

Chapter 8 — News Producers in a Pro-Am Mediasphere: Why Citizen Journalism Matters

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The rise to prominence of citizen journalism is usually described as a paradigm shift in the relationship between news organizations and their audiences – ‘citizen’ or ‘amateur’ journalists are positioned as inherently different from, and possibly in competition with, ‘professional’ journalists. Some journalists in the industry have taken up this theme, and are at pains to distinguish their professional, supposedly objective and accountable practices from what they describe as the opinionated and partisan ‘armchair journalism’ of amateurs, while some citizen journalists, in turn, give as good as they get and describe the professionals as lackeys of their corporate masters who (willingly or unwittingly) fall prey to political and commercial spin. In fact, the very terminology we use to describe both sides creates the impression that professionals are not also citizens, and that citizen journalists are incapable of having professional skills and knowledges; in reality, of course, the lines between them are much less clear.

Stories of conflict between ‘citizens’ and ‘professionals’, though sometimes entertaining, generally tend to be unproductive; they obscure the fact that mutually beneficial cooperation between the two sides is possible, and beginning to take place, and keep us from exploring those opportunities. At a time when many mainstream news organizations are struggling to remain financially viable, and when various citizen journalism outlets are striving to develop long-term organizational structures of their own, it is important to examine the zones of overlap and contact between the two, and to highlight what is possible here. Neither professional nor citizen journalism is going to disappear any time soon (though the same cannot be said with confidence about any one specific publication in either camp), and it is likely that the best opportunities for sustainable journalistic models lie in an effort to combine the best of both worlds – in the development of hybrid, ‘Pro-Am’ journalism

organizations which may substantially transform journalistic practices while maintaining continuity with a long history of (professional *and* citizen) journalistic efforts. Some such models are now emerging, in fact.

Citizen Journalism

In Jay Rosen's famous formulation, citizen journalism is fuelled by 'the people formerly known as the audience' (2006) who now actively engage in the journalistic process themselves. While media and cultural studies have long established that even in previous times, audiences were never merely passive and uncritical recipients of media messages, but already actively engaged *with* what they read, heard, and saw, then, the main difference is that now they are able to engage *in* the process itself: that they have access to means of content creation and dissemination which no longer necessarily constitute a system secondary to the technologies available to mainstream media organizations.

At the same time, significant differences between citizen and industrial journalism remain, of course. By and large, individual participants in citizen journalism sites and projects commit only what JD Lasica has described as 'random acts of journalism' (2003): contributing news and commentary only occasionally and on selected topics rather than achieving a comprehensive coverage of the news; similarly, most citizen journalism websites focus only on specific news beats, or cover the news from particular ideological perspectives. Except perhaps for *OhmyNews* in the South Korean context, which itself is hardly representative for citizen journalism as such, there is no single citizen journalism site which manages to rival a major (or even minor) commercial or publicly funded mainstream news organization in the breadth and depth of its coverage. However, the number of citizen journalism sites is vast, and though each covers only a particular slice of the news, in combination this flotilla of large and small sites and projects nonetheless manages to address virtually all the beats covered by mainstream news organizations. Its ability to do so is a result of citizen journalism's inherent openness

to any participant able to make a meaningful contribution: as Clay Shirky has put it, 'here comes everybody' (2008).

A further, major point of difference between industrial and citizen journalism is their style of coverage: citizen journalism focusses mainly on providing opinion, commentary, and evaluation of current events, rather than reporting these events first-hand (Bruns 2006, Singer 2006). This is a necessary result of the non-professional, random nature of citizen participation in journalistic practices, of course: by and large, citizen journalists have neither the accreditation or resources, nor necessarily the equipment and skills to gain access to and report from major or minor events as they happen – for the most part, they are unable to attend press conferences, travel to the scene, engage in lengthy investigations, or secure high-profile interviewees. Well-publicized exceptions from that rule occur where people unexpectedly find themselves at the scene of major events (such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami or the 2005 London bombings) or privy to as yet undisclosed information (such as Trent Lott's praise for Strom Thurmond's 1948 segregationist policies, or Barack Obama's lament that small-town Americans clung to god and guns in times of hardship), and commit a 'random act of (citizen) journalism' by reporting such events.

