its site, as well as provides content embeddable on blogs.

Widgets are a way that blog posts, videos and links of any kind can easily be integrated into a blog or Web page. As distinct from a "button," which usually links to just one other site, a widget is designed to offer numerous connections. MySpace and Facebook, for example, supply "buttons" or "badges," which allow readers to connect to a specified profile. Amazon and Twitter supply widgets, which allow readers to connect to numerous pages on those systems.

Widgets are supplied not only by companies such as Amazon.com to help readers of your blog or Web site see Amazon's products (for which purchases you will be paid a percentage, if you are an Amazon Associate—see "Monetizing Your Blog" earlier in this chapter) but also by networks and organizations that are not selling

anything. Twitter's widgets allow your readers to see the twitters, or one-line status announcements, of specified people or everyone on Twitter. In all cases, the widgets are supplied for free. They, in effect, act as little building blocks of the Web, appearing on your page with a bundle of connections to other Web sites.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of widgets in contrast to static links is that the links in widgets change, or are "dynamic," based on the purpose of the widget. Amazon has widgets for its products that provide updating links to those products based on the content of blog posts on the same page. For example, if I post a review about "Dexter", the Showtime television series, my Amazon widget will display the "Dexter" novels and DVDs of earlier seasons. Google AdSense ads work in the same way. Twitter's widgets are constantly updated to show the most recent tweets. I also have a "Politics" widget from an organization called "Widget Box," which takes yet a third approach, displaying headlines with links for the most popular—meaning, most read—political posts on blogs in the "Politics" division of the Widget Box network (divisions exist for television, science and other categories). Widget Box also provides a widget that lists the posts in your blog with updates; this can be very useful if you have more than one blog and want to attract readers back and forth and, of course, if you can get friends to put your widget on their blogs and Web pages. Blogging platforms such as Blogspot also provide numerous widgets, including one—much like the Twitter widget—that lists and links to the most recent posts of other blogs, which you have entered into your "blogroll."

Adaptive Blue offers one of the most sophisticated widgets available. I have one for my novels and another for my nonfiction books. The covers of the books are displayed in the widget. Clicking on a cover will provide links to where the book can be purchased online (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Powell's), reviews of the book, Wikipedia and Google pages for the book (if they exist), and Facebook and Twitter and other social media where the book can be discussed.

The multiplicity of links in Adaptive Blue widgets brings home another point about monetization of the Web. Although the Adaptive Blue widget is not itself commercial, as is an Amazon or Google AdSense widget, it nonetheless links to sites such as Amazon and to new new media such as Facebook, where ads are displayed. Similarly, political blogs in the Widget Box political widget may display Google AdSense or any kind of ads, even if your blog does not. If for some reason you are not only allergic to making money but to aiding any kind of income generation on the Web, you need to take special care in choosing your widgets.

Gauging the Readership of Your Blog

Unless you blog purely for the pleasure of seeing your writing on a Web page—which is certainly a motivating factor for most writers—you will be interested in how many people are reading your words, and in other statistics that measure the popularity of your blog.

Services such as Statcounter and SiteMeter provide details on the number of people who visit your blog, including raw number of visitors, what pages they read, where the visitors come from (what countries, what Web sites, etc.), how long they stay on your blog and where they go when they leave your blog (what links they click). The basic services are free, with paying options that provide analyses of larger groups of visitors.

Technorati measures a blog's popularity in a different way: how many other blogs have linked to it. Further, Technorati keeps track of the linkage of all blogs that link to yours. Being linked to 10 blogs with 500 links each is more impressive than being linked to 100 blogs with 5 links each. In the first case, many more readers are likely to see your blog than in the second.

Alexa takes another, complementary approach, ranking blogs according to a formula based on number of readers, links and rates of growth. Google PageRank does something similar but over longer periods of time. Both systems are secretive about the precise "algorithms" they use to determine the rankings, to discourage unscrupulous bloggers and Web site developers from manipulating or "gaming" the data to achieve higher rankings.

Such "gaming" is something we will encounter in other systems that measure popularity or base their listings on popularity. Digg, which we will look at in Chapter 5, puts articles, images and videos on its front pages based on the number of "Diggs" and "Buries" submissions may receive from readers. Attempts to inflate this number, and Digg's attempts to prevent that, provide one of the main dramas of its operation and indeed of new new media such as Facebook and MySpace, where status is based on numbers of "Friends."

Different Blogging Platforms

My InfiniteRegress.tv blog uses Google's "Blogspot," or "Blogger," platform. In addition to the virtue of being free, it offers a big assortment of blog templates (which determine what the blog looks like—colors, positioning of blog posts and sidebars, etc.) or allows you to import and therein design your own template. The Blogspot platform also offers extensive control over comments, including notification of new comments and various moderator tools such as CAPTCHAs. Blogspot also allows multiple blogs by the same or multiple authors, all at no charge.

A key feature of Blogspot—perhaps the most important—is that bloggers have access to the HTML code that determines the look and feel of the blog and allows easy insertion of stat counters, automatic Digg counters, etc.

MySpace, Amazon, Vox and other Web sites also offer free blog space to their users but with no access to the HTML code and far less control over the blog in general. Wordpress is most like Blogspot, in that it offers a wide variety of features and is free.

At the other end of the spectrum, some platforms offer features equivalent to Blogspot but are not free. Typepad charges anywhere from \$4.95 (basic service) to

\$89.95 (business service) per month. Its main advantage over Blogspot is a more distinctive look (assuming you like that), and it comes packaged with stat counters and other features. Movable Type is free for noncommercial use (no ads on your site, and you do not use it to make money) or otherwise costs from \$49.95 to \$99.95 per year. LiveJournal's basic blogging account is free but offers an "upgrade" with increased image storage capacity for less than \$2 per month. (Typepad, Movable Type, and LiveJournal are all owned by Six Apart.)

In the end, if money is no object, your choice of blog platform will likely be most determined by what you find most attractive or consonant with your image of your blog's purpose. For a cheapskate like me, the free cost of Blogspot is irresistible. And I do like its general appearance and the powers I have to sculpt and control the blog.

Are Bloggers Entitled to the Same First Amendment Protection as Old-Media Journalists?

Blogging can be serious business, not only in the money that can be made and the ethical issues involved, which we have examined previously, but in its political and social impact and its relationship to older media ranging from newspapers to television. We turn in this section and the remainder of this chapter to a consideration of some of these issues, starting with the question of whether bloggers are protected from government interference under the First Amendment.

The Supreme Court has generally sided with newspapers and print media on First Amendment and freedom of the press issues in the 20th century. In *The New York Times v. Sullivan* (1964), the Court severely limited the degree to which the press could be sued for defamation and libel; in *The New York Times v. the United States* (1971), the Court stopped the Nixon administration's attempt to shut down publication of the Pentagon Papers (see Tedford, 1985, for a detailed discussion of these and the other First Amendment cases mentioned in this chapter; see also Levinson, "The Flouting of the First Amendment," 2005).

