

MEDIA SURVEY 2008

Under increased pressure and facing the uncertain industry economics, journalists are producing content for multiple mediums, being asked to do more with less, and constantly monitoring their value to their media companies.



State of it

► From increased responsibilities to growing competition, the constantly evolving media landscape has created both challenges and opportunities for today's journalists, finds the first-ever PRWeek/PR Newswire Media Survey. *Frank Washkuch* reports

Seven years ago, Scott Hensley was a successful newspaper reporter. Working the healthcare beat for *The Wall Street Journal*, he focused on creating detailed reports for the print edition.

Today, Hensley is the editor of the *Journal's* Health Blog, a career move he says he couldn't have foreseen just a few years ago.

"I've become a blogger, and I didn't even know what that was a few years ago," he says. "The thing that has changed my life the most is blogging. I start at 7am every day, and it's a rare day when I'm out of [the office] before 5pm. We're a news-driven blog. We post eight to 10 times a day. We try to have three up by 9am; a half-dozen by noon. "When I was writing for print," he adds, "I wasn't even thinking about what a possible story would be most days by 10am."

Hensley isn't alone. Many journalists are having to expand their skill set and add "blogger" to their résumés. Moreover, reporters at newspapers across the country are finding that they have to fill an online news hole, as well as the traditional ink-stained pages, according to the 2008 PRWeek/PR Newswire Media Survey.

Journalists across all mediums report that they are taking on more work. When asked what has affected their jobs the most over the past few years, 38.2% say they are expected to contribute more to their title's online version. Those extra inches of type, however, result in more opportunities for both journalists and PR pros because stories that don't make the newspaper or magazine can find a home on the Web, explains Dave Armon, COO of PR Newswire.

"[The survey shows] that reporters [are] obviously writing a lot more for online, as well as for the traditional outlets. For a PR person, it [is] very encouraging; the possible hole [for reporters] to fill is much larger now," he says. "So story ideas that don't make it into the [print] publication have a home not only on the online site, but possibly also on the reporter's own blog. And that just makes for a much more vibrant 24-hour news environment for anyone in media relations."

Of the 1,231 media members surveyed, 41.3% work for newspapers; 29.5% work for print magazines; 9.3% are in TV news; 8.2% work for online magazines and news Web sites; 6.4% are bloggers;

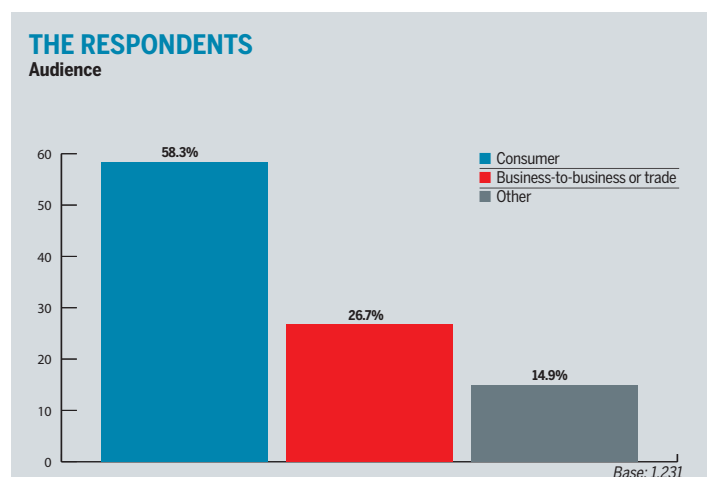
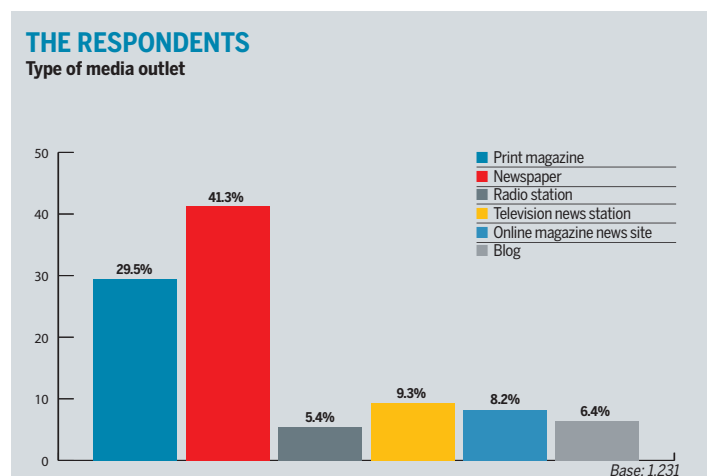
and 5.4% are employed at radio stations. The majority (58.3%) of respondents work for outlets geared toward a consumer audience, while 26.7% work for trade outlets.

