

Uses and Perceptions of Blogs: A Report on Professional Journalists and Journalism Educators

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As journalism educators prepare their students to succeed professionally, whether professional journalists and educators see eye-to-eye on emerging trends that influence current journalism practice is worth examining. A national online survey of journalism professionals and educators found that professionals use blogs significantly more than educators. Educators had similar views of blogs, but professional journalists' uses and perceptions of blogs varied depending on type of organization they worked for and occupational position in their news organizations. Educators are quick to catch on to national trends in journalism even though they do not routinely use blogs, as they are trained to assess the impact of critical trends in the discipline.

The news industry has experienced exponential growth of online news publications with the adoption of the Internet as a strategic medium for news delivery.¹ The Internet's interactive nature allows news to be delivered through a converged platform of multimodal and multidirectional capabilities, challenging the way journalists deliver news and how the audience receives it.²

Most recently, the emergence of blogs has sparked debate about "who is a journalist and what journalism is."³ Prominent journalists have started blogs, and Web sites of well-known

media outlets have adopted blogs onto their news sites.⁴ In the process, blogs have compelled traditional journalists to change the way they deliver news.⁵

Blogs have been described as a new form of communication that shifts mainstream control of information to the audience. Emergent technology allows bloggers to express views and blog readers to engage in meaningful conversation, thus empowering news audiences to become information providers.⁶ Some describe blogs as an emancipatory tool for communication with the transformative potential of

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challenging traditional hegemonic notions of information delivery.⁷

Basic opinion surveys of journalists regarding blogs have begun,⁸ yet empirical research assessing how journalism professionals use blogs and how they evaluate the importance of blogs is lacking. In addition, how journalism educators, who nurture the next generation of journalists, use and perceive blogs has not been examined. With the changing media climate, it is, thus, worthwhile to examine how these key individuals adopt blogs and perceive their influence on journalism today. The current study aims to compare journalism professionals' and journalism educators' uses and perceptions of blogs. Additionally, this study seeks to identify conditions associated with blog uses and perceptions among professional journalists and journalism educators.

Technology and the Journalism Profession

Technology has always played a critical role in journalism. Various technological transformations, from Gutenberg's printing press and the development of photography to radio and television, have advanced it. At the same time, these technologies also challenged existing journalism conventions.⁹ The Internet is only the latest to challenge the way journalists deliver news and how the audience receives it. Particularly, blogs, an easy-to-use Web publishing tool, allow users without knowledge of HTML to create and update a Web site within minutes. Accordingly, millions of people have created their own personal blogs to

keep a journal about the events revolving around their lives and to have their reflections recorded.¹⁰ Many bloggers are participating in some form of amateur journalism, challenging the role(s) of traditional journalists.¹¹ These trends are significant to journalists as blogs have been characterized as being socially interactive and community-like in nature.¹² They potentially allow bloggers to express opinions and blog readers to engage in meaningful conversations. For all of these reasons, blogs are described as an emancipatory challenge to one-way communication.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, mainstream news media reporters and editors have often disregarded blogging because of its lack of credibility, for failing to be objective, and for the lack of journalistic training of bloggers.¹³ Bloggers countered this criticism by arguing that mainstream journalists are often arrogant elitists who do not want to include the public in deciding what's important and what's not.¹⁴ Pundits, however, point out that blogging can benefit traditional journalism by providing different perspectives, by helping to regain trust traditional news organizations have lost, and by increasing interactivity in journalism.¹⁵ Bloggers also recognize that they need to learn traditional news values, the benefits of editing, and the importance of original reporting from traditional journalists in order to be perceived as credible sources of news information.¹⁶ Thus, the central question concerning the debate about blogs is who is a journalist and what is journalism in the twenty-first century.¹⁷

As the debate between journalists and bloggers continues, audiences' views of news and journalism appear

to be changing. Lowrey and Anderson found that news audiences' perception of what is news has broadened, and thus they tend to use both traditional news media sites and nontraditional news sources when seeking news information.¹⁸ They concluded that audience participation activities, such as blogging, will increasingly challenge traditional journalism, and the perceived authority exclusive to traditional journalists will decline.¹⁹