Broadcast journalism, the other old-media part of the press, has not fared as well. *Red Lion Broadcasting v. Federal Communications Commission* (1969) held that, since broadcast stations are necessarily scarce in comparison to print media—only a limited number of stations can fit on the broadcast spectrum, in contrast to no natural or technological limit on the number of newspaper publishers—radio and television stations had to give "equal time" to opposing political opinions (also known as the "Fairness Doctrine"). And although more an issue of social satire than hard reporting, the Supreme Court ruled in *Federal Communications Commission v. Pacifica Foundation* (1979) that the FCC had a right to tell radio stations not to broadcast comedian George Carlin's "Seven Dirty Words" routine (the

reason in this case was that listeners could tune in and accidentally hear such objectionable broadcasts, unlike a deliberate decision to buy a copy of Playboy or Penthouse).

New media—or the appearance of old media such as newspapers on the Web—received a major endorsement by the Supreme Court in *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union* (1997), in which the Communications Decency Act and Attorney General Janet Reno's attempt to use it to punish Joe Shea for publication of "indecent" language (critical of Congress for passing this law) in an online magazine were struck down as a violation of the First Amendment's protection of the press (see Levinson, 1997, for more). The decision in effect held that an online magazine was more like a newspaper than a radio or television broadcast.

And what of new new media—such as blogging?

Here a battle has been waging over government coercion of the press in an area that may be a bit beyond First Amendment territory: shield laws, which protect journalists from being forced to reveal their sources to prosecutors and courts and do not address the right to publish, per se. The Supreme Court held in *Branzburg v. Hayes* (1972) that the First Amendment did not give journalists the right to refuse to testify or reveal sources, but Congress and the courts could enact legislation that gave journalists that privilege. Shield law advocates argue that, without such protection, journalists would be unable to do their jobs, since their sources could not rely on any pledge made by a journalist not to reveal his or her sources in a story. I agree and was quoted in USA Today about New York Times reporter Judith Miller's 2005 imprisonment for failing to reveal her sources in the Valerie Plame CIA leak investigation, "It is wrong to jail a reporter for protecting sources, including flawed reporters" (Levinson, quoted in Johnson, 2005). Miller quoted my comment in the opening statement of her testimony to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, Hearing on Reporters' Shield Legislation, on October 19, 2005.

At present, there is no federal shield law, which is why federal prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald was able to get a judge to put Miller behind bars. Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia have shield laws, but do they—should they—protect bloggers or journalists who blog?

Judith Miller reported on the "Fox News Watch" (December 6, 2008) that, for the first time, more online journalists than print journalists had been arrested around the world in 2008.

The imprisonment of video blogger Josh Wolf in San Francisco in 2006–2007 shows that, for some people, the very phrase "journalists who blog" is a contradiction. Wolf was videotaping a protest in San Francisco in July 2005 about the G-8 Summit taking place then in Scotland. He sold some of his video to local television stations and posted other clips on his blog. A police officer, ironically named Peter Shields, was assaulted at another part of the demonstration, not videotaped by Wolf, and suffered a fractured skull. Wolf was asked by authorities to turn over his videotapes. He refused and was thrown in jail. Commented U.S. Attorney Kevin Ryan in a court filing, "[Wolf] was simply a person with a video camera who happened to record some

public events”; U.S. District Judge William Alsup, apparently agreeing, described Wolf as an “alleged journalist.” Wolf’s attorney, First Amendment advocate Martin Garbus, thought otherwise and indicated, “I would define a journalist as someone who brings news to the public” (see Kurtz, 2007).

Wolf was released in April 2007, after eight months in prison, when prosecutors withdrew their insistence that Wolf had to testify. I concur completely with Garbus and was pleased to produce several blog posts and one podcast (Levinson, “Free Josh Wolf,” 2007) as well as a letter to the federal prosecutors on Wolf’s behalf.

One way of looking at this case, and the more general issue of whether bloggers are bona fide journalists, is how to best apply Marshall McLuhan’s famous aphorism that “the medium is the message” (1964). Applied superficially, we might well conclude, as Prosecutor Ryan did, that the medium of blogging is different from the media of print and broadcasting, as it indeed is, and different enough to negate or not allow journalists in its online ranks. A more accurate analysis, however, would note that there are media within media—that journalism, a form of communication, is a medium that can be presented via other media, such as newspapers, radio, TV broadcasts and written and video blogs (see Levinson, 1999, for more on media within media). As Garbus observed, the medium or practice of journalism is the bringing of “news to the public.” Wolf was clearly working in that medium, within the larger packaging of video blogging.

Wolf’s case was likely complicated by the fact he was not only a blogger but also not a traditional blogger, in that he was using video rather than text as his medium (media within media: journalism via video via blog). Text blogging, which is what we have been looking at in this chapter, has significant differences from video blogging, most importantly that the text can be written and uploaded and therein disseminated at least a little more quickly, with less technical requirement or savvy, than videos. But Garbus’s definition of what makes a journalist indicates that the capacity for journalism is not among such differences. We will look further at the special qualities of video in new new media in the next chapter, about YouTube. But whatever these qualities, they offer but another opportunity for journalism and all communication, unfettered by editors and experts and bosses—and, one hopes, government—as do all new new media.

Bloggers and Lobbyists

A related issue surfaced in Washington state in December 2008 (“Fox Report with Shepard Smith”), where the Public Disclosure Commission began looking at whether bloggers who are paid to write posts endorsing specific positions are, in effect, lobbyists and therefore subject to the regulations that govern them (these amount to always disclosing that you are a paid lobbyist).

Horsesass.com blogger David Goldstein argued on the Fox segment that bloggers are entitled to First Amendment protection from any disclosures to the

government, including whether they are paid for their blogs and who is paying them. But advertising and lobbying are already under substantial governmental regulation, which insists on full disclosure for lobbyists and truth in advertising for commercials on television, radio, the press and indeed anywhere. Are the lobbying laws themselves in violation of the First Amendment? And what about the restrictions on advertising?

The question regarding advertising and governmental insistence on truth is the easiest to answer, because advertising is clearly a form or part of business, which is itself regulated in numerous ways by the government. False advertising is surely a kind of fraud in business and therefore not really in the same arena as reporting and commenting on public policy or any other subject—the job of the press, whether new new media blogs or old media newspapers.