GREATER WORKLOAD

As newspapers and other traditional media outlets rush to upgrade Web sites and add multimedia tools, reporters and editors are working more hours, some on staffs whittled away by buyouts and layoffs. Of the survey's respondents, 57.3% report they are tasked with working more today than in the past few years, and 55.8% say they are contributing to other mediums outside of their official duty.

The prevalence of news Web sites is forcing journalists to work more – and faster – than in the past. The fervent pace kept by bloggers – both amateur and professional – means reporters who have been filing dispatches at the same pace for decades now must work at a speed once reserved for wire correspondents, notes James Pindell, managing editor of Politicker.com and a former newspaper reporter.

"I covered the New Hampshire primaries for *The Boston Globe*, and no one attended more events



transition

than I did. I [went to] between 350 and 500 campaign events in the past few years. The reason? Technology," he says. "If I know I'm writing about Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), I can go cover McCain. Then when I'm done reporting, and have time, I can go to a [former Sen.] John Edwards (D-NC) event a half-hour away, set up shop, write the story there, file it, and not lose any productive time because I had to go back to the office."

However, Internet-age reporting has its negatives, especially in terms of accuracy. Charles Kaiser, *Radar* columnist, remembers a time when newspaper reporters filed only a few stories per week. Now penning numerous stories or posts per day, reporters are also writing more corrections and updates, he explains.

While following up the widely discussed February *New York Times* story that cited aides concerned that a relationship between McCain and a lobbyist had grown romantic, Kaiser says *Radar* tried to leave former Republican Rep. Vin Weber ample time to respond to allegations that he was one of the *Times*' sources. The story soon needed to be updated, Kaiser explains.

"I told [a receptionist] that I had to post this [column] in 15 minutes. After a half hour, I hadn't heard from him [and posted the story]," he recalls. "After 50 minutes, he called back and said absolutely, positively the story was not true in any way. We got that up in 60 seconds. We wouldn't have gone with the original story if he had given us the denial when I had first called."

ANTICIPATING CHANGE

As cuts in newspaper staffs at major outlets, such as *The New York Times* and the *LA Times*, are making headlines of their own, editors and reporters recognize that there are many changes still to come.



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— Scott Hensley, editor of *The Wall Street Journal's health blog*

More than two-thirds (67.3%) of respondents from newspapers anticipate print circulation declines and increased focus on the Web at their publications over the next three years, while 41.1% expect a shift in staffing from print to online. Additionally, 39.7% of print magazine journalists expect circulation declines and Web growth and 24.2% a shift in staff to online activities. Yet 38.2% of newspaper staffers expect a reduction in staff over the next three years, while only 9.4% of magazine journalists do.

However, one response in particular – 63.5% of print magazine or newspaper journalists saying their publication will continue "indefinitely" in its current state – surprises Armon.