However, while studies about blog use by the general population²⁰ and blog content on online news publications²¹ exist, little has been done to tap into how journalism professionals use and perceive blogs. Furthermore, practitioners have historically been labeled "laggards" in adopting new technologies due to lack of training and slow integration of emerging technologies into their work.²² As more Internet-based communication tools, such as blogs, emerge and gain popularity, journalism professionals must stay ahead of the curve and understand how to adopt such technologies. This study examines such trends.

Technology in Journalism Education

Technology, especially the Internet, is also changing how educators train the journalists of tomorrow and ultimately how journalists do their jobs.²³ Subsequently, teaching journalism and mass communication has become a "technology-intensive occupation" with those educators encountering technology in their academic lives more frequently than educators in other academic disciplines.²⁴ JMC faculty members teach writing, reporting,

editing, and publication design in labs equipped with computers and digital cameras. Computer-assisted reporting and online journalism classes have become the norm in many JMC programs. In addition, because the computer software used in various programs, such as print design and Web publishing, are constantly updated, educators must also make efforts to stay abreast of these changes to keep their students up to speed.

Despite monumental changes brought on by technology, some researchers have criticized the field as being slow to respond to technology in terms of training for both faculty and students.²⁵ In the early days of the Web's commercial acceptance, researchers pointed out that accredited programs that did not have a Web presence were not recognizing technology's impact on the field.²⁶ Later research showed administrators embracing both marketing capabilities and the opportunity to offer courses online.²⁷ Technology has, in essence, placed journalism education at an important turning point in curriculum development.²⁸

It is, therefore, important to examine whether journalism educators are embracing technological changes occurring in the professional media world into their programs. Because of the traditional disconnect between journalism educators and professional journalists, with each pointing fingers at the other for either lack of theory or practice,²⁹ whether there are consistencies or inconsistencies between the groups regarding the adoption of new technologies, such as blogs, is significant.

Furthermore, journalism educators nurture the next generation of

journalism professionals. It is, therefore, worth examining whether journalism professionals and educators see eye-to-eye on emerging trends and factors influencing current journalism practice and culture. As journalism educators equip their students with tools and skills to succeed as working professionals, it is important to assess how educators evaluate current trends and whether the views that they have on the current news media climate properly prepare the next generation of journalists in the converged digital media environment.

Research Questions

As journalism educators nurture future journalism professionals, we believe how educators and professionals receive an emerging journalism tool should be consistent. Based on the increasing attention blogs are attracting and the discussion of their potential influences on journalism, we formed the following research questions:

RQ1a: How frequently do journalism professionals and educators participate in blogging activities?

RQ1b: Are there differences in the way journalism professionals and educators use blogs?

RQ2a: How do journalism professionals and educators perceive blogs?

RQ2b: Are there differences in the way journalism professionals and educators perceive blogs?

RQ3: What factors are associated with blog use and certain blog perceptions?

Method

Data in this study came from three sources. In sampling professional journalists we used two sources: (1) Newslink, a database that lists and provides links to the Web sites of print and broadcasting news outlets worldwide,³⁰ and (2) the member directory of the Online News Association (ONA), an association of professional online journalists.³¹ In sampling journalism educators, we used the list of mass communication institutions in the annual enrollment report by Becker, Vlad, Coffey, and Tucker.³²

Using links of print and broadcasting news organizations in the United States available through Newslink, we randomly selected 300 newspapers, television, and radio news organizations (100 organizations from each type of medium) and accessed each organization's Web site. From each news organization's Web site, we again randomly selected three journalists' e-mail addresses. After excluding those Web sites that were not in use at the time of sampling and the e-mail addresses that were not functioning, our sample included a total of 751 traditional journalists—303 newspaper, 206 television, and 242 radio journalists. As the member directory of the ONA lists individual journalists, we selected 250 online journalists. Thus, we collected a total of 1,001 e-mail addresses of traditional and online journalists.