Regulation of lobbying is a different issue, part of the goal of making politics in our democracy “transparent,” as in obliging candidates for office to reveal their financial contributors. I am not sure, even aside from blogging, that government monitoring of election contributions is in the best interests of our democracy. An argument could be made that the best policy is for the government to keep its hands and scrutiny totally off election financing, as such supervision could lead to a party in power taking actions that support its continuing dominance. But if, for the sake of argument, we agreed that lobbyist financing should always be made public, there is still the question of whether a blogger being paid to write in favor of a candidate, official, or political position is in effect a lobbyist.

A lobbyist usually works on an interpersonal basis, via meetings with the targets of the lobbying (lawmakers, etc.) to convince, cajole, and pressure the targets to vote or act in favor of or against a certain piece of legislation, or to take a certain position on a package or wide range of bills revolving around a central issue, such as global warming. Although production of press releases may well be part of such efforts, the text is just a component of the campaign.

In contrast, a blog post, whether paid for or created on the blogger’s initiative, exists in its own right on a blog page. A lobbyist may well link to it, reprint it or include it in the campaign materials, but if we are talking about a blog post, and not a press release, the text also has a life of its own. Although it obviously has characteristics in common with advertising and should be identified as a purchased post (as discussed previously in “Monetizing Your Blog”), I would argue that government insistence that the blogger reveal all circumstances of the purchase goes too far and does violate the blogger’s First Amendment rights. The publisher paid an advance and will pay royalties to me for this book. Newspapers pay reporters salaries. The name of the publisher is on the title page of this book, and the name of any newspaper is clear to any reader. But other than the IRS getting notified of this income for tax purposes, no one would dream of saying the government has a right to know the specific financial arrangements between my publisher and me, or between a newspaper and its reporters. A blogger being paid to write on behalf of a political cause or candidate should be entitled to the same protections.

Anonymity in Blogging

Although bloggers should not be compelled by government to reveal the circumstances of a blog post's creation, good form certainly requires that a blogger should let readers know when a post is hired. This question of what should and should not be revealed about how and why a blog post is written relates to a larger question of anonymity, or whether a blogger (or commenter) should write under his or her name.

Anonymity is antithetical to journalism; most reporters and documentarians, including Josh Wolf, are all too happy to have their names associated with their work, and, indeed, in old media such as newspapers, a byline is rightly considered crucial in building a career.

But The New York Times (Glater, 2008) reported a case in which a district attorney in the Bronx subpoenaed a text blog about New York politics, titled "Room 8," to reveal or help prosecutors discover the identities of several anonymous bloggers. As was the outcome with the Josh Wolf case, the DA's office withdrew the request—this time under threat of a lawsuit by the blog over violation of its First Amendment rights.

The great advantage of anonymous blogging, of course, is that it maximizes the freedom of bloggers to speak or post their minds without fear of reprisal from supervisors, bosses, voters, friends and family. Anonymous blogging goes even further in this direction than blogging under a pseudonym or a nickname unrelated to the blogger's real name—all anonymous blog posts literally have the same "anonymous" attribution, which defeats any attempt to identify a series of blog posts as the work of a single person, obviously apparent when a post is signed by a pseudonym, even though the real name of the blogger is nonetheless not known.

Posting without revealing one's identity has a long history on the Web and online communication. When my wife, Tina Vozick, and I founded Connected Education in the mid-1980s—a nonprofit organization that offered courses for academic credit, completely online, in cooperation with the New School and other land-based institutions of higher education (see Levinson, 1985, 1997)—one of the first things I discussed with a colleague, Peter Haratonik at the New School for Social Research, was whether we should allow anonymous comments in the Connect Ed Café, an online forum for casual discussion. Anonymous comments by students in their online classes were ruled out from the beginning, but we thought that perhaps discussion in the Café would benefit from the opportunity of anonymity by those who wanted it. In the end, we decided against it; people don't like talking to people with "bags over their heads," as Haratonik put it.

But anonymity, and/or pretending to be someone you are not, has evolved into many other uses in blogging and new new media, including not only the capacity to make controversial posts without worry of reprisal but also disruptive, cyberbullying and cyberstalking comments without revealing one's identity (see Chapter 11). Used for such purposes, anonymity serves as a coward's mask for reprehensible behavior.

In an entirely different kind of disruptive application, anonymous and pseudonymous accounts can be employed to inflate the popularity of a blog post or

anything with a URL on the Web. All the inflator needs to do is create multiple accounts. This is a significant concern on Digg. It also rears its head on Wikipedia, where "sock-puppets," or accounts created by users to buttress their arguments, can short circuit or bias attempts to build a consensus among online editors. We will look at these abuses in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

There may also be a personal disadvantage to both anonymous and pseudonymous blogging for the blogger, in addition to the professional problem of not building your reputation as a writer. I often joke that I would never write under a pseudonym, because I want the girl who sat next to me in seventh grade, and didn't pay much attention to me, to see the error of her ways when she walks into a bookstore. The general principle here is that anonymous writing will not feed your taste for fame, if that is what you seek.

Anonymity is obviously easier in text media than audio-visual media, where disguising of voices and images takes a little work, and any muffling of sound or image is obvious. Indeed, anonymous comments are an option on most blogs, although the moderator can block anonymous comments. If a blogger wants to encourage discussion, blocking or removal of a comment merely because it is anonymous seems counterproductive. As a rough, anecdotal statistic of the popularity of anonymous comments on blogs, more than one of four comments on my Infinite Regress blog are anonymous.

Blogging for Others

Although blogging on your own blog is the newest new media use of blogging—that is, the specific kind of blogging that most captures the qualities of new new media and its differences from older media—numerous blogs on the Web permit, invite and consist of blogs written by people who are not the blog's owner. The crucial difference between writing for these kinds of blogs and your own blog, of course, is that you have far less control over how what you write is published on the blogs of others. In its most extreme form, this kind of gatekeeping can decide whether your post will be published. The applicant blogger is in such cases no different than a freelance writer or reporter submitting a story to an online newspaper. But even when the publication of anything you submit is assured, writing for the blogs of others may leave decisions in the hands of others about where on the blog page your post is placed, in what category and so forth. The blogger may also be deprived of the ability to edit the post after it has been published, remove or moderate comments, keep track of the number of readers, and earn advertising revenue from the blog post. These and other specific limitations of blogging for others differ from blog to blog.

The great advantage of blogging for sites other than yours is that these sites may well have enormously greater numbers of readers than does your blog. The Daily Kos, for example, had some 5 million readers on Election Day 2008, and the number

of its readers in the days before and after was no lower than about 2.5 million. Compare those numbers with the readership of USA Today, the highest circulation newspaper in the United States, which is just over 2 million per day, and you can get an idea of the power of the most successful blogs to attract large numbers of readers.