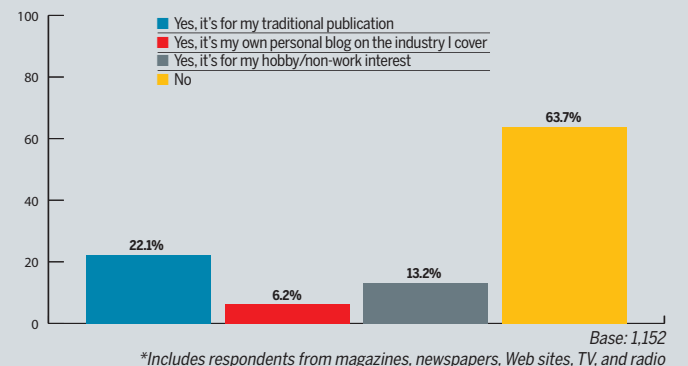
"[It's] more of an optimism than I would have expected about the life expectancy of publications and mainstream media outlets. It was encouraging to see journalists feeling that there is a place for their publications, that their employers aren't going out of business anytime soon," he says. "It was good to see [journalists] were still more committed to their jobs and their professions and they think there is a bright future – or at least a future."

Many reporters are still slow to embrace blogging, even though it provides an opportunity to enhance their job skills, says Greg Hernandez, staff writer and blogger at the *Los Angeles Daily News*. Indeed, only 22.1% of respondents report writing a blog for their traditional outlet.

"I think overall there were some early adopters, people who did embrace it early on," he notes. "And maybe they were more online-savvy and [saw] how their lives were moving in this direction and they realized that. But I think some journalists who had been

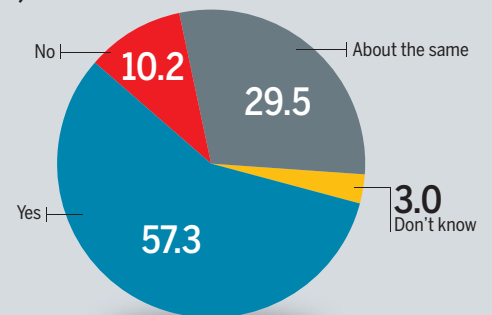
TRADITIONAL JOURNALISTS WHO BLOG

Are you the author of a blog?



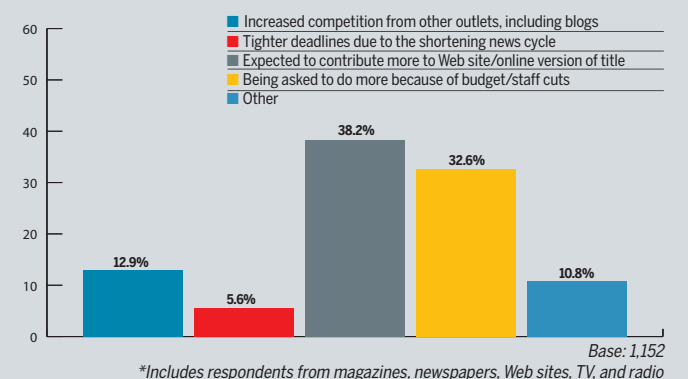
TRADITIONAL MEDIA WORKLOAD

Are you being asked to work more today than in the past few years? (% respondents)



FACTORS AFFECTING TRADITIONAL MEDIA JOBS

Which of the following has most affected your job over the past three years?



PROFILE OF CHANGING MEDIA: LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS



Until two years ago, the *Los Angeles Daily News*' Web site had, for the most part, the same content as its print sibling, plus a few additional features, such as photo galleries.

That changed with the hiring of Josh Kleinbaum, now the managing editor of the Los Angeles News Group's interactive operation. Almost immediately, staff members created new blogs, as well as other new features.

"I wanted to start a blog, and within an hour we could start it," says Greg Hernandez, entertainment reporter and author of the *Out in Hollywood* blog. "It's still evolving, but we started to have a presence; a few people started to blog and then everyone started to blog. Blogs were a big part of it, but [management] was already starting to think in terms of, for instance, for awards shows, [how] a photo gallery would be huge, so we had to do that."

Hernandez credits the sports staff with finding a large online audience with its blogs.

"The sports blogs are just bonanzas," he points out. "The *Inside USC* and *Inside UCLA* blogs, those are 20,000 hits per day. Sports fans will check those sites time and time again throughout the day, and the beat reporter is out there during practice and games and can get them big stories, and it's perfect for sports."

don't think they can be driven out in the short term."