In order to select journalism educators for study, we relied on Becker and his colleagues' report.³³ From this list, we accessed 254 institutions' Web

sites to randomly select educators who specifically taught journalism-related courses, such as reporting and writing, history, ethics, law, and graphic design. The institutions that did not list faculty e-mail addresses and the faculty members whose e-mail addresses were not functioning at the time of sampling were excluded from the sample. The final sample included 741 JMC educators.

The survey invitation was sent in two waves a week apart. Each recipient was assigned a unique Web address so that he or she could complete the survey only once. Before the respondents entered the survey question page, respondents were guaranteed that the information collected would be confidential. The response rate was 19.9% for the journalists ($N = 189$) and 32.3% for the journalism educators ($N = 239$), creating a combined response rate of 25.3% ($N = 428$). This response rate is similar or slightly higher than those reported in other Web surveys.³⁴

The survey consisted of a self-administered questionnaire. In this study, we focused on uses and perceptions of blogs as various research traditions, such as uses and gratifications, cultivation and the technology acceptance model (TAM), have examined the relationship between media/technology consumption and effects on various attitudes. Studies have identified associations between use and perception in the context of health communication,³⁵ entertainment studies,³⁶ and mass communication³⁷ research. Thus, we first asked respondents several questions about their general blog use. Every respondent was asked whether he or she maintained a blog site. Respondents who indicated they

blogged were then asked a series of questions regarding their blogs.³⁸ All respondents, regardless of whether they blogged themselves, were asked how often they used blogs for professional tasks, such as monitoring clients/issues, day-to-day work, or maintaining one as a part of one's job (i.e., column-related blog, for a client). Other blog use questions were adapted from Web use questions asked by Porter and Sallot.³⁹

Next, we asked questions about attitudes toward blogs. These questions covered topics regarding the credibility (i.e., blogs are factual), quality (i.e., blogs are poorly written), efficiency (i.e., blogs help me sort through and analyze information quickly), threat (i.e., bloggers are not a threat to my industry), role (i.e., blogs and bloggers are challenging conventional notions of my industry) and usefulness (i.e., blogs are useful in crisis situations).

Finally, we asked demographic questions, such as age, race, gender, and education, as well as characteristics about work, such as years practicing/teaching in the profession, position at work, type of media organization (for professionals), and types of courses taught (for educators).

Measures

Blog Uses. Respondents were asked several questions regarding blog use using a 5-point Likert scale with response options ranging from never (1) to very frequently (5). A principal components factor analysis was used to further understand how journalism educators and professionals adopted blogs. Varimax rotation was employed,

and items that cross-loaded on two or more factors and those with factor loadings lower than .50 were eliminated. The model yielded two distinct factors accounting for 66.6% of the variance. Factors were used to create scales for types of blog use. The scores for each blog use factor were created by averaging the individual scores for the items.

Blog Perceptions. Using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), participants were asked questions about their attitudes toward blogs. Scales were then created to further examine perceptions of blogs regarding their credibility, quality, efficiency, threat, role, and usefulness. The scores for each factor were created by averaging the individual scores for the items.

Results

The total sample was 428 with 55.8% ($N = 239$) representing JMC educators and 44.2% ($N = 189$) representing journalism professionals. Of those who indicated gender, 60% were male ($N = 209$) and 40% female ($N = 140$). About 67% ($N = 286$) of the sample was white, with Asian Americans representing the next most sampled population ($N = 13.3\%$). Most (42.2%) earned annual salaries between \$50,000 to \$75,000. The average age of the respondents was 46, and the respondents' average years practicing or teaching in the field was 15 years. Blog topics read regularly were general news (47.6%), politics (42.3%), arts and entertainment (30.2%) technology (25.4%), sports (21.7%), and international news (12.7%).