The Daily Kos started in 2002, which makes it one of the oldest of the new new media. It publishes “diaries” submitted by registered users (registration is free and open to everyone). Such blog posts cannot be submitted more than once a day. They are listed briefly on the front page—unless they are “Recommended” by Daily Kos editors, in which case they are listed on the front page longer—or, even better, “Front Paged” by the editors, in which case the blog post is actually published on the front page (this happened to me just once, out of about 50 submissions, “Take It from a College Prof: Obama’s ‘Missing’ Paper Is Another Conservative Red Herring,” 2008). The writer can edit the diary after publication, but there is a public indication that the diary has been edited. Other registered users can make comments—diaries on the front page often get hundreds of comments—but the writer has no power to eliminate, reject or otherwise moderate the comments. The writer, however, is free to join in such discussions and respond to comments. Diaries can be recommended by readers. Comments can be rated (not recommended), and writers can also post a special comment titled “Tip Jar,” which readers can rate and therein show additional approval and appreciation of the diary.

These features of blogging on the Daily Kos provide an excellent example of a mixture of new new media and new media (or top-down, expert-driven, editorially controlled approaches of older print media applied on the Web).

Op-Ed News has more old media—editor-controlled—characteristics. Submissions to Op-Ed News can be published as either “op-eds” or “diaries.” The decision is made by the editors and is significant at least insofar as “op-eds” attract greater numbers of readers. Also unlike the Daily Kos, which publishes its content as soon as submitted, Op-Ed News publishing takes time—a few hours or longer—since each submission has to be approved for publication and characterized as either an “op-ed” or a “diary” by the editors.

At the outer fringe of old media, top-down editing on the Web, Jezebel.com (part of the Gawker Media Network) not only moderates comments but insists that first-time writers of comments “audition to be a commentator.” The gist of the guidance Jezebel provides for the basis upon which commenters may be approved? “We only approve the comments we love.”

The Daily Kos and Op-Ed News both permit cross-posting, or publishing pieces that have already been published on other blogs, including your own. Not so on Blogcritics, which insists on first publication of all submissions. (It adopted this policy in 2007, as a way of maintaining its readership. Google usually puts the earliest publication of a blog at the top of its search results.)

Neither the Daily Kos nor Op-Ed News pays the writers who submit blogs for publication. But some blogs do. This, obviously, can add a powerful incentive for writing for the blogs of others.

Payment can generally come in one of two ways: payment for publication of the story (either on a per-word or per-story basis) or payment from ad revenues earned from your stories’ publication. Internet Evolution and iPhone Matters are examples of the first kind of payment. Tucker Max’s Rudius Media employs the second method. Guess which kind of payment is most likely to provide the most income?

The answer should be apparent in the “Monetizing Your Blog” section. Advertising on blogs generates negligible payment unless your daily readership is in the many thousands. And, when you’re splitting this income with the publisher of the blog, hundreds of thousands of readers a day may be needed to generate hundreds of dollars a month. In contrast, you could earn that amount with a single post on blogs that pay for your articles or via daily, short posts on blogs that pay even a few dollars for each of your postings.

Open Salon initiated a different, third approach in 2008. The classic Salon site, with roots going back to 1995, is a mix of old and new media strategies. It provides free blogging content, updated daily, but also offers a variety of paid subscription options to readers. Open Salon takes a clearly new new media approach, encouraging readers to register for free and post their own blogs. As on the Daily Kos, blogs can have “Tip Jars,” but in the case of Open Salon, these can receive not only kudos but also cash, in the form of donations of \$1 or more made by readers. The Tip Jars are thus not metaphorical but real insofar as the tips consist of real money. At this point, the success of Open Salon as a way of generating income from blogging has yet to be fully determined. Presumably the income will be far less than that received for publication of a story on a per-word or per-story basis. (The same applies to the Google AdSense option that Open Salon began providing for its bloggers in June 2009.)

In summary, it is worth noting the obvious: All blogs under the control of someone other than you can not only refuse to publish a given piece by you, but can fire you if you are a regular blogger, or ban you from the blog. The Daily Kos banned Lee Stranahan in August 2008 (Stranahan, 2008) for cross-posting a piece he had written for The Huffington Post, urging John Edwards to tell the truth about his affair first reported in the National Enquirer. Stranahan’s banning took place before Edwards admitted to the affair on August 8, but the truth or falsity of Stranahan’s or anyone’s post is not the issue that concerns us here. The lesson of Stranahan’s banning is that any blog other than your own, regardless of how progressive and writer-driven, can still exercise old-style media control any old time it pleases.

The Daily Kos, in terms of the ultimate control it exercises over its pages, is thus no different than The New York Times. Given that the Daily Kos publishes “diaries” written by readers—or, at least in principle, anyone—we can reasonably designate it an example of new new media, in contrast to The New York Times, which is an archetypal old medium in journalism (not really “all the news that’s fit to print” but “all the news that we deem fit to print”), with articles written by assigned, professional reporters, even when published on the new medium of the Web. But the Daily Kos is nonetheless very much on the old side of the new new medium continuum, if only because of its power to ban any blogger. In a truer or full-fledged new

new medium, which arises any time anyone writes a blog under his or her control, the blogger may retire or refrain from blogging but cannot be fired or banned.

Of course, a blogging platform—Google’s Blogspot or Six Apart’s Typepad or Moveable Type—could refuse for whatever reason to provide or sell a platform to a given blogger. But such refusals seem closer to a telephone company refusing to provide service to a given customer—because of the customer’s poor credit, for example—than an editor of a blog banning one of its writers.

Changing the World with Your Blog

As in everything we do in life, we may have different motives for publishing our blogs—and often more than one motive. These could include the joy of writing and having other people read what you write, making money, and changing the world—influencing something real in the world, in politics or science or whatever area—by the words on your blog. Words, after all, can be very powerful. And the power of a blog is unique in comparison to older forms of writing, in that the writing, as we have seen, can be instantly published, which means that anyone, including powerful, important and famous people, can read it. A significant limitation, however, is that readers, whether famous, important, powerful or not, are not likely to know about a blogger’s writing, are not likely to look for it, and are not likely to pay much attention to it if they stumble upon it, unless the blogger already possesses some of these qualities—that is, the blogger is powerful, important, famous. Nonetheless, when all factors are taken into the equation, the unknown blogger still has a much better chance of being read by the powerful and famous than the unknown writer in older media, mainly because those older, unknown writers had little chance of being published.

How do you know if someone important is reading your blog? Stat counters can tell you the IPs—Internet locations—and geographic locations of your readers. These may include the company or school in which their computer is located but not likely their names. Ultimately, the only completely reliable way of knowing who, specifically, has read your blog is when readers comment, link or refer to your blog in their own blog, or speak or write about your blog in other media.

Rich Sommer’s comment on my blog about “Mad Men,” discussed previously, would be a case of someone more famous than I not only reading but also communicating to me and the world on my blog. But the world did not change as a result of this. And, indeed, television reviews are not all that likely to have a big impact on the world.

