

Poynter.

**Becoming**  
a  
**Better Online Editor**  
Quality, ethics, manipulation,  
attribution, deadline decision making...oh, my

Knight New Media Center  
Oct. 23, 2006

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**Becoming**  
a  
**Better Online Editor**

*The future arrives too soon  
and in the wrong order  
Author Alvin Toffler (1927 - )*

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## **My purpose**

Share thoughts about our changing world

1. Why this matters  
In a world of news as commodity
2. What are you doing about it today?
3. How might you do it better in the future?

## **Our learning path**

1. Macro trends
2. Specific examples
3. Your participation

*This is a conversation, not a lecture*

## What is your job?

How do you see your job  
in terms of journalism?

## Media credibility

Not a happy trend  
Not a new trend

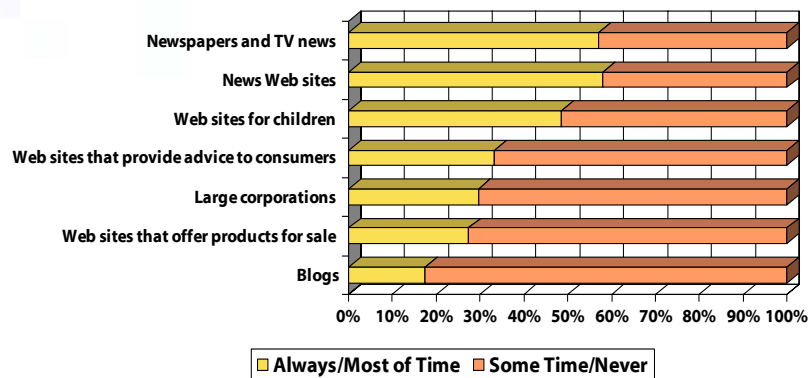
## They don't believe

### Gallup Poll on media credibility

- 2004 survey
  - ✓ 44% expressed confidence in the media's ability
    - 9% a great deal; 34% a fair amount
  - ✓ 2003 the number was 54%
    - Which was close to average since 1997

## They don't believe

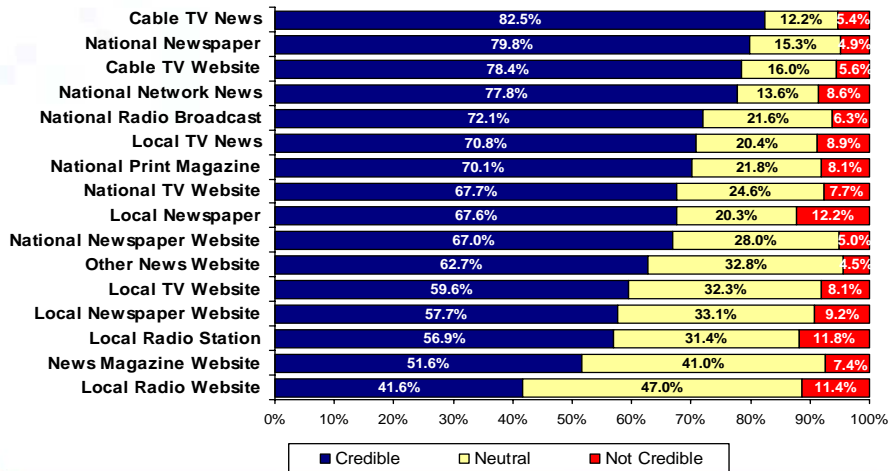
### Trust in organizations for accurate information



Source: Consumer Reports Web Watch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite the Dangers," October 26, 2005.