Other than in the case of such unforeseen scoops, however, citizen journalism relies mainly on a process of what can be described as gatewatching (Bruns 2005). The role of industrial journalism especially in a pre-networked age has long been understood as one of gatekeeping or filtering: of all the news of the day, reported by in-house staff or arriving over the wire services, journalists and editors would select only the 'news that's fit to print' (as the *New York Times* slogan famously puts it), according to internal selection policies and their own idealized (and often somewhat condescending) image of what 'the man on the street' was interested in. Journalists, in other words, positioned themselves as keepers of the gates which controlled a steady flow of relevant news to their audiences, and prevented readers from being

overwhelmed by a flood of reports from which it would have been difficult to pick those reports seen as most important.

But today's vastly greater direct access to a variety of news sources and reports now available to news audiences has made it necessary to acknowledge that any one news organization's gatekeeping choices provide only one 'first draft of history', with many alternative versions also readily available; journalists must concede that the users of news are both very well able to make choices between them for themselves, and that a growing awareness of the many sources available to them has also increased their interest in doing so. We have entered a massively multi-channel environment in which 'keeping the gates' to save users from the flood of information is no longer possible. To acknowledge this, journalists could link, for example, to reports by their competitors about the same event (as *BBC News Online* now occasionally does), and to the wire stories and press releases which provided source material for their reports; the popularity of the *Google News* service is a clear indicator of users' interest in such services.

Born into this multi-channel environment, citizen journalism sites bypass the old gatekeeping logic altogether. Rather than ignoring the existence of alternative news sources and sticking to the claim that *their* collection of news is all their users need (as many mainstream news sites continue to do even now, by refusing to link to other sources), citizen journalism sites overtly acknowledge such sources and use them as input for their own coverage – though they may claim that their own *interpretation* of the news is the most correct and convincing. This is the essence of *gatewatching*, then (Bruns, 2005): participants in such sites observe on a continuous basis what information passes through the gates of other news organizations, they serve as watchdogs alerting their fellow participants to relevant items of information that may make useful contributions to the debate. They do so, for example, by posting articles that comment on stories in mainstream and niche online news publications, by analysing government and NGO reports, by providing links to a range of documents relevant to current debates, and by engaging in sometimes

lengthy discussion threads which explore the implications of a news event from various perspectives.

While this difference in approaches is sometimes used to justify a classification of citizen journalism as secondary to and derivative of professional or 'real' journalism, this substitutes an idealized version of professional journalism for an accurate picture of day-to-day journalistic practice. Although it is true that there is a greater amount of first-hand research and reporting in professional journalism, it must also be acknowledged that in reality, the (technological, financial, staff) resources available for such reporting are strictly limited, and unevenly distributed both within and across news organizations (there exists what Shirky (1999) has described as a 'resource horizon', beyond which professional work is no longer feasible). Many major news organizations will have a number of dedicated correspondents in specific national and international locations, for example, but rely on wire services for other material; minor news services (including especially regional and local newspapers) employ an even smaller number of journalistic staff, or have even removed any boundaries between their news and advertising departments. Additionally, long-term investigative reporting has become a luxury which only a handful of internationally leading news organizations can still afford.

Any general claim that professional journalists report the news, and citizen journalists merely add commentary, is unsustainable, therefore; as John Quiggin notes for journalism in his field of economics, for example,

the distinction between news and analysis is largely meaningless. The information from which journalists and bloggers work consists mainly of official statistics and statements put out by governments, companies and organizations of various kinds. ...

Bloggers typically go on from here by briefly stating, or linking the relevant facts and then providing some analysis. Added value, beyond the analysis itself, is likely to consist of more links to relevant information or to further commentary.