And as many newspaper and magazine Web sites begin to resemble large blogs or newsletters – complete with post-story comment sections – the definition of who is a journalist is blurring, says Armon.

"What we're seeing here is the differentiation between blogger and journalist disappearing rapidly," he says. "The idea of claiming that journalists are second-rate because they're not accredited by some government entity is hogwash. If they have the audience, and they have the original content, then who's to say that they're not journalists?"

Yet the survey indicates that bloggers themselves oppose joining the journalist ranks. More than half (53.2%) do not consider themselves journalists, although just over one-half (50.6%) of bloggers had previously worked for a traditional publication. When asked if they expect to work for a large media company someday, 55.7% of bloggers say no, while 74.7% say they don't expect their blog to be acquired by a media company.

Matthew Cerrone, the owner and operator of *MetsBlog*, quit his job at a small PR shop two years ago to run his baseball fan site full time. Yet despite working a full schedule, sometimes competing for scoops with New York-based sports reporters, he does not consider himself a journalist – even if many of his readers expect him to be one.

"I think there are expectations of me as a writer, but I think people forget that I am just blogging my experience as a baseball fan," he explains. "If I happen to relay sto-

ries, or if I relay my experience sitting on a couch throughout a game or talking with a former player over the phone, so be it. Sometimes I'm just blogging my experience."

THE RADIO STORY

Employees of magazines and newspapers are not alone in their fear of management showing veteran reporters the door in favor of thicker bottom lines. The owners of many small-market radio stations have replaced experienced – or eager-to-learn – individuals with computerized broadcasts emanating from a centralized source, says Joe Mathieu, an XM Satellite Radio host who previously worked as managing editor and anchor for CBS MarketWatch.

In addition, many radio hosts are expected to produce witty, opinionated blog posts throughout their shifts. Booth video of radio shows is becoming more common, as well. Podcasts are another opportunity for hosts to place full interviews, which are often cut down in length to go on-air, within the reach of diehard fans, he says.

However, the lack of small-town radio stations leaves large-market channels without the "minor leagues" where they once recruited younger talent, adds Mathieu.

"I'm a fairly young guy, but it was just long enough ago when [a station] had to have a big reel-to-reel [tape recorder]," he recalls. "Then came the so-called 'jack in the box' [automation technology] that allowed radio stations to completely automate talk for 12 hours or more and do radio. It eliminated the small-to-midsize market radio stations that used

around a long time... resented any new work.

"[Moving to the Web] really requires more work out of everyone," adds Hernandez. "People resented [being asked to do] more work for the same pay. They weren't grasping that the survival of the business and the publications were at stake and [that] if they couldn't step up, there might not have been room for them in the business."