Professional Journalists' and Journalism Educators' Uses of Blogs. The first research question examined

journalism professionals' and educators' frequency of using blogs (RQ1a). The findings indicate that 21% of all participants write or maintain a blog. Respondents were also asked about their uses of 15 blog items. Overall, as a group, the participants indicated that they "never" or "rarely" use blogs with all items having mean scores of less than 2.5. When blogs were used, however, they were used primarily for informational purposes—for alternative viewpoints (mean = 2.43, $sd = 1.17$), daily news consumption (mean = 2.41, $sd = 1.25$), additional information on issues/topics (mean = 2.39, $sd = 1.17$), story ideas for teaching/research/work (mean = 2.24, $sd = 1.20$), timely updated information (mean = 2.15, $sd = 1.23$), day-to-day work/assignments (mean = 2.05, $sd = 1.17$), and story ideas for personal blogs (mean = 2.02, $sd = 1.15$). Table 1 shows descriptive statistics on frequencies of each blogging activity between JMC educators and professional journalists.

A series of one-way ANOVAs were used in our analyses to examine differences of means between groups. In examining the differences in the way journalism professionals and educators use blogs (RQ1b), we found that among those who host their own blogs, journalism professionals post entries on blogs significantly more frequently than journalism educators ($F(1, 85) = 4.34, p < .05$). In addition, journalism professionals read blogs for fun ($F(1, 418) = 20.37, p < .00$), read blogs written by others ($F(1, 418) = 20.37, p < .00$), and post comments on blogs maintained by others ($F(1, 414) = 20.37, p < .01$) more frequently than journalism educators.

As shown in Table 2, a factor analysis of the blog use questions

Table 1
BLOG USE BETWEEN JOURNALISM EDUCATORS AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS

| Blog Use | Journalism Educators Mean (sd) | Journalism Professionals Mean (sd) |
|--|---|---|
| Help you in day-to-day work/assignments | 1.90 (1.12) | 2.25 (1.21) |
| Maintain blogs for clients/organization | 1.27 (.80) | 1.58 (1.17) |
| Monitor blogs professionally | 2.05 (1.22) | 2.51 (1.40) |
| Monitor blogs for story ideas for training/research/work | 2.07 (1.13) | 2.46 (1.25) |
| Read blogs as a part of daily news consumption | 2.20 (1.17) | 2.68 (1.30) |
| Use blogs to conduct research | 1.67 (.89) | 2.25 (1.21) |
| Read for timely updated information | 2.07 (1.17) | 2.25 (1.31) |
| Find story ideas for personal blogs | 1.68 (.95) | 2.44 (1.24) |
| Use blogs to communicate with others | 1.58 (.96) | 1.94 (1.24) |
| Read additional information on an issue/topic | 2.22 (1.12) | 2.61 (1.19) |
| Read for alternative viewpoints | 2.24 (1.09) | 2.67 (1.23) |
| Use blogs to express own ideas or opinions | 1.46 (.88) | 1.94 (1.31) |
| Use blogs out of habit | 1.50 (.91) | 1.91 (1.27) |
| Use Web site subscriptions to keep up on the latest news | 1.68 (1.17) | 2.27 (1.43) |
| Use blogs for two-way communication with audiences | 1.45 (1.0) | 1.89 (1.30) |

Items: Subjects were asked "How often do you use blogs to/for ..." with 5=very frequently and 1=never.

yielded two distinct factors.⁴⁰ The first factor, which we labeled surveillance and research, accounted for 43.07% of the variance after rotation. It consists of 10 statements (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$) that indicate that blogs are being used for information purposes. The second factor, which we labeled interactive blog communication, accounted for 23.53% of the variance after rotation. It consists of four statements (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) that indicate blogs are being used for two-way communication purposes. The first factor represents a

more passive use of blogs whereas the second factor represents a more active, engaging use of blogs.