Political blogs of course are different in their potential impact. I have no idea if Barack Obama or any of his close advisers or anyone significant in politics ever read any of my blog posts, let alone was influenced by them.

But on the early afternoon of September 24, 2008, I published a piece on Infinite Regress and cross-posted to Open Salon and several other sites, titled “Obama Should

Reject McCain’s Call to Postpone Friday Debate.” This was my response to John McCain’s announcement that he was putting his campaign on hold, so he could go to Washington to deal with the financial crisis, and his request to Barack Obama to join him in postponing their first scheduled debate of the 2008 presidential election.

I “advised” Obama that postponing the debate would be a big mistake, that the financial crisis called for an affirmation of the democratic process, including a continuation of the campaigns and the scheduled debates, not suspending or delaying them.

I was soon pleased to post the following on my blogs:

BREAKING NEWS: 4:47 p.m.: Obama just said that he thinks the debates should go on—that this is precisely a time when the American people need to see what he and McCain would do as president. Good!

And, at 6:00 p.m., Joan Walsh, editor of Salon and blogger on Open Salon, posted the following comment on my blog:

Paul Levinson speaks, Obama listens! I just blogged on this, too!

Did Obama or any of his advisers read my blog? Were they influenced by it? Probably not. Obama’s team was far more likely to have read and been influenced by the blog of Joan Walsh, who is not only editor of Salon but a frequent guest on Chris Matthews’ “Hardball” and other news shows on MSNBC.

But I’ve included this true story of my blogging in this book because it highlights the potential of any post, anywhere on the Web, to be read by a presidential candidate or a president him- or herself (especially the case now for Barack Obama, given that we know he is an active BlackBerry user). And this, too, is one of the hallmarks of new new media: You sit at your computer and type your words, and those words can tip the world in a better direction, or at least the direction you think best. You can be a major editor, a college professor, or a sophomore in college or high school.

A Town Supervisor and His Blog

Paul Feiner, who since 1991 has been town supervisor of Greenburgh, New York (an elected two-year term, in Westchester, a little north of New York City), is explicit about his reliance on blogging. When I was a guest on his weekly “Greenburgh Report” radio show on WVOX on January 9, 2009, Feiner explained that he finds comments made on his own, public blog to be helpful, even crucial, in keeping informed of what his constituents are thinking.

Feiner even recognizes the benefits—and drawbacks—of anonymous commenting. “I let people write anonymously on the blog,” Feiner told me, even though such commenters can be “very nasty” and “make up stuff that’s not true.” Feiner appreciates the dividends of this: “I’m able to get a sense from my blog [of] what some of the issues and controversies are going to be well before they hit a Town Board meeting...because sometimes people can say what’s really on their

mind in a blog... If I hadn't had a blog or used the Internet or just relied on newspapers, I would never know what people are saying, not in my presence."

In other words, for officials and political leaders such as Paul Feiner who perceive the advantages of new new media in governing, we might say that "foreblogged" is forewarned or "fore-informed."

"Bloggers in Pajamas"

The political impact of blogging, however, has not been applauded by everyone. Back in September 2004, Jonathan Klein, a former CBS News executive, defended Dan Rather's "60 Minutes" segment about George W. Bush's lack of National Guard service during the Vietnam War, by observing on Fox News that "You couldn't have a starker contrast between the multiple layers of checks and balances [at "60 Minutes"] and a guy sitting in his living room in his pajamas writing" (quoted by Fund, 2004). Klein, who would soon be appointed CNN/USA president, was attacking the conservative bloggers who were attacking Rather and CBS, and although I thought then and now that CBS and Rather were right to run that story (see Levinson, "Interview by Joe Scarborough about Dan Rather," 2005, and Levinson, "Good For Dan Rather," 2007), I certainly did not agree with Klein's myopic "analysis" of blogging, nor with his confidence in the "multiple layers of checks and balances" in mass media journalism. Jayson Blair's several years of fictitious and plagiarized reporting for The New York Times had already been exposed. And given the power and reach of the Internet even then, and the way all kinds of information could become available in all sorts of unexpected ways, it struck me that pajamas and living rooms were no impediments to the pursuit and publication of truth.

That is obviously much more the case today. But the "bloggers in pajamas" meme lives on, not only as a justifiably sarcastic comment on Klein's 2004 statement and any like-minded old media worshippers still among us—and in the names of successful online news venues (for example, Pajamas Media) and well-read independent blogs such as The Pajama Pundit—but also in the thinking of conservatives such as Sarah Palin, unsuccessful Republican VP candidate in 2008. Palin, shortly after losing the election, told Greta Van Susteren on Fox News that a lot of the media's negative stories about her were due to their reporting on the basis of "some blogger, probably sitting there in their parents' basement, wearing pajamas, blogging some kind of gossip, or a lie" (Palin, 2008). Palin not only demoted the blogger in pajamas from guy to kid, from living room to basement, but later switched the focus of her concern from pajamas and parents' basements to blogging anonymity, telling John Ziegler in the segment of his "Media Malpractice" documentary put on YouTube in January 2009, "When did we start accepting as hard news sources bloggers—anonymous bloggers especially. It's a sad state of affairs in the world of the media today—mainstream media especially, if they're going to be relying on anonymous bloggers for their hard news information. Very scary." (See also Kurtz, 2009.)

In Klein's slight defense, in 2004 new new media were much newer than they are now. The Huffington Post, YouTube and Twitter did not yet even exist, and Facebook was just a few months old. Palin's attack was thus more unwarranted than Klein's.

But her contempt for new new media is nonetheless shared by many in the older media themselves. Or as "John Connor," lead character in Fox's "Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles," sarcastically observed in the 13th episode of its second season (2008), "We all know how reliable bloggers are." That bloggers were mentioned at all on a television series about fictional characters is an indication of how important blogging has become in our lives and culture. But the fact they were cited with disdain shows the degree to which so many people in our real world still distrust them.

Not coincidentally, Facebook took a lashing in the 10th episode of the same season of "The Sarah Connor Chronicles" (2008), a few weeks earlier, when "Riley," John's girlfriend, lambasted her adoptive family and their obliviousness to the real dangers that await them with a remark that all they care about is looking at their "Facebook pages." Meanwhile, over on the premiere of the fifth season of "Weeds" on Showtime in 2009, "Celia Hodes" observed that a Facebook account "would be a waste of time." And "Margene Heffman" on the sixth episode of HBO's third season of "Big Love" in 2009 bad-mouthed yet another new new medium, apologizing that some of the information she had obtained about a Mormon pioneer "may not be right—I got it off Wikipedia."