By contrast, the typical straight news story would consist mainly of (what are presented as) quotes from government ministers, and reactions from the

opposition, business and so on. Even when simply restating the government's announcement, journalistic convention requires that it be presented in the form of a series of statements, presented as if taken down by reporters. Press releases are routinely written to facilitate this. (2009)

Indeed, the claim that professional journalism constitutes an inherently higher order of news and analysis than citizen journalism (still made by some journalists, and expressed at its most hyperbolic in the work of Andrew Keen, for whom citizen journalism is part of an emerging and deleterious 'cult of the amateur'; 2007) remains a key reason for the sometimes testy relationship between the two forms of journalism. Sustained (and sustainable) criticism by citizen journalists of the work of their counterparts in the industry has led a number of industry figures to lash out against their critics. In Australia, for example, such reaction was visible against the backdrop of the 2007 federal election campaign, when the country's only national newspaper *The Australian* was embarrassed over its interpretation of opinion poll data by bloggers specializing in the science of psephology, the statistical analysis of elections; while *The Australian's* journalists claimed that their election predictions were inherently better than those of the 'armchair journalists' because parent company News Ltd. also owns Newspoll, in the end it was the psephologists who accurately predicted the election results (see for example Bruns 2008b). Additionally, a number of citizen journalism sites and news blogs have been established specifically to highlight and correct perceived systematic biases in the mainstream news media – sometimes with very specific targets, as in the case of *Bildblog*, the citizen journalism site tracking misinformation in the popular German tabloid *Bild*. (Though not citizen journalism as such, US news parody TV programmes such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* also deserve mention here – in their use of footage from mainstream television news to critique the performance of professional journalists, they can certainly be understood as engaging in citizen journalism-style gatewatching.)

In spite of the often antagonistic relationship with the mainstream news media which such examples highlight, however, citizen journalism ultimately also

continues to depend on such news media content – at the very least as a basis for its critical function, but more broadly also for general background information, as impetus for its own work, and (where views and debates in citizen journalism are in turn again picked up by the mainstream media) for the wider dissemination of its ideas. In particular, the problem remains that citizen journalism has only limited access to first-hand information (except for locally and hyperlocally sourced material, or in the specific areas of expertise of its individual contributors); while the gatewatching approach enables it to make useful contributions even in spite of such restrictions, citizen journalism's inability to engage in original reporting and especially in longer-term investigative journalism is a significant limitation. Beyond this input stage, it is possible to highlight other limitations for citizen journalism also at the further stages of journalistic activity: at the process stage, the overall media agenda is still set by the mainstream media organizations, and at best corrected by citizen journalists drawing some degree of public attention to other issues and alternative views, while at the output stage, the work of citizen journalists has greatest impact only when it manages to filter back into mainstream media coverage.

At the same time, such limitations should not be seen as fatally undermining the citizen journalism idea – it has become evident over the past decade that citizen journalism can make an effective, successful, and important contribution to news coverage in a number of ways. The central point in this context is that (except perhaps in the dreams of some of its most ardent advocates) citizen journalism does not aim to replace its industrial counterpart outright, but rather to challenge, complement and extend it wherever possible and necessary. It is able to do so three key dimensions (also see Bruns 2008c):

- It can extend the *breadth* of journalistic coverage by reporting (first hand) from areas which mainstream journalism is now too underresourced and inflexible to cover – this includes analysis in specialist fields such as economics and psephology, as well as reporting about issues which have

been ignored by the news media for various reasons, especially also on the local and hyperlocal home front.

- It can improve the *depth* of journalistic coverage by offering more a detailed evaluation of current affairs, incorporating a greater variety of critical voices and thereby achieving a more multiperspectival coverage of the news (Gans, 2003).
- It can extend the ongoing journalistic coverage of issues over *time*, by being able to exist outside the 24-hour news cycle and utilizing Web technologies to compile growing dossiers of information about specific topics (e.g. in the form of expanding *Wikipedia* entries).