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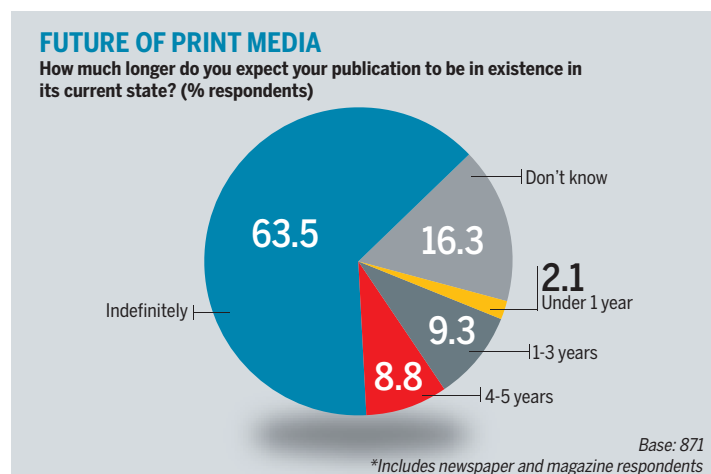
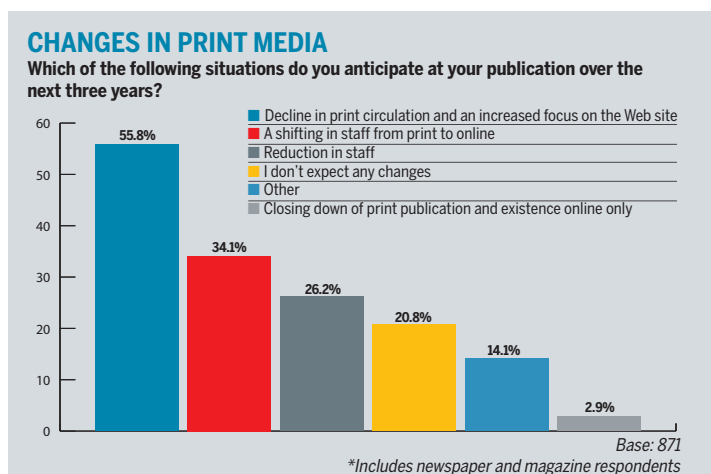
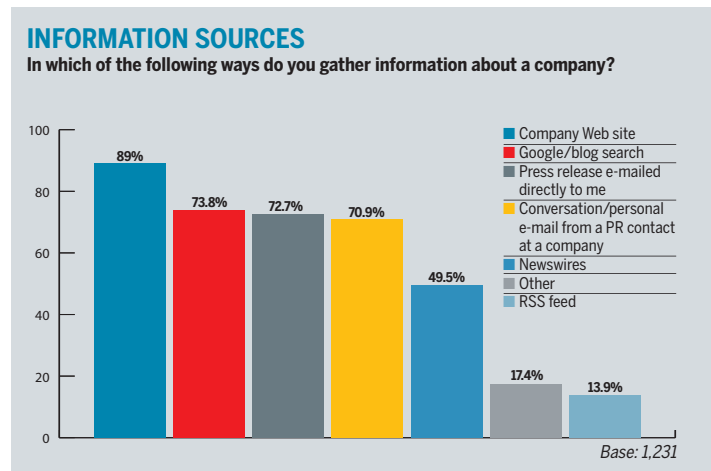
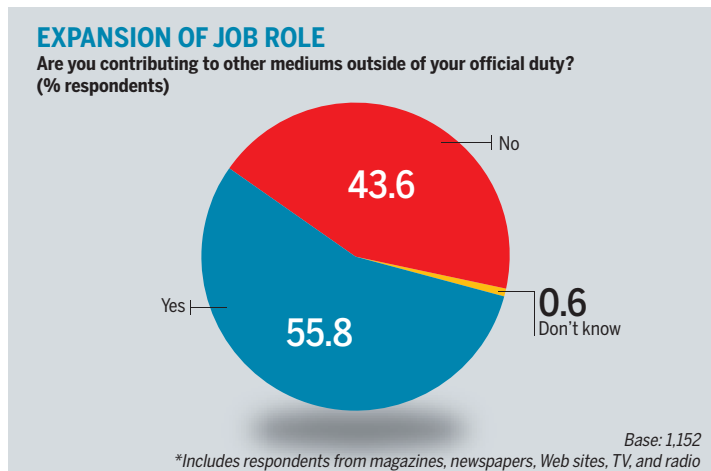
– Dave Armon, COO
PR Newswire

BLOGS: BANE OR BOON

Some traditional reporters and editors might blame bloggers and other new-media pioneers for the newspaper industry's financial troubles, which have resulted in thousands of layoffs. Yet some bloggers contend that nontraditional Web sites are actually allies to major news organizations.

Even if bloggers wanted to unite in order to push the mainstream media into the information dustbin, they would not be successful, due to the established reputation of many newspapers, says Paul Kiel, reporter/blogger at *Talking Points Memo*, a blog that recently won a George Polk Award for its reporting on the possibly politically motivated firings of US attorneys.