In incurring this disfavor among some politicians and people who write fiction for older media, new new media continue a tradition that in one way or another afflicted the advent of many nascent media in their time, including the telegraph, motion pictures and television. The London Times delayed printing the news it received about Abraham Lincoln's assassination, because the news was received via telegraph. Motion pictures were considered a "primary school for criminals" early in the 20th century. And first television and, more recently, video games have been blamed for violence in the real world, on the basis of no reliable evidence, or at best a misunderstanding of correlation and causation. Just for good measure, television has been blamed for a reduction in literacy, even though a survey taken in 1978, in the same town in Indiana as in 1944, showed no decline at all, and book sales have risen through the past 50 years of television. (See Levinson, 1997, for details on the initially distrustful reception of telegraph and motion pictures, the continuing attacks on television, and the status of book sales in the 20th century; Maeroff, 1979, for the Indiana literacy study; and Levinson, 2006, for the confusion of correlation with causation in the "evidence" attempting to link violent videogames to violence in the real world.)

The telegraph was replaced in the 20th century by the telephone and, ultimately, by fax and email. But motion pictures and television did just fine, even though the screens on which movies and television shows are viewed are increasingly part of a computer or an iPhone, the same screens on which blogs are read.

And there are those in old media who see blogging as neither bogeyman nor panacea but subject to the same events that threaten to undermine old and new media, and all of society. Or, as Neil Young put it in his 2009 "Fork in the Road"

song, in part about the economic crisis: “Keep on blogging, till the power goes out, your battery’s dead, twist and shout.”

Blogging cannot in itself cure what ails our society. (No communication can.) Blogging certainly cannot solve economic crises or make peace in the world. But it beats the alternative of saying nothing, and it goes a lot further than saying a word to the person next to you or relying entirely on professional reporters and commentators to say it for you.

The Blogosphere Is Not Monolithic and Not All-Powerful

As the initial liberal attack in 2004 on conservative “bloggers in pajamas” and Sarah Palin’s 2008 attack on liberal “bloggers in pajamas” indicates, the blogosphere is not monolithic politically or in any other way. And neither are any new new media, which are intrinsically in the business of maximizing individual expression.

But old media continue to encourage monolithic, either/or categorizations and apply these categories to bloggers. On November 20, 2008, for example, Norah O’Donnell had a segment on her afternoon show on MSNBC about how the “liberal bloggers” were “outraged” about the Democrats’ decision to allow Joe Lieberman to continue to caucus with the Democrats and keep his position as chair of the Homeland Security Committee. (Lieberman, an Independent/Democratic senator from Connecticut, had vigorously supported Republican John McCain in the 2008 election and had said about Barack Obama, among other things, that whether he was a “socialist” was “a good question.”) Markos Moulitsas, founder of the liberal Daily Kos in 2002—after the “kos” in his name—affirmed that, yes, he and liberal bloggers were upset that whereas Barack Obama had promised “change,” keeping Lieberman in the caucus, in effect rewarding his attacks on Obama’s program of change, could hardly be considered “change.”

Similarly, Jim Angle reported on Fox News on December 22, 2008, that the appointment of John Brennan as CIA Chief, intended by Obama, had been “torpedoed by bloggers on the left.” Salon’s Glenn Greenwald was identified as foremost among this cabal, and Greenwald himself, appearing in that Fox News segment (on Brit Hume’s “Special Report”), confirmed that “the Obama team would be foolish if they just ignored what happened on blogs,” and he knew “for a fact” that there were “people high up in the Obama campaign and the transition team who read blogs regularly” (confirmation of sorts for what I discussed previously in “Changing the World with Your Blog”). A few days later, on December 26, 2008, CNN’s Brian Todd said “people” are referring to Brennan’s nixing by bloggers as “blogicide.” (The term, however, is more commonly used to describe a blogger’s deletion of all of his or her posts, as in Georganna Hancock’s “PageRank Promotes Blogicide!” 2007, or a desire to end one’s blog in response to a low “PageRank” or measure of popularity by Google.)

If we accept Greenwald’s observations as true, and the consequent perspective of this book that presidential advisers who read blogs are doing well for the president and the country by keeping informed of diverse opinion, does that mean that Moulitsas and Greenwald were speaking for all liberal bloggers? Not that they were presenting themselves that way, but MSNBC and Fox presented them as representative of the liberal blogosphere. Would a more accurate depiction have been that the two bloggers were speaking for themselves and offered views shared by many but by no means everyone on the left?

For example, regarding Joe Lieberman, I had written a blog on November 6, 2008, titled “The Shame of Joe Lieberman,” which concluded, “I would rather see the Democrats have one vote less in the Senate than ever see you counted as part of our party.” So, clearly, I was very angry at Lieberman’s behavior in the election, and “outrage” would be an apt description of what I felt.

But by the time Lieberman’s continuation in the Democratic caucus was announced two weeks later, I had moved from outrage to something closer to mild annoyance—I didn’t like it, but I could see the wisdom in keeping Lieberman in the Democratic fold.

Or consider the Let Joe Stay blog (2008), with the following description on its masthead: “I’m a Democrat counting down the days to President-elect Obama’s inauguration. However, in the promised new climate of hope and change, I find it upsetting to see Senator Harry Reid and many of his Democratic colleagues turn against one of their own simply because he chose his longtime friend over his party.”

Now, the Let Joe Stay blog is anonymous and, for all we know, was created by a member of Joe Lieberman’s family or staff, or by Joe Lieberman himself. And someone could well quibble and say that I, a self-described “progressive libertarian” (2008), am not really a “liberal,” even though I favored massive government intervention to help with the 2008–2009 economic crisis, etc. But that’s precisely the point—or the mistake of characterizing segments of the blogosphere in monolithic political terms. In reality, the left side of the blogosphere, the part of the blogosphere that enthusiastically supported Barack Obama’s election, includes Moulitsas (founder of a blog with millions of readers daily), the Let Joe Stay blogger (whose profile had a total of just 108 views as of January, 2009), and millions of other bloggers (most with very few readers, a few with very many) who write a wide and subtle diversity of political and all manner of opinion.

In contrast, a newspaper has an editorial opinion on its editorial page, along with the opinions of a handful of commentators. These opinions may be similar or contradictory, but they can be accurately summarized at any time. We could count the number of newspapers, survey whether they are primarily liberal (such as The New York Times) or conservative (such as The Wall Street Journal), and obtain a reliable indication of the political valence of newspapers in the United States (or the world), and the points of view espoused in its liberal, conservative, or other segments.

Further Tensions Between New New Media and Older Forms

As we will see throughout this book, media rarely live in harmony. In fact, media throughout history have competed for our attention and our patronage in a struggle for survival that Charles Darwin would have recognized. The only difference is that, in the Darwinian evolution of media, we humans make the natural selections, or decide which media survive (Levinson, 1979).