Professional Journalists' and Journalism Educators' Perceptions on Blogs. Findings on perceptions of blogs yielded less differing results (RQ2a). They show that both journalism professionals and educators agreed or strongly agreed that blogging activities will increase over the next five years (88.3%) and that blogs/bloggers are challenging conventional notions of the industry (66.3%). These findings

Table 2
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF BLOG USE ITEMS

| Factors | Factor Loadings | |
|--|-----------------|-------|
| Factor 1: Surveillance and Research | 1 | 2 |
| Read blogs as a part of daily news consumption | .85 | |
| Monitor blogs for story ideas for teaching/research/work | .82 | |
| Read for timely updated information | .82 | |
| Find story ideas for personal blogs | .81 | |
| Help you in day-to-day work/assignments | .80 | |
| Read additional information on an issue/topic | .80 | |
| Read for alternative viewpoints | .78 | |
| Use blogs to conduct research | .75 | |
| Monitor blogs professionally | .71 | |
| Use blogs out of habit | .63 | |
| Factor 2: Interactive Blog Communication | | |
| Use blogs for two-way communication with audiences | | .81 |
| Use blogs to express own ideas or opinions | | .78 |
| Maintain blogs for clients/organization | | .78 |
| Use blogs to communicate with others | | .70 |
| Eigenvalues | 6.46 | 3.53 |
| Variance explained | 43.07 | 23.53 |
| Reliability (Cronbach α) | .95 | .85 |
| Mean (sd) | 2.16 | 1.60 |
| | (.99) | (.90) |

Items: Subjects were asked "How often do you use blogs to/for ..." with 5=very frequently and 1=never.

suggest that blogs are increasingly becoming an integral part of news consumption and have the potential to influence journalism practice and culture and, perhaps, the role of the journalist. It is important to note that both groups also showed strong support that

people in the industry are concerned about blogs (71.2%).

However, oftentimes, journalism professionals and educators did not have a strong opinion either way, neither agreeing nor disagreeing on whether blogs are factual (47.2%) or can be

Table 3
BLOG PERCEPTIONS BETWEEN JOURNALISM EDUCATORS AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS

| Blog Perceptions | Journalism Educators Mean (sd) | Journalism Professionals Mean (sd) |
|--|---|---|
| Blogs help me sort through and analyze information quickly | 2.04 (1.09) | 2.28 (1.14) |
| Blogs eliminate intermediaries, making it easier for me to reach my audience | 2.12 (1.14) | 2.41 (1.19) |
| Others in my industry are concerned about blogs | 3.75 (.86) | 3.79 (.88) |
| Using blogs is now a standard journalistic tool | 3.08 (1.01) | 3.09 (1.05) |
| Blogs are not a threat to my news audiences | 3.42 (1.03) | 3.62 (1.03) |
| Blog are useful in crisis situations | 3.35 (.92) | 3.41 (1.12) |
| Blogs are useful tools through which to provide journalists with appropriate sources | 2.99 (1.00) | 2.98 (1.08) |
| Blogs are factual | 2.31 (.86) | 2.34 (.87) |
| Blogs can be trusted | 2.70 (1.04) | 2.84 (1.02) |
| Blogging activity will increase over the next five years | 4.16 (.68) | 4.28 (.77) |
| Blogging should be taught to students learning to work in my industry | 3.59 (.95) | 3.56 (1.00) |
| Bloggers are not a threat to my industry | 3.51 (1.01) | 3.69 (.97) |
| Blogs and bloggers are challenging conventional notions of my industry | 3.70 (.95) | 3.58 (1.05) |
| Blogs are not poorly written | 2.62 (.73) | 2.72 (.82) |
| Blogs are not done by amateurs | 2.74 (.79) | 2.85 (.77) |
| Blogs are important technology for students to know about | 3.78 (.90) | 3.75 (1.01) |
| Blogs represent a personal way to communicate info | 3.98 (.74) | 4.12 (.62) |
| Blogs are not a passing fad | 3.45 (.93) | 3.51 (.98) |
| Blogs provide a good supplement to traditional communication to my audience | 3.23 (.98) | 3.17 (1.14) |
| I do see the professional importance of blogs regarding my industry | 3.42 (1.04) | 3.68 (1.05) |
| Students are interested in learning about how to use blogs professionally | 3.56 (.89) | 3.82 (.82) |

Items: Subjects were asked their level of agreement of statements with 5=strongly agree and 1=strongly disagree.

trusted (43.9%), whether they are poorly written (42.4%) and composed by amateurs (58.3%). Table 3 shows descriptive statistics on frequencies of each blogging perception between journalism educators and professional journalists.