From Citizen Journal Producers to Pro-Am News

In its potential ability to extend and add to the products of industrial journalism across these three dimensions, citizen journalism can be seen as part of a growing number of other user-led initiatives which similarly pick up their own content development processes where (for a variety of organizational reasons, mostly related to limited resources or diminishing returns from further investment) professionals leave off. Open source software development communities, for example, address a greater breadth of software uses by developing software for what the industry regards as niche applications (at one point including Web servers and Web browsers, in fact), and their non-commercial approach enables them to investigate in greater depth the best solutions for specific programming problems and to invest more time into finding and eradicating remaining bugs and errors. Similarly, *Wikipedia's* open collaborative model has enabled it to beat its commercial contributors in both breadth and depth of coverage, and to both cover emerging topics more speedily and update existing entries more frequently. Each of these projects, and many more like them, manages to extend industrial models on the three dimensions of breadth, depth, and time; in each of these cases, too – as in citizen journalism – users are no longer simply consumers of or audiences for

content, but are able to become active producers, too: they take on a hybrid role as *produser*.

In these collaborative projects which engage in such work, the creation of shared content takes place in a networked, participatory environment which breaks down the boundaries between producers and consumers and instead enables all participants to be users as well as producers of information and knowledge. These producers engage not in a traditional form of content production, but are instead involved in *produsage* (Bruns 2008a) – the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement, of further extending their work in the direction of all three dimensions. Participants in such activities are not producers in a conventional, industrial sense, as that term implies a distinction between producers and consumers which no longer exists; the artefacts of their work are not products existing as discrete, complete packages; and their activities are not a form of production because they proceed based on a set of preconditions and principles that are markedly at odds with the conventional industrial model.

Produsage projects – from citizen journalism through open source and *Wikipedia* to the many more emerging user-led content creation initiatives – build on a set of four universal principles:

Open participation, communal evaluation: produsage is based on the collaborative engagement of (ideally, large) communities of participants in a shared project.

Fluid heterarchy, ad hoc meritocracy: producers in a community of produsage participate as is appropriate to their personal skills, interests, and knowledges; such participation further changes as current points of focus for the produsage project change.

Unfinished artefacts, continuing process: content artefacts in produsage projects are continually under development, and therefore always unfinished; their development proceeds along evolutionary, iterative paths.

Common property, individual rewards: produsage adopts open source- or creative commons-based licence schemes which explicitly allow the unlimited use, development, and further alteration of each user's individual contribution to the communal project.

However, participation in produsage is necessarily limited by individual users' 'interest horizons': in analogy to industrial production's 'resource horizon', produsage will take place only up to the point where 'a problem simply isn't interesting enough to attract a group of developers' (Shirky 1999). Additionally, there are challenges to be overcome at each stage of the longer-term produsage process. To begin with, for many produsage projects it is difficult simply begin from scratch, out of thin air: even a major success story like the operating system Linux began only with Linus Torvalds's donation of his early work to the wider development community, and even *Wikipedia* built in part on an early-1900s version of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* which had become public domain after the expiration of its copyright term. Further, many projects rely on more or less elaborate support systems which require server resources and dedicated management staff - and few such projects are able to attract donations from 'angel investors' or the general public to the same extent that *Wikipedia* and a handful of other produsage leaders are able to do. Finally, while the informational content generated by produsage communities is usually readily available from their Websites, in many cases there also remains a need for additional distribution mechanisms which are able to make this material available to larger audiences or through media channels other than the Web.

The need for such support of produsage projects at input, process, and output stages provides an important opportunity for the development of hybrid, pro-am models combining industrial production and communal produsage. Indeed, Leadbeater and Miller (2004) see the emergence of a new group of leading 'Pro-Am' users right at the interface between industry and community, between production and produsage; they are 'innovative, committed and networked amateurs working to professional standards. This emerging group ... could have a huge influence on the shape of

society in the next two decades', they suggest (p. 9), and they fill a key role of being 'disruptive innovators': 'disruptive innovation changes the way an industry operates by creating new ways of doing business, often by making products and services much cheaper or by creating entirely new products' (p. 52). Industry aiming to engage in the exploration of pro-am models must particularly seek to involve these Pro-Ams themselves, as pathways to building relationships with the wider communities of produsage.