The competition between new new and older media is therefore no surprise, and it plays out, as we have seen, in the disdain and misunderstanding of new new media by people working in and through older kinds of media. Because blogging is the most prevalent form of new new media, especially in its characteristic of consumers becoming producers, it has received most of the hostility.

Another clear example can be found in the attitudes of official television blogs—message boards set up by television networks for discussion, i.e., promotion, of their shows—to the posting of comments with links to other blogs. Over the past few years, as a low-key experiment, I posted comments on Fox's official blog for "The Sarah Connor Chronicles", NBC's official blog for "Heroes", and ABC's official blog for "Lost". Many of these comments contained links to my reviews of these same television shows on my own Infinite Regress blog.

Moderators from all three blogs occasionally moved or removed my comments, and "The Sarah Connor Chronicles" blog removed my account—i.e., blocked me from its blog completely. Here is the listed policy on links, posted on Fox's official forum about "24": "The only links that are allowed are ones to articles about the show, cast, etc., in the mainstream media, or the official sites of the cast. Links to fan sites, personal sites, competing sites, commercial sites, links to download sites, jpgs, MP3s, etc., are not allowed."

In terms of the tensions between new new and older media we have been tracing, we might put the above policy as follows: "The only links allowed on our

new media site, about the old medium of television we are promoting, are links to other new media or official sites such as those in the old, mainstream media or official, professional sites about the show, cast, etc. Links to new new media fan sites, personal sites, competing sites, etc. are not allowed."

A moment's reflection shows how destructive those restrictions are to the purpose of the Fox blogs, which is to promote the television programs. Although links to "unofficial" blogs in comments posted on official blogs may indeed draw readers from the official blogs to the unofficial blogs, the readers of the unofficial blogs are still reading discussions of the television program that is the subject of the official blog.

The phrase "competing sites" in the original statement of the rules shows, in particular, just how illogical and counterproductive this policy is. What is a "competing site"? Is not any site that posts blogs and reviews of the same television series a site not in competition but in support of the same goal as the official site? A blog site not allied with any television series—such as BuddyTV, TV.com, or Television Without Pity—might at least have a logical point in forbidding links to other sites, since what these sites want is not necessarily an increase of viewers of any television show but an increase in readers of their site. I would still disagree with such a strategy—because I think the profusion of links raises all boats in the blogosphere, or all blogs—but I could at least understand it. (Of the three blogs mentioned, only Television Without Pity—perhaps apropos to its name—zealously removes links and bans writers for posting them.)

Conceivably, the official blog moderators do not actually read any blog posts with links to other sites, do not click on the external links posted in the official blogs, and as a result assume the external links are nothing more than spam, with no connection to the television show. But, in that case, the old media top-down approach of deciding what gets published, rather than letting all readers become writers and publishers, is still to blame.

For well-established television shows such as "Lost" and "Heroes", such self-destructive actions—or inoculations against the very advantages of viral marketing and promotion—likely will not have much ill effect on the success of the shows. But as we move into a world that increasingly expects unfettered participation of viewers—one of the hallmarks of new new media—the difference between a show that gains a reliable audience and a show that does not may well reside in how fully the online discussion boards divest themselves of old media habits. (It may be worth noting, in this context, that "The Sarah Connor Chronicles" was not renewed by Fox for a third season.)

The misunderstanding of new new media by older forms manifests itself in other ways. As "Mad Men", the AMC television series about early 1960s advertising executives, gained popularity and notice in the first part of 2008, people with names of characters from the show—"Don Draper," "Peggy Olson"—began showing up "tweeting" on Twitter. MySpace has for years seen accounts from users ranging from Socrates to Jack Bauer (hero of Fox television's "24"). These, like the Twitter

names, are a form of role-playing that people enjoy, and which therefore help promote the show. AMC at first did not see it that way and filed a copyright violation notice that forced Twitter to take down the accounts. Fortunately for all concerned, AMC's ad agency had more new new media savvy than AMC and talked it into backing off (Terdiman, 2008). Don, Peggy and the gang are happily tweeting, at least as of June 2009.

The Associated Press and bloggers have been embroiled in a different kind of copyright conflict. AP regularly files "take down" notices to bloggers who extensively quote AP articles without permission and payment. (AP is a news agency, or wire service, which sells news reports and stories to newspapers and broadcast media. It has roots going back to 1846 and the advent of the telegraph and is the only surviving international news service headquartered in the United States.) Bloggers retaliated by threatening to boycott AP (Liza, 2008). So far, neither side has annihilated the other, but copyright continues to be a major bone of contention between old and newer media, and we will look at that issue in more detail in Chapter 3, about YouTube.

But it would also be a mistake to conclude that old media and their practitioners have nothing of value to teach or impart to new new media. We turn now to hard-line, investigative reporting, at the opposite end of the journalistic spectrum from the commentary that thus far has been the lifeblood of blogging.

The Need for Old-Media Reporting in an Age of New New Media Journalism

Marshall McLuhan astutely observed back in 1977 that "the Xerox makes everyone a publisher"—but, like his recognition in 1962 that electronic media were turning the world into a "global village," his observation about the Xerox machine was more prediction, based on a powerful trend he noticed, than a depiction of how the media and the world of that day actually were.

It would take the rise of new new media in general, and the internationally interactive participants they created, for the global village to be fully realized (see my "Digital McLuhan", 1999, for more). For the global village of the 1960s was neither global (television was a national medium) nor interactive like the residents of a village (television viewers across a nation could not talk to each other, except in very small groups).

As for photocopying creating publishers, almost all of the output of such machines, even today, is also for very small numbers of readers. That limited kind of publishing would finally be surpassed—and in a way that rivaled older publication of newspapers and magazines—with the advent of blogging, as we have seen in this chapter.

And what of the older vehicles of journalism—The New York Times, the Washington Post, and other paper press? Their numbers have been declining, in

circulation, number of different newspapers, and the size of the newspaper operations that have survived (Perez-Pena, 2008). The New York Times reported a 5 percent drop in circulation from 2007 to 2008, though it is still more than a million. These older media have to some extent migrated to the Web. (See "themediasdying", 2009, on Twitter for hourly or more frequent reports about cutbacks, layoffs and closings in old media. The title gives cause to think that grammar may be dying, too—"media" is plural for "medium".)

But there remains, as of this writing in 2009, a crucial resource in older media that newer media such as the Daily Kos, Huffington Post and Politico have yet to fully and in many cases even partially re-create for themselves, and thus continue to seek from old media. As Jeff Jarvis noted in an NPR interview (2008) about "How Will Investigative Stories Fare in an Era of Layoffs and Slashed Newsroom Budgets?": "Bloggers rely on the resource that mainstream media put into this.... The whole business is still in trouble and investigative journalism is in peril..."