Scales for credibility,⁴¹ quality,⁴² efficiency,⁴³ threat,⁴⁴ role,⁴⁵ and usefulness⁴⁶ were created to further examine perceptions of blogs. A series of one-way ANOVAs were employed to assess the differences between journalism professionals' and educators' perceptions of these issues (RQ2b). The results reveal no differences between perceptions of credibility, quality, future role, and usefulness, but educators were more apprehensive about the blogging phenomenon, perceiving blogs as helping with efficiency significantly less than journalism professionals ($F(1, 377) = 6.83, p < .01$). Educators also perceived blogs as being more of a threat to their industry/work than professionals ($F(1, 359) = 4.22, p < .05$).

Additionally, cursory examination of relationships between the two blog-use variables and the six perception scales reveal positive correlations for all relationships at the .01 level, thus, further confirming a strong association between blog use and perception. While assessment of various perceptions of blogs yielded slight differences between journalism professionals and educators, it appears that regardless of group membership, individuals who used blogs more frequently were more likely to agree with all six blog perception variables.

Factors Associated with Blog Uses and Perceptions. To identify factors associated with blog uses and perceptions (RQ3), we further looked

into the variations within journalism professionals and journalism educators.

Blog Uses. Among professional journalists, we found a significant difference in blog use depending on the type of media organization the journalist worked for: Online journalists used blogs most frequently for research/surveillance ($F(3, 142) = 4.21, p < .01$) and interactive communication ($F(3, 146) = 6.04, p < .01$) followed by television journalists. With regard to whether job position influenced blog use, we found that those who were in higher, managerial positions used blogs for research/surveillance more frequently than those who were in reporting/anchor positions ($F(1, 141) = 5.00, p < .05$). No significant difference exists between uses of blogs for interactive communication.

Looking closer at journalism educators, we found that those who taught a combination of skills-based and conceptual courses used blogs most frequently for research/surveillance, followed by those who primarily taught skills-based courses and, finally, those who primarily taught conceptual courses at their respective institutions ($F(2, 191) = 3.28, p < .05$). No significant difference was found between how educators used blogs for interactive communication.

In addition, our analysis indicates that teaching online reporting or Web design courses affects one's use of blogs. Those who taught online reporting or Web design used blogs for interactive communication more frequently than those who did not ($F(1, 191) = 4.32, p < .05$). Further analysis failed to reveal statistically significant differences between adjunct, assistant, associate, and full professors' blog usage.

Correlation analyses between blog uses with demographic variables, such as age, gender, level of education, and years taught or practicing in the industry, yielded no significant relationships for professional journalists. However, a significant correlation surfaced with the educators: The longer one taught, the less likely one was to use blogs for research/surveillance, $r(189) = -.17$, $p < .05$.

Blog Perceptions. Upon closer examination of professional journalists only, we found that online journalists perceived blogs to be most credible followed by television, radio, and newspaper journalists ($F(3, 146) = 2.76$, $p < .05$). Online journalists were also most likely to perceive blogs as having an important role in the industry ($F(3, 142) = 4.06$, $p < .01$) and perceived blogs as being most useful followed by television, newspaper, and radio journalists ($F(3, 142) = 8.96$, $p < .01$). Those who were in higher, managerial positions perceived blogs as being more useful than those who were in reporting/anchor positions in their organizations ($F(1, 142) = 8.69$, $p < .01$).

Among educators, the type of courses they taught, whether they taught online reporting or Web design courses, and whether they were adjunct, assistant, associate, or full professor did not reveal significant differences.

