

TWITTER: JOURNALISM CHASES THE GREASED PIG

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Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2010

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Hill, Desiree. Twitter: Journalism Chases the Greased Pig. Master of Arts (Journalism), August 2010, 65 pp., 11 tables, references, 76 sources.

The study seeks to find a baseline of Twitter usage of traditional media. Findings suggest that traditional media are using Twitter (a non-traditional medium) in a traditional way. The study explores why a tool like Twitter needs to be approached by journalists in ways to which they may not be accustomed. The study additionally finds that newsrooms are underutilizing Twitter's potential for audience interactivity and have not established guidelines for journalists in the use of Twitter for work purposes. Conclusions include the need for more understanding of Twitter on the part of managers, a usage of Twitter that fits the medium, rather than traditional journalism models and more study in the future so that the journalism business can stay ahead of the curve when new communication technologies are introduced.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

The Current Landscape of Twitter

Summing up Twitter is like trying to catch a greased pig. Research becomes quickly outdated as the social network evolves in a viral-like fashion. Hackers and entrepreneurs create new applications that rapidly catch fire among users. For journalism the shape-shifting of Twitter becomes an endless pursuit. The changing nature of the social media site means the journalism business is constantly playing catch-up and will continue to do so until Twitter reaches a maturation point of stabilization.

Humanity's need to communicate spans millennia and media. From crude drawings in caves to hieroglyphics carved in stone to words printed on paper, the insistent need to communicate continues in the 21st century with a human brain, keyboard, internet connection and a website with the unlikely name of Twitter.

Twitter is not a social network (like Facebook or MySpace) that begs biographical information from each user and a careful selection of "friends" to populate the site. Neither is Twitter a deep-thought blog where users ruminate on topics as varied as autism and Zionism. Even if Twitter users wanted it to be an in-depth place of verbal discourse, it could not. Twitter is limited to 140 characters. Reporting in *Wired* magazine, Stephen Levy wrote, "Essentially, Twitter left a ball and a stick in a field and lurked on the sidelines as its users invented baseball" (Levy, 2009, p. 150).

"Anything that is useful to both dissidents in Iran and Martha Stewart has a lot going for it," writes Clay Shirkey, an expert on social media. "Twitter has more raw capability for users than anything since email" (as cited in Carr, 2010). History will determine whether Twitter has

more potential than email. At this writing, Twitter seems to be impacting journalists and their audiences. In outlining a newly-released set of guidelines for electronic news organizations and social media, the Radio Television Digital News Association guideline committee wrote, “[Social media] narrow the distance between journalists and the public. They encourage lively, immediate and spirited discussion. They can be vital news-gathering and news-delivery tools” (Tomkins, Benz, Woelfel, Goehler, Knopes, Graham, & Murphy, 2010, para.1). But as social media evolve for the public and journalists, careful consideration is needed to determine the strategy of these new tools never-before-seen or imagined in the world of news gatherers and their managers.

Twitter’s writers themselves use journalism-centric terms in describing the service within the site as “a real time information network powered by people all around the world that lets you share and discover what’s happening now. Twitter asks ‘what’s happening’ and makes the answer spread across the globe to millions, immediately” (Twitter, n.d.). In some senses that phrase could be the mission statement for a traditional news organization. Further, Twitter’s writers iterate, “Whether it’s breaking news, a local traffic jam, a deal at your favorite shop or a funny pick-me-up from a friend, Twitter keeps you informed with what matters most to you today and helps you discover what might matter to you most tomorrow” (Twitter, n.d.). With a little editing, that sentence could have been lifted from a promotional announcement for a morning newscast.

The purpose of this literature review and research study is to determine Twitter’s news information influence not only on journalists, but also on the public. The public plays an interesting role with Twitter in that it can both retrieve valuable news information from Twitter and also share important news material with journalists. In this sense Twitter may serve as one

of the purest forms of two-way conversation between and among various iterations of the media and the masses.

This study examines the history of Twitter and outlines its current status in terms of numbers of users and future plans for growth, as well as the impact of Twitter on journalism and the ethical considerations and responsibilities that come with an emerging form of communication. The heart of this literature review is the study of how electronic journalism is currently using Twitter as both a communication tool to audiences and as a news-gathering tool for further news dissemination. The review of recent research and academic study focuses on social media research as well as discussion of citizen journalism and its implications for democracy.

A case study targeting a medium-sized media market in the central part of the United States further illuminates the current state of Twitter usage in the traditional media. Tulsa, Oklahoma is number 61 in Nielsen's television market index of 210 broadcast markets. The Tulsa market serves slightly more than half a million viewers and covers slightly less than one-half of 1% of the population of the U.S. Tulsa is a typical news media market in that it has one daily newspaper, 4 news-producing television stations and 2 radio stations with local news staffs. Tulsa also has a balance of both locally-owned and corporately owned media outlets, which can provide a contrast in approach to news and engagement with local viewers. The Tulsa market's Twitter output was reviewed as a case study for a one week period. The week of May 3 through May 9, 2010, was selected.

