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## **“The State of the News Media in the U.S.”**

**The Internet has now become a major source of news**



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**The promise of Internet news is its availability, immediacy, interactivity and unlimited space.**



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**Over half of the people in the U.S. went online. And half to two-thirds of those who go online use at least some of the time to get news. The number of total online news users is 80 million to 105 million Americans.**



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**The Internet is the medium having the most success attracting young people to news, something that the older media were having trouble with before the Internet even existed.**



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**Economically, producers of Web news are still trying to translate the rising number of people who gets news online into the kind of profits to which traditional news media companies are accustomed.**



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**Journalism has traditionally been a slow-growth industry (CNN, for instance, took ten years to turn a profit). The Internet seems no different.**



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**Still, online advertising revenues are growing at a much quicker pace than those in the traditional media. The Web has also continued to gain prominence with consumers, as evidenced by the \$ 20 billion spent online between Thanksgiving and Christmas in 2003.**



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**A handful of giant media companies have come to dominate Web news, at least for the moment. Time Warner, the largest of them, controls two of the top four news sites. Nearly 69 percent of the most popular news Web sites are owned by one of the 20 biggest media companies.**





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**There are also a myriad of local Internet news sites, whose goals are not to compete for the nationwide audience but rather to appeal to the local community. Their popularity is harder to track.**



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**Web logs, or blogs are an exciting news prospect for the Web. And some of these bloggers are influential. For now, though, bloggers appear to command only a fraction of the online audience. During the first week of the Iraq war, for instance, the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that only 4 percent of Internet users had visited a blog.**



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**The Web is only part of the mainstream news business that generally is seeing audiences grow, especially among the young.**



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**People like the convenience of the Web, its availability at work, its speed for delivering breaking news, and increasingly they are coming to trust the accuracy of the information they receive there.**



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**The problem is an economic one. How will Web journalism begin to pay its own way? If people increasingly substitute the Web for their old media before a robust economic model for the Web evolves, the economic effect could be devastating for journalism.**



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**Companies might begin to cut back significantly on their newsgathering abilities as audiences abandon profitable old platforms in favor of less profitable new ones. The Net in this case might weaken, not strengthen, the economic vitality of news organizations and the quality of American journalism.**



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**Internet journalism is still largely material from old media rather than something original.**



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**For now, perhaps the strongest trait the Internet is taking advantage of is providing background information to its stories, such as links to archival material of other sources.**





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**Content on the web is still driven by text narratives. Most sites make only limited use of the multi-media potential of embedding such things as videos, audio, still photos and user feedback into news stories.**



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- Basically, there are three kinds of sites:**
- those generating staff content, usually from their parent company**
  - those relying almost entirely on wire service**
  - and those trying to edit and adapt wire copy and adding some original content.**



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**Television network news all looks alike, local television news is identical from city to city, newspaper writing differ little from paper to paper. That is not the case for Internet; different styles and approaches. (CNN home page typically features links to about 50 articles, plus contents from sister organizations Time, Sports Illustrated and Fortune. The NYTimes typically has even more articles, 75 to 80, most of them staff written, yet little video. Yahoo, on the other hand, normally features just 20 articles. All of these articles are from wire services, but several include streaming video).**



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**Originality of Reporting. Internet journalism on the major news sites is still largely a medium made up of second-hand material, usually from the old media.**



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**Originality of Reporting. Only about a third of the articles was material produced by the organization’s own staff. A larger percentage of lead pieces, 42 percent, were wire stories posted without any editing and produced by other sources, particularly The Associated Press and Reuters. When a big story hits, one is likely to come across the same story on any number of Web sites.**



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**Basically the news sites studied fell into three categories when it comes to lead stories:**

- Sites that were primarily staff written or performed their own verification and reporting (NYTimes, CNN.com)**
- Sites that customized wires and produced some original content. (CBS.com, MSNBC.com)**
- Sites that relied almost entirely on wire stories without rewrite or much editing. These sites are really more portals than news organizations. (AOL, Yahoo)**



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**Top News Web Sites: MSNBC, CNN, Yahoo News, AOL, NYTimes, Gannet Newspapers, Knight Ridder Digital, Internet Broadcasting Systems, Tribune Newspapers, ABC News, WashingtonPost.com, USA Today.com.**