We also ran several correlations between blog perceptions with demographic variables and years taught or practicing in the industry. Results yielded no significant relationships for professional journalists. However, several correlations surfaced with the educators. Those who were older were less likely to find blogs credible,

$r(180) = -.25$, $p < .01$. In addition, the longer one taught, the less likely one was to find blogs credible, $r(193) = -.22$, $p < .01$, the less likely one was to find blogs as having an important role, $r(183) = -.16$, $p < .05$, and the less likely one was to find blogs useful, $r(183) = -.20$, $p < .01$.

Discussion

This study's findings indicate that while overall use of blogs is low, journalism professionals are using blogs significantly more than journalism educators for research/surveillance purposes and interactive communication. Notably, blogs are used more frequently for informational purposes despite their interactive nature and credibility issues. Within the professional journalist group, online journalists are the most avid blog users, generally followed by television journalists. Educators who taught primarily conceptual courses do not appreciate the use of blogs as much as their colleagues who teach primarily skills-based courses or a combination of both skills and conceptual courses though many use blogs passively for research/surveillance. Perhaps the lack of skill and knowledge they have about blogs hinder their engagement in such uses. Indeed, individuals who teach online reporting and Web design are active users of blogs for interactive communication, taking advantage of the socially interactive nature of blogs.

While significant differences in blog use exist between journalism educators and professionals, the perceptions they have about blogs are evaluated similarly. This is a significant

finding in that blogs are generally considered to be interactive, participatory communication tools, shifting centralized control of news media to the audience. With journalism professionals and educators feeling the growing presence of blogs in their profession and discipline, it is likely that blogs will be discussed in journalism and mass communication programs with increasing direction given to students as how to fully use blogs as a constructive journalistic tool.

The fact that journalism educators, though not using blogs routinely, perceive them similarly in many areas can be interpreted positively as educators serve as guardians and nurturers of the next generation of journalists. Educators appear to be quick to catch on to national trends in journalism even though they do not partake in the experience. They are also skilled in assessing the impact of blogs at various levels and are, thus, likely to accurately share such information with their students. They are, however, more cautious than their peers in the field as they evaluate the efficiency of blogs critically and perceive them as more threatening to the field than journalism professionals.

Within the professional group, it appears that newspaper journalists are most reluctant to give up their gatekeeping roles in sharing the authority allotted through traditional journalistic practices than journalists in other news media outlets. Furthermore, individuals who were assuming managerial positions generally use blogs more frequently and perceive them more favorably, which suggests blogs can be effective tools for individuals serving leadership positions that require constant watch of issues and trends. Educators,

however, display much more consistent perceptions and show very little variation based on their meager use of blogs.

Most interestingly, age is associated with the credibility of blogs for journalism educators with older educators less likely to find blogs credible. This is a significant finding as age was not associated with blog credibility among professional journalists. Based on this study's findings, blog use is more frequent among professionals, and thus professionals may feel more familiar and at ease with blogs, in turn contributing to the added trust and comfort of blogs. In addition, years taught is associated with various perceptions. The more years one taught at an institution, the less approvingly one viewed blogs in terms of credibility, their role in the industry, and their usefulness. The more one taught, the less likely one was to use blogs for research/surveillance. These are disturbing findings as the educational institution appears to be negatively contributing to educators' adoption of new communication technologies that have the potential to challenge traditional communication models. It may also reflect the critical, analytic environment that most educational institutions are.

In sum, journalism professionals are adopting blogs more actively than journalism educators. The industry appears to be paving the road for professional blog use rather than suggested innovation introduced in the classroom. Interestingly, however, educators' and professionals' perceptions about blogs are comparable. As journalism educators teach the next generation of journalists in the evolving world of electronic journalism, their perceptions appear to be on target with

professional journalists. While they lag behind in blog use, journalism educators still recognize the growing importance of blogs from a professional perspective.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides significant findings about blog uses and perceptions, it also suffers from a few shortcomings. The use of a Web-based survey is an inherent weakness of this study. Respondents who feel comfortable using the Web would be more likely to participate in such a study. In addition, their responses regarding blog perceptions would likely be more favorable because of their use of technology, possibly skewing the survey results. Again, we revisit the relationship between use and perception of media/technology. Future studies should further explore such relationships and consider use of a paper-based survey to account for the weaknesses of Web surveys.