Given the challenging financial circumstances currently experienced by the journalism industry, such disruptive innovation at the pro/am interface - now visible in a few early projects - may be just what it needs. From these projects aiming to bridge the gap between citizen and industry journalism it is already becoming clear what professional journalists are able to bring to the table. Their contributions can, again, be distinguished across the three stages of publishing activity. At the input stage, dedicated journalistic and editorial staff are especially important during the early phases of pro-am journalism projects. Citizen journalists rarely arrive at such projects fully formed, and even in that rare case would have to adjust substantially to the intellectual, social, and technological frameworks of the specific projects; professional staff are crucial both in attracting produser communities to such sites and in acting as role models for subsequent produser participation.

This was obvious for example in *Youdecide2007.org*, an independent project accompanying the 2007 Australian federal election which aimed to attract citizen contributors covering the local election contest across the 150 Australian federal electorates, which employed a small number of staff to encourage and facilitate citizen participation (the present author was a Chief Investigator of this Australian Research Council-funded project, which was run by Queensland University of Technology in collaboration with SBS, National Forum, and Cisco Systems). *Youdecide's* editor Jason Wilson has adopted Miller's (2007) term 'preditor' - that is, producer/editor - to describe his role in the site (see Wilson et al. 2008, Bruns & Wilson 2009), and distinguishes four key areas of responsibility:

- **content work**, editing citizen content (for quality and legal issues) and producing professional 'seed' content to attract producers;
- **networking**, involving both making and maintaining contacts in the mainstream and independent media, and procuring and republishing content across the networked news environment;
- **tech work**, both running the online services, and using appropriate technologies to syndicate content, communicate with users, and assess the performance of the service;
- most important of all, **community work**, gathering and serving an online newsmaking community. (Bruns & Wilson 2009)

What is immediately obvious from this description is that the professional staff member's contribution is designed to take on those tasks which citizen journalists cannot be relied upon to perform, both because of limits to their interest horizons and due to their limited integration into the wider mediasphere. So, for example, the tasks described as content work take place beyond the interest horizon of citizen contributors, while effective networking with the wider mediasphere – for example to ensure that any scoops emerging through the site are taken up in the mainstream press – is possible for the most part only for legitimate site staff, not for 'average' citizens. Other tasks, especially community work, may be able to be transferred to the emerging community of contributors over time, as stronger community structures form and respected leaders emerge from within the community itself – but particularly in the early phases of a new project, professional staff are for the time being necessarily placed in a role of community leader themselves, and their performance in that role (that is, their ability to make the project appear welcoming and attractive) is a crucial factor in determining the success or failure of the project during that phase. For professional journalists, this poses an unaccustomed challenge – their work on the site must embody the spirit of citizen journalism (for example, a sense of openness and equipotentiality, an ease of participation and a

communal approach to the project) even though their eventual role as professional staff on a pro-am undertaking places them somewhat at odds with these ideals.

This challenge continues beyond the formative phases of pro-am journalism projects – while with a project’s growing maturity, its ‘predators’ may be able to step back from generating seed content and managing the internal dynamics of the community, other aspects of their work (liaising with other media, managing the site technology) continue. In particular, pro-am sites which find themselves in direct competition with professional mainstream news organizations may now focus their energies on the process stage of journalistic work, deploying their professional staff to accompany the content creation processes of citizen contributors. South Korea’s *OhmyNews* is perhaps the best-established example for pro-am collaboration in this context: here, all articles submitted by its tens of thousands of contributors are checked at least briefly for style and accuracy by a staff of some 50 editors. Instituting such professional oversight also constitutes a significant challenge for pro-am projects, however: especially for sites with substantial produser communities, handling the potentially substantial volume of incoming content without unacceptably slowing down the publishing process may be difficult.