"We push a lot of traffic toward *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, and our readers are complete political junkies," he explains. "So the idea that people are reading us and not the *Times* seems pretty absurd to me. We're a competitor in the sense that we're trying to get stories before [they do], but it's also a situation where I don't think we're taking readers from [them]. The *Times* and the *Post* are such unique newspapers – they're institutions in a way – and I



to be the training grounds for radio. If I were getting into the business now, I wouldn't even know where to begin because all of those small stations that were incubators for talent are automating out of a computer."

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

As the media landscape is changing, so are the tools journalists use to do their jobs. Not surprisingly, the Internet has had the biggest effect. When asked how they acquire information about a company, journalists cite company Web sites (89%), Google (73.8%), e-mailed press releases (72.7%), and conversation/personalized e-mail from a PR person (70.9%). Nearly half (49.5%) use newswires, while only 13.9% report that they use RSS feeds.

Journalists are also turning to social networking sites and blogs to supplement their news coverage or find sources. Of those surveyed, 25.5% say they have a profile on MySpace, 29% are on Facebook, and 32.3% are on LinkedIn. While only 8.4% say they "always" use blogs for research, more than 36.5% say they use them "sometimes." In addition, 57.7% report using blogs to measure sentiment, 38.7% for finding subjects, and 29.5% for searching industry experts.

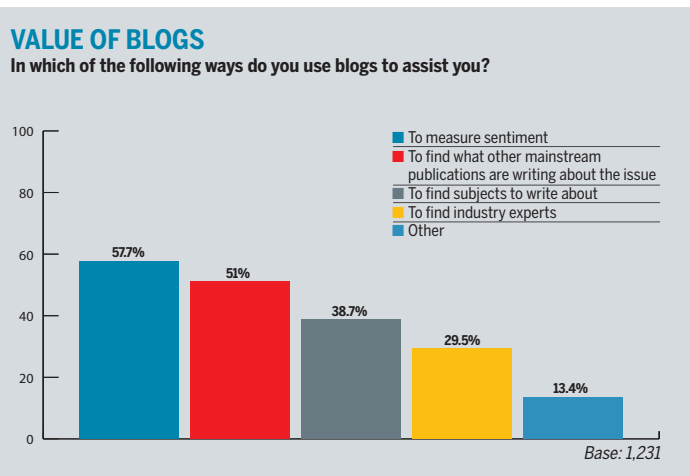
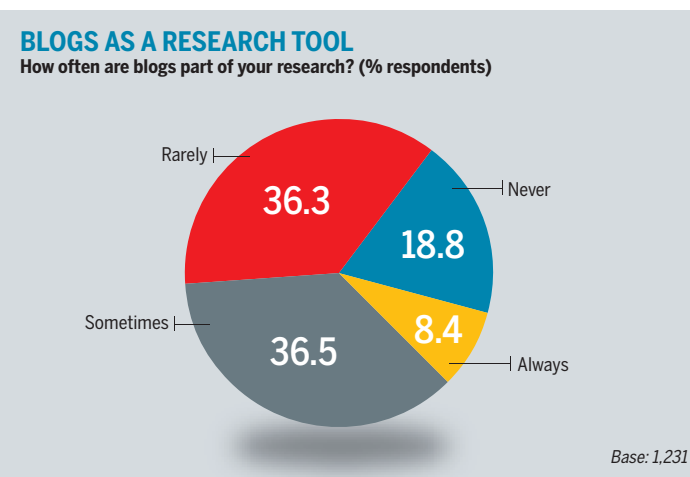
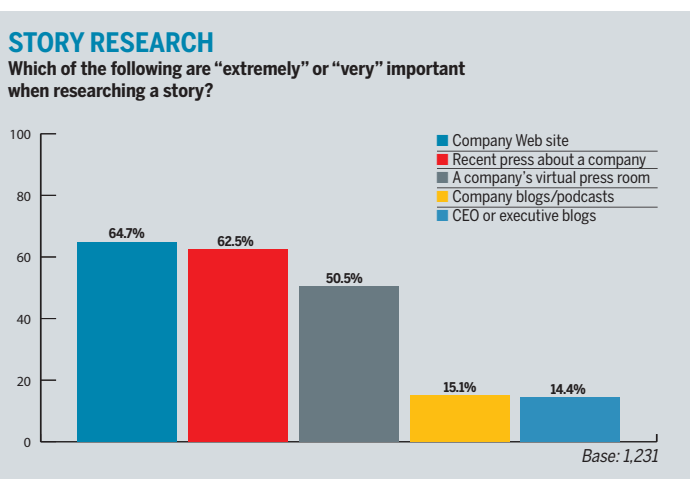
The *LA Daily News'* Hernandez, who says he caught the blogging bug earlier than many colleagues, is blunt when assessing the chances of getting – or keeping – a job for those without Web skills in today's dog-eat-dog environment.