Additionally, in this study we targeted blogs of the journalistic nature that focus on reporting information or providing commentary. As blogs vary in form and purpose, some being more personal in nature much like diaries, future studies might take better care to distinguish the unique forms of blogs in examining their various roles and functions.

Future studies should also further examine potential factors contributing to blog adoption, such as Internet self-efficacy, experience online, and views on technology, as blogs are increasingly becoming important informational and communication tools for journal-

ism professionals, educators, and the general news audience.

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30. Newslink provides a comprehensive listing of national and international news media organizations and has been used as a resource in several empirical studies (see William P. Cassidy, "Variations on a Theme: The Professional Role Conceptions of Print and Online Newspaper Journalists," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 82 (summer 2005): 264-80; William P. Cassidy, "Online News Credibility: An Examination of the

Perceptions of Newspaper Journalists," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12 (2, 2007), article 7, <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue2/cassidy.html> (February 6, 2007); Edgar Huang, Karen Davison, Stephanie Shreve, Twila Davis, Elizabeth Bettendorf, and Anita Nair, "Bridging Newsrooms and Classrooms: Preparing the Next Generation of Journalists for Converged Media," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 8 (3, 2006): 221-62. Thus, Newslink served as a useful sampling frame from which we selected traditional journalists.

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32. Becker and his colleagues conduct annual reports on journalism and mass communication programs' enrollment figures. See Lee B. Becker, Tudor Vlad, Amy Jo Coffey, and Maria Tucker, "Enrollment Growth Rate Slows; Field's Focus on Undergraduate Education at Odds with University Setting," *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* 60 (autumn 2005): 286-314.

33. The list from Becker et al.'s annual report better served our study purpose of exclusively sampling journalism educators than the directory of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) that includes both faculty members and graduate students of jour-

nalism and mass communication programs in the nation. See Becker et al., "Enrollment Growth Rate Slows; Field's Focus on Undergraduate Education at Odds with University Setting."

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38. For example, they were asked if it was a personal and/or professional blog. Respondents with personal blogs were asked if they ever discussed the journalism field on the blog.

39. Lance V. Porter and Lynne M. Sallot, "The Internet and Public Relations: Investigating Practitioners' Roles and World Wide Web Use," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80 (autumn 2003): 603-22.

40. A principal components factor

analysis was conducted using Varimax rotation. Items (blog use) that cross-loaded on two or more factors and those with factor loadings lower than .50 were eliminated. The analysis yielded a reduced scale of 14 items that loaded on two factors, and, thus, one item was not included in the two factors. Both factors had eigenvalues of at least one, and the two factors accounted for 67% of the variance.

41. The blog credibility scale consists of two statements: "blogs are factual" and "blogs can be trusted" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .63$).

42. The blog quality scale also consists of two statements: "blogs are not poorly written" and "blogs are not done by amateurs" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$).

43. The blog efficiency scale consists of the following statements: "blogs help me sort through and analyze information quickly" and "blogs eliminate intermediaries, making it easier for me to reach my audience" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$).

44. The blog as threat scale consists of: "blogs are not a threat to my news audiences" and "bloggers are not a threat to my industry" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$).

45. The blog role scale consists of five statements: "using blogs is now a standard journalistic tool," "blogging activity will increase over the next five years," "blogging should be taught to students learning to work in my industry," "blogs are not a passing fad" and "blogs and bloggers are challenging conventional notions of my industry" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$).

46. The blog usefulness scale consists of six perception questions: "blogs provide a good supplement to traditional communication with my

audiences," "blogs are useful in crisis situations," "blogs are useful tools through which to provide journalists with appropriate sources," "blogs represent a personal way to communicate

information," "I do see the professional importance of blogs regarding my industry," and "students are interested in learning about how to use blogs professionally" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$).

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