A move towards pro-am models of this form may require a substantial investment in staffing, therefore – this is true both for news industry organizations (which may invite increased contributions of material by users, but often struggle to handle this material effectively) and for citizen journalism projects (which may be interested in pro-am opportunities in order to improve the quality of their content or the long-term sustainability of the project, but find themselves unable to afford hiring a sufficient number of professional staff). Much as in other industries where produsage provides an effective alternative to industrial production, and where pro-am production/produsage hybrids may be possible, the structural challenges in arriving at such hybrid approaches are non-trivial.

Other, complementary approaches to professional support for citizen journalism processes are also possible – notably, for example, *OhmyNews* has recently also opened a citizen journalism school aimed at improving the journalistic and content creation skills of its contributors. (*Youdecide*, too, provided some guides to basic journalistic practice, including advice on how to contact local authorities and how to conduct interviews with political candidates.) The relative scarcity of mature pro-am citizen journalism projects world-wide means that the full range of such approaches still remains to be explored – overall, any approach which provides professional assistance to citizen journalist practices will be relevant in this context.

Finally, however, for most citizen journalism and even pro-am journalism sites the problem of limited impact remains – *OhmyNews*, whose impact on Korean politics is by now well documented, remains an exception from the rule here. Pro-am journalism projects may make a welcome contribution to the journalistic coverage of the news, but it can be argued that this contribution remains of limited relevance unless such sites are able to gain an audience well beyond their own participants. This is a problem at the output stage of the journalistic process which Wilson’s ‘networking’ component of the preditorial tasks also touches upon – and here, too, the addition of professional support to citizen journalism processes can serve to provide a significant boost to the visibility and dissemination of their outcomes.

One important example for this model exists in the shape of the German citizen journalism site *myHeimat*. This project takes a hyperlocal approach which ultimately aims to attract participants from all over the country to cover events in their local area, and at present has managed to build strong produser communities especially around its initial base in the Munich-Augsburg region, and in the Hannover region in northern Germany. The project is strongest in local communities around major cities, where local attachment and history is important, and – by comparison with other citizen journalism projects – focusses remarkably little on covering political topics; its strengths lie in covering local cultural and community events instead. What is important for our present purposes is that in areas where it has achieved

critical mass, *myHeimat* has begun to produce regular print magazines and newspaper inserts (either independently or in collaboration with local newspapers) which contain the best of the site's user-created content and are delivered free of charge to local households. Using this approach, *myHeimat* achieves vastly better penetration and brand recognition in the local news market than is possible for any other local or hyperlocal citizen journalism initiative; its print publications have also opened up a new market in hyperlocal advertising which remains inaccessible to larger local, regional, or national magazines and newspapers (Huber 2008). In this model, in other words, which in 2008 won a European Newspaper Award for its innovative pro-am approach, the professional harnessing and harvesting of citizen journalism content feeds back into the citizen journalism project by opening up new audiences and thereby improving its sustainability from both a financial and community perspective.

Conclusion: Next Steps

In evaluating existing pro-am models and developing further approaches to combining professional and citizen journalism, the chief task is to understand clearly what contributions each side of the pro-am divide is best able to make. From the brief discussion of exemplary projects above, it becomes clear that professionals are often better placed to discharge the tedious tasks of journalistic work, such as reviewing the style and checking the facts of an article, and ensuring compliance of the site's content with applicable laws. Their contributions are also critical especially in the early stages of projects, where they are required to provide seed content and kickstart community processes; they may need to continue such work for some time in order to set the coverage agenda of a site, but must also be ready to step back and let the community take greater responsibility as it matures. Additionally, at least at present, the clout associated with a journalist's professional status also continues to provide them with networking opportunities that remain inaccessible to citizen journalists – both the conduct of first-hand interviews with major public figures, and the maintenance of relationships with other newsmakers and news organizations

(which is also important for ensuring the dissemination of scoops and other important stories through the wider mediasphere) therefore remain the domain of the professional for now. (It should also be noted, however, that some citizen journalists have now risen at least to Pro-Am status themselves, so that any inherent status advantages of professional journalists may be in decline – reporters from *Huffington Post* and other news blogs are now accredited members of the Washington press corps, for example.)