"If you can't do that, just get out," he asserts. "Really, I mean in terms of the Web and being able to do your own research, you have to be really savvy on the Internet – and you should be, if you're a reporter, for God's sake."

As for how journalists prefer to receive information, e-mail is clearly the medium of choice (93.5%), according to the survey. Journalists rate getting information from newswires (24%) higher than a phone call (16.6%) or a fax (9%). Today's journalists should be able to use blogging platforms quickly and accurately, know how to record and post podcasts to the Web, and familiarize themselves with video-blogging technology and the intricacies of reporting for a technically savvy audience.

"My whole life has changed in terms of how I do things," says Rachel Sklar, columnist for *The Huffington Post*. "You used to write the words and e-mail them in a story. Now it's writing it, hyper-linking it, picking an image, framing it, designing it within the parameters of the program you have, and determining if it looks OK. I'm also an editor – it's a self-generating thing where I decide what I cover."

Journalism schools are so aware of the move to the Web that many programs teach students to pick up a digital camera or video recorder



in the same ways they used to teach tight news writing. David Domke, journalism professor at the University of Washington, says that his students sometimes have a few things to teach him during online journalism classes.

"I guess I had some skepticism that they had the ability to function across technical platforms, and that they had the ability to write, record, and do audio/video with any kind of speed and accuracy. In the traditional journalism world, most people 40 [years old] or [more], can't do that," he says. "For [the younger generation]," adds Domke, "reporting is not just a pen, pencil, and a laptop. For them, reporting is a digital camera, an audio recorder, a cell-phone camera, and maybe a laptop. And that's where I wasn't going to be able to help them because I don't have that knowledge."

However, some things don't change. According to the survey, 86.2% cite personal contacts as "extremely" or "very" important in finding experts for stories; 66.9% choose news articles; 55.1% tap company Web sites, while 52.2% pick readers who contact them and 49.6% pick press releases.

The survey also indicates that journalists have mixed feelings about dealing with PR pros. When asked what percentage of pitches they receive is related to the subject they cover, the highest number (48.7%) say zero to 25%. More than one-quarter (26.1%) say 26%-50% of pitches are relevant and 16.9% say 51%-75% of pitches are useful. Only 7% of respondents say 76%-100% of pitches are relevant.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Successful Web sites make it more difficult for weeklies and monthlies to keep timely content on their pages, changing the way periodi-



"There's a different page-view culture [than a few years ago]"

– Rachel Sklar, columnist *The Huffington Post*

55.8% of respondents say they are contributing to other mediums outside of their official duty

PROFILE OF CHANGING MEDIA: POLITICKER.COM

Fifty Web sites in 50 states.

That's the plan for Politicker.com, a Web-only news organization set to cover this year's Presidential election and local contests from the ground level.

The Web site has launched in 10 states thus far, with more planned as national managing editor James Pindell hires additional staffers. Jared Kushner, publisher of the *New York Observer*, owns the venture.

The organization is the descendant of PoliticsNJ.com, which launched in 2000, and was acquired by Kushner and renamed PolitickerNJ a year ago.

Pindell explains that a news operation such as Politicker.com, which has no print version, can only exist online.