Ironically, the Daily Kos and new new media blogging first achieved prominence as important media of journalism in the aftermath of the failure of old media journalists to report the absence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and in general to supply sufficient criticism in the buildup to that war. (Daily Kos began on May 26, 2002, and The Huffington Post on May 9, 2005.) One could say, cynically, that new new media would do well to field their own investigative reporters, who could not do much worse than the old media professionals on the crucial issue of going to war (see Reilly, 2009, for a similar point). That might be all well and good, but given that new new media do not have their own investigative teams in place, where would investigative journalism come from, if the older media ceased to exist?

The good news from the history and evolution of media is that new media rarely replace, utterly, their ancestors. For every hieroglyphic or silent movie that did not make it into the future—because it could not survive the competition of alphabetic writing in the case of hieroglyphics or talkies in the case of silent movies—there have been hundreds of media, large and small, that have taken the path of radio (which amply survived the advent of television) and still photography (which easily survived the rise of motion pictures).

The key, as I alluded to above when I said that humans decide the survival of media—and I explain in "Human Replay: A Theory of the Evolution of Media" (1979) and "The Soft Edge: A Natural History and Future of the Information Revolution" (1997)—is that media survive if they uniquely satisfy a human communication need. Radio survives in an age of television because it caters to our need to sometimes hear one thing when seeing something else. Imagine driving down the highway and watching television; if you were the driver, you would not get very far. Similarly, just look at a wall or a landscape in the distance or even a person's face at rest, and a still photograph can usually capture all you might like to see of that. In contrast, the world grows dark every night but never really silent, and our eyes close but not our ears, which spelled the end of silent movies and their presentation of images without synchronized

speech. (See Chapter 13, “Hardware,” for more on this “anthropotropic” evolution of media, as I call it, toward more human communication.)

Words on paper still have their advantages. They are inexpensive, easily portable and require only the power of the sun or any ambient light to be read. As long as that advantage continues in contrast to words on a screen, old media newspapers and magazines will survive in some form, which, one hopes, includes a cadre of investigative journalists. And if and when that advantage fades, presumably at least some blogs by then will be generating enough steady income to field their own investigative reporters.

Old Media and New New Media Symbiosis: Easter Eggs for “Lost” and “Fringe”

Not everything in the natural, Darwinian world is competition. Organisms also live in mutually beneficial relations, as do bacteria in our digestive system, which help us digest our food, as we give them a nice warm place to live. Bees eat pollen, which helps plants reproduce, as the bees carry some pollen from one plant to another. And we humans also benefit, doubly, since we like both honey and flowers.

The old medium of television clearly benefits from publicity given to its shows by the new new medium of blogging; the new new medium of blogging benefits from television or any medium that gives bloggers something to write about. News blogs benefit from the work of old print media investigative journalists, while old print and broadcast news media draw upon analyses and opinions expressed by bloggers. And old media such as television shows and newspapers advertise extensively on blogs, just as blogs such as *Television Without Pity* advertise on Bravo Television.

The symbiotic or mutually catalytic relationship of old and new new media is thus undeniable and vibrant. And although conflicts can get in the way of such cooperation—as when an official television blog prevents links to reviews on other blogs—there are also cases in which television deliberately works new new media into its programming and promotion.

The virtual “game” of *Second Life*—in which users appear as avatars—figured in a “CSI” television episode in 2007, in which characters from the television show pursued an investigation in *Second Life* and entered there as characters (Riley, 2007; see Chapter 9 later in this book for more on *Second Life*). “Lost” tried something even more ambitious, setting up a real Web site for “Oceanic Airlines”—the fictitious airline which flew the lost flight that started the show—on which users could look for “additional” flights. “Lost,” as well as J. J. Abrams’ more recent show, “Fringe,” offer “Easter eggs,” or clues on the Web, which fans can then find to gain special insight into the ongoing stories on television.

As “Fringe” Executive Producer Jeff Pinkner told TV Guide’s Mickey O’Connor in an online interview (2008), “There are many Easter eggs, several of which have

yet to be discovered by anybody—either on the show or out there on the Internet. There’s a clue in every episode that tells you what the next episode will be about.”

So “Lost” and “Fringe” deliberately seeded the Internet with clues to enhance the viewers’ enjoyment of the show, not just by giving them valuable information but by making the viewers more than viewers, turning them into researchers, and in effect much more active participants in the unfolding fiction of the show. And, to complete the cycle, some of these viewers who were transformed into researchers were so inspired that they blogged about the show. (And the cycle continues in the university classroom. Sarah Clarke Stuart’s Spring 2009 “The Infinite Narrative: Intertextuality, New Media and the Digital Communities of ‘Lost’” course at the University of North Florida, for example, uses blogs about “Lost,” including one of my reviews in *Infinite Regress*, as part of the course’s required reading; see Stuart, 2009; Aasen, 2009.)

But the new new media of the Web are doing more than making anyone who so desires to be a publisher. New new media of sound and image are also making some of us producers.

NEW NEW MEDIA

PAUL LEVINSON

Fordham University

Allyn & Bacon

Boston Columbus Indianapolis New York San Francisco Upper Saddle River
Amsterdam Cape Town Dubai London Madrid Milan Munich Paris Montreal Toronto
Delhi Mexico City Sao Paulo Sydney Hong Kong Seoul Singapore Taipei Tokyo

Acquisitions Editor: Jeanne Zalesky
Assistant Editor: Megan Lentz
Marketing Manager: Wendy Gordon
Production Editor: Pat Torelli
Manufacturing Buyer: Debbie Rossi
Editorial Production and Composition Services: Elm Street Publishing Services/Integra Software
Services Pvt. Ltd.
Cover Designer: Kristina Mose-Libon

Copyright © 2009 Paul Levinson. All rights reserved. Manufactured in the United States of America. This publication is protected by Copyright, and permission should be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or likewise. To obtain permission(s) to use material from this work, please submit a written request to Pearson Higher Education, Rights and Contracts Department, 501 Boylston Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02116, or fax your request to 617-671-3447.

Many of the designations by manufacturers and sellers to distinguish their products are claimed as trademarks. Where those designations appear in this book, and the publisher was aware of a trademark claim, the designations have been printed in initial caps or all caps.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Levinson, Paul.

New new media / Paul Levinson.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-205-67330-8

1. Social media. 2. Computer network resources. 3. User-generated content. I. Title.

ZA4150.L48 2009

302.23'1—dc22

2009017972

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 RRD-VA 13 12 11 10 09

Allyn & Bacon
is an imprint of

PEARSON

www.pearsonhighered.com

ISBN-10: 0-205-67330-9

ISBN-13: 978-0-205-67330-8

To Tina, Simon, and Molly, always new to me.