By contrast, this chapter has already outlined the key contributions that citizen journalists are able to make: their greater numbers, diverse views, and lack of responsibility to commercial imperatives enables them to engage with the news in greater breadth, depth, and over a longer time than is possible for the professionals. This can lead to a more detailed, more multiperspectival, and longer-term tracking of issues than is possible in the mainstream news industry – it is possible to argue, for example, that mainstream coverage of long-term problems from the war in Iraq to the global financial crisis has been forced by the requirements of its 24-hour news cycle to focus largely on short-term events and report on process issues, while coverage by leading citizen journalism sites has returned more frequently and perceptively to exploring and critiquing the fundamental factors involved, while adding new information from the mainstream media to that bigger picture where useful.

Clearly, then, both sides of the journalistic divide have valuable contributions to make, and – in order for pro-am projects to be feasible – must come to respect one another more than is commonly the case. While citizen journalists already utilize the outputs of the news industry as a matter of course, and often highlight the work of professional journalists where it is of particularly high quality, the challenge here may be especially for journalistic staff in the industry, whose self-understanding must often still shift considerably to allow them to participate constructively in pro-am projects. Contrary to common industry practice in models where users may simply add comments or send in some other user-generated materials, in the pro-am

models, as they have been discussed here, professional staff are no longer in a privileged position as moderators, but act simply as community guides supporting the pro-am journalistic process by addressing especially those tasks which would be difficult for the community to discharge on its own. In doing so, they must respect the necessary requirements for produsage processes (cf. Bruns 2008a) – they must allow community work to develop in sometimes unexpected directions, must allow users to rise to positions of leadership from within the community, must provide an environment where users may begin by making small contributions and graduate to more substantial forms of participation, and must respect user investment in and authorship over the content created in the process. Recent experience – from *OhmyNews* in Korea through *myHeimat* in Germany to *Youdecide* in Australia, and beyond this to a number of other projects – shows that on the basis of such mutual understanding, the creation of successful and sustainable pro-am models is possible.

In the context of current developments in the worldwide news industry, indeed, such a move towards pro-am models may not only be possible, but even necessary. Even before the global financial crisis showed any impact on the industry, existing business models were under pressure; newspapers around the world have begun to shed staff as advertising revenue in print publications declines, and the closure of long-running news magazines such as *The Bulletin* in Australia (Bruns et al. 2008) signals a growing unwillingness amongst proprietors to support especially the most expensive and risky forms of journalism, such as investigative reporting.

Such problems have emerged, however, in a context of continued and perhaps even increasingly strong citizen interest in the news – the emergence of citizen journalism itself, the success of news parodies such as *The Daily Show*, and the ranking of *BBC News Online* and other leading news sites amongst the most accessed sites on the World Wide Web all point to this fact. The problem lies not in a decline in user interest, therefore, but in the content and business models favoured by the news industry; it may be attributed in part simply to the Internet generation's expectation that everyday information ought to be accessible free of charge, but partly also to the

growing media sophistication of this 'Generation C' (*Trendwatching* 2005) of content creators, who are no longer satisfied simply to access professionally-produced news reports without also being able to engage with and publicly respond to them in meaningful ways. (A further factor in this development is the simultaneous improvements of the supporting media platforms and technologies that make such engagement ever more easily possible.)

Such developments are not at all unique to the news industry, of course – produsage approaches have emerged across a wide range of fields dealing with informational and even physical materials (Bruns 2008a), and provide increasingly credible alternatives to industrial production. Much as in the news industry, the challenge in these industries is similarly to explore pro-am models for combining the best of industrial production and community produsage; today, however, due to the established histories of citizen journalism and open source software development the news industry – along with the software industry – is in a position to lead these disruptive but innovative developments towards the establishment of sustainable and successful pro-am frameworks which may also be adopted by other industry sectors.

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