"The Internet is the only logical means of delivery for our product. In terms of our model, it's different from others, which are Washington, DC-based. The traditional newspapers – *The [New York] Times*, *The [Washington] Post*, even *Roll Call* and *Politico* – they all have reporters in

Washington," he says. "We're doing something different, which is having Web sites in all 50 states with reporters in all [of them] covering those states each day."





“We are now competing with the Web, so we have to do things the Web doesn’t”

— Jason Tanz, *Wired* senior editor

calls measure success of news stories and columns in print, says Jason Tanz, senior editor at *Wired*.

“We are now competing with the Web,” he notes, “so we have to do things the Web doesn’t do.”

“We are a technology magazine, and there’s a ton of technology online and people aren’t going to be turning to us for the raw data,” Tanz adds. “They’re going to be turning to us for the stories and the kinds of things magazines traditionally provided, and those might not translate so quickly to the Web.”

During the glory days of print journalism, reporters waited days or weeks for feedback on their articles from readers. Now, reporters publish news stories to the Web moments after they’re approved by a copy desk or news editor, and reaction is swift as bloggers post stories or readers share stories with one another.

That use of Web technology has a multi-fold result. For one, reporters and editors can quickly follow up a story or gauge public sentiment after a piece’s dissemination. Reporters can also measure their own popularity by the number of comments posted or by how many times it is linked to by other blogs or Web sites, says Sklar.

“There’s a different page-view culture [than a few years ago]. Gawker is the biggest example of that with its pay-for-page views,” she says. “It’s like the question of ‘if a tree falls.’ If you write something and it’s not picked up [elsewhere], does anyone read it?”

Yet few journalists surveyed expect the Gawker model to catch on. Just 18.4% of respondents say they believe more publications will start

PROFILE OF CHANGING MEDIA: RADAR MAGAZINE



Radar has taken an unconventional route to its place as a popular-culture, politics, and current-events magazine and Web destination.

After calling it quits following just three issues in 2003, management shut down the publication after another three-issue run in 2005 due to financial problems. The title then tried its luck online, launching RadarOnline.com in September 2006 and its print counterpart five months later.

Radar used a different Web strategy during its most recent launch than during the first two versions of the publication, with more emphasis on breaking news and original content, according to senior editor Tyler Gray.

The new online content strategy also gives reporters more incentive to track the online distribution of their stories, he adds.

“I worked for six years at daily newspapers and I can’t get the thing out of me that wants to do a story quickly when it breaks,” Gray notes. “I think there’s that influence into daily print journalism, even if it’s going online. “[Reporters] can track where their stories are picked up immediately and there’s some instant gratification. They can see who picks it up and how hot their story is.”

compensating employees in a pay-per-performance model, while 30.1% disagree. The majority (51.4%) of respondents say they did not know.

When asked to select the ways in which they measure the success of their work, 70.1% choose feedback from colleagues, while 50% pick comments from readers online. Less than half cite links from other media (41.8%), a place on the most-read or most-e-mailed list (38.1%), and letters to the editor (34%).

But electronic measurements can give journalists another way to show management that they are worth the investment during an age of newsroom cuts, says Hernandez.

“We just had 22 layoffs in our newsroom,” he reports. “Anyone who is remaining, in this newsroom or in any other, has to look hard at themselves, their productivity, and their relevance to the organization. I remember the days when people would just turn in stories on cruise control. The business cannot support that now; you have to bring something to the table.”

And journalists are also aware that they are contributing to the financial health of their entities. More than nine in 10 respondents (91.4%) say an “extremely” or “very” important goal of their work is to make their publications successful by creating appealing content. ■

The PRWeek/PR Newswire survey on assessing the attitudes and ideas of traditional journalists and bloggers, specifically regarding their duties, workload, interaction with PR pros, and opinions of the future of media, was conducted by PRWeek and Millward Brown.

E-mail notification was sent to approximately 8,675 traditional journalists and 956 bloggers. A link to the survey was also posted to a journalist group message board on Facebook.

A total of 1,231 journalists (1,152 traditional journalists and 79 bloggers) completed the survey online between January 14-30, 2008. Results aren’t weighted.