## Online public's credibility ratings

ONA's project in 2000

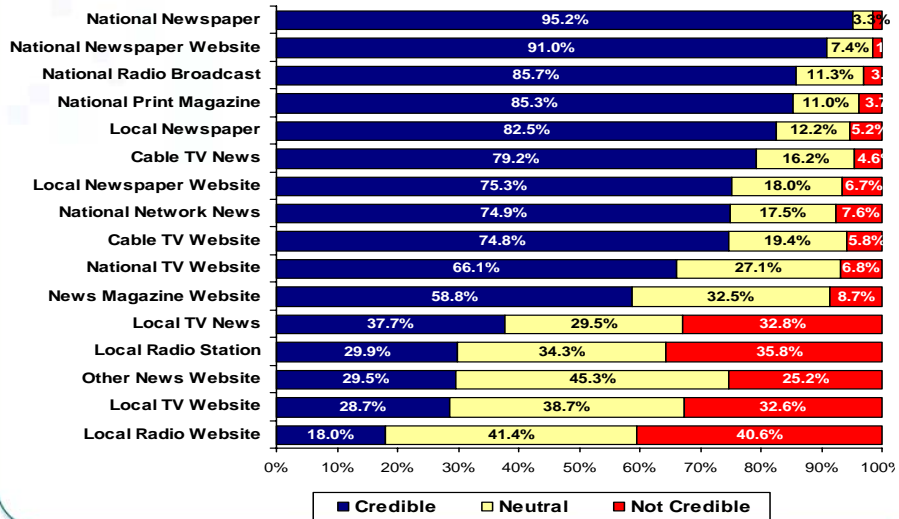


## The public vs. media workers

ONA's project in 2000

- We believe in ourselves more than the public believes in us

## Media workers' credibility ratings

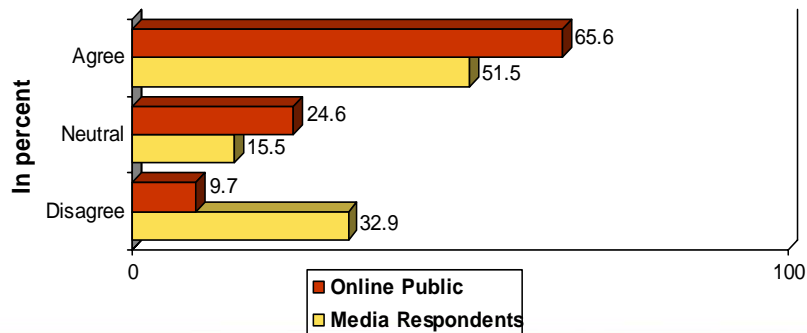


## Influence of business interests

ONA study showed public is more skeptical

✓ So are media workers

Do advertisers and business interests influence how news is reported?



## Now what?

What's needed?

How will it get done?

Who will do it?

## The Poynter Online Ethics Project

Foundation: Poynter's ethics work

- Led by Bob Steele
  - ✓ He's been teaching ethics for more than 15 years
    - Assisted by others in Poynter faculty
      - » Howard Finberg
      - » Kelly McBride
      - » Bill Mitchell
      - » Butch Ward

## The Poynter Online Ethics Project

### Developing principles and protocols

- Assistance by more than 20 online leaders and newspaper editors
  - 2 day working seminar at Poynter in August

## The Poynter Online Ethics Project

### Principles / Core Values

- The standards that guide us
- “What we stand for”

### Protocols

- The process for making decisions
- Catalyst for discussions
  - ✓ The questions we need to ask

## The assertions

*For your challenge, amendment and/or agreement*

1. Online publishing has the opportunity for serving the audience in new and meaningful ways. Journalists have an important **responsibility** to explore that potential as part of their constitutionally-protected responsibilities to hold the powerful accountable and serve as a public watchdog.

## The assertions

*For your challenge, amendment and/or agreement*

2. **Journalism values** in such areas as truth, community and democracy should endure only if we embrace dramatic changes in the pressures and competition we face and the products we publish. Journalists should accept the challenge and embrace the opportunity to build new business models that will flourish in the new media age. Journalism's highest values can only endure if they stand on **sound economic foundation**. It is essential that the journalists who adhere to those values are proactive – not just reactive – participants in the process of innovation.

## The assertions

*For your challenge, amendment and/or agreement*

3. Written ethics guidelines based on those values are an essential ingredient in the decision-making required in various forms of emerging media. Such guidelines will be most useful if framed as **aspirations** as opposed to rules and if compiled or revised with the active participation of the audience. Ethics guidelines should not be considered the exclusive province of those who describe themselves as journalists; their usefulness is tied to the act of journalism as opposed to the resume of its creator.

## The assertions

*For your challenge, amendment and/or agreement*

4. **Transparency** is a necessary dimension of a news organization's and/or individual's relationship with the audience. Transparency must be linked with **accountability** – institutional as well as individual.

## The assertions

*For your challenge, amendment and/or agreement*

5. Limited resources, the novelty of online publishing or a lack of protocols **cannot become an excuse** for shoddy work or causing harm.

## Our challenge

Identify the key areas of concern

- Develop principles, protocols and questions around the topic
- This isn't about rule making

## The 10 issues we identified

- 1. Revenue and Content**  
The relationship between advertising and editorial in a world without borders
- 2. Community Generated Content**  
What role does the media company play?
- 3. The Reporter as Commentator**  
The voice of the journalist outside the news story
- 4. Credibility, Accuracy**  
Are the rules different?
- 5. Speed vs. Thoroughness**  
What are the tradeoffs?

## The 10 issues we identified

- 6. Transparency**  
How much do we explain how and what we do?
- 7. Multimedia & Manipulation**  
Use of audio, video, images
- 8. Voice, Tone and Attitude**  
Are the boundaries different?
- 9. Workflow & Staffing Challenges**  
The Role of Editor & Editing
- 10. Journalism's Role**  
Watchdog vs. Corporate interests

## Our challenge, today

What are the most important issues?

Where would you put your “money”?

- You have 7 dots to spend

## Our challenge, today

Let's take the top three issues

- Work together in a group and identify
  - ✓ Key areas of concern
    - What are the problems?
    - What are the issues?
  - ✓ Key things to think about
    - What are the principles we should consider?
    - What protocols should be considered?
  - ✓ Key questions to ask ourselves
    - What kind of FAQ could you build to help your organization??

## Dealing with the challenges

Reports from the work groups

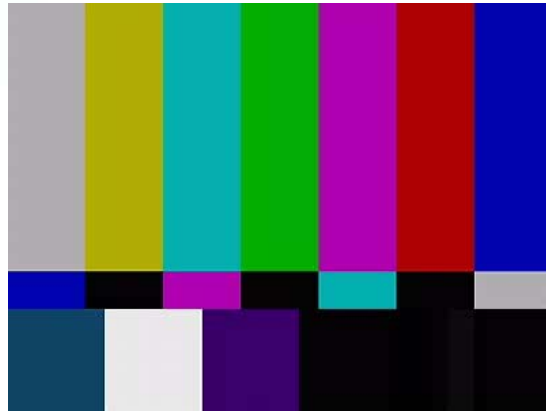
## Final thoughts

How does this work at your organization?

How would you like it to work?

## Final thoughts

### About User Generated Content



Thanks for listening.

Have lots of fun during the seminar.

Howard Finberg

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