The goal of the project is to determine a baseline of content provided via Twitter from an average size city, as well as a framing of content and type of communication occurring between the media entities and their audiences. The case study benefits from a follow-up questionnaire to

news managers and an interview with news managers based on the findings. This project sets a benchmark of what is currently happening with Twitter and the traditional media, and makes recommendations to traditional media outlets within the U.S. and around the world on how best to further this new extension of journalism, and others like it.

The study suggests that traditional media are using Twitter (a non-traditional medium) in a traditional way. The study explores why a tool like Twitter needs to be approached by journalists in ways to which they may not be accustomed. The study additionally finds that newsrooms are underutilizing Twitter's potential for audience interactivity.

History and Statistics of Twitter

At age 4, Twitter is just emerging from the toddler stage; but from a business perspective, it is a financially mature multi-million dollar industry. Twitter started as an idea in 2006. By 2009, leaked memos from inside Twitter's corporate realm reportedly predicted a billion users in the not-so-distant future (Levy, 2009).

Twitter's origins could be traced to the demise of one business crossing paths with a very simple idea. Now the CEO of Twitter, Evan Williams had watched his previous podcasting venture suffer from staggering competitive forces. He and an engineering colleague quickly began working on their next creative venture. That colleague, Jack Dorsey, can be credited with some of the early creative simplicity that is the key to Twitter's success. Dorsey came up with the suggestion of the brief status updates that would answer questions such as "where are you?" and/or "what are you doing?" (Levy, 2009). Twitter emerged from a day of brainstorming with a group including Dorsey, who suggested that users be able to send messages seamlessly from mobile devices or the Web. "We happened to be on top of the slide on the north end of South

Park. It was sunny and brisk. We were eating Mexican food. His idea made us stop eating and start talking,” recalls Dom Sagolla, who was part of Dorsey’s creative team (Sagolla, 2009, para.

2). The content would be as simple as what the users were doing from wherever they were.

Dorsey was the first to introduce the idea of an individual using small bursts of text to communicate with a specific group.

The working name was just ‘status’ for awhile. It actually didn’t have a name...mobile was a big aspect early on...we wanted to capture that feeling; the physical sensation that you’re buzzing your friend’s pocket....we came up with the name ‘twitch,’ because the phone kind of vibrates when it moves...So we looked in the dictionary for words around it, and we came across the word ‘twitter,’ and it was just perfect. (Sarno, 2009, para. 20)

In spring of 2006, it took 2 weeks for Dorsey and the team to build the model that was originally called Twittr, partially taking a cue from Flickr, the photo and video hosting website (Levy, 2009).

Twitter’s birth date was March 21, 2006. Dorsey had the honor of sending the first tweet: "just setting up my twttr" (@jack, 2006). Since that first tweet, Dorsey has 1.6 million followers on the site he is largely credited with creating.

One of the next pivotal moments in Twitter’s early existence came almost exactly one year later. The event that marked an exponential shift in Twitter’s growth was the South by Southwest (SXSW) music and culture festival in Austin, Texas. The Twitter marketing team got attention with a visual display of Twitter messages throughout the conference on two large TV screens. During the festival tweets grew from 20,000 a day to 60,000. Writing for *Newsweek* Stephen Levy noted, “Hundreds of conference-goers kept tabs on each other via constant twitters. Panelists and speakers mentioned the service, and the bloggers in attendance touted it. Soon everyone was buzzing and posting about this new thing that was sort of instant messaging and sort of blogging and maybe even a bit of sending a stream of telegrams” (Levy, 2007, para.

4). Journalists took note and a new media star was born. Not only did Twitter win the minds of skeptics at the festival, but it also won the SXSW web award that year. Twitter founders thanked the festival for the award, saying, "We'd like to thank you in 140 characters or less. And we just did" (Stone, 2007, para. 1).

Fast-forward to the week of February 22, 2010. Twitter ranked as the number 12 site in the world, with Google, Facebook and YouTube at numbers 1, 2, and 3 respectively (Alexa, 2010). In December of 2009, Internet measurement company comScore.com reported more than 60 million accounts registered on Twitter around the world, with one-third of the users residing in the U.S. (Ali, 2010). Internal documents leaked from Twitter top management in 2009 predicted 100 million users by the end of 2010 and 1 billion users by 2013 (Levy, 2009). Twitter has already exceeded that expectation with the announcement in April 2010 that it had reached more than 100 million registered users. Nine billion tweets were generated in 2009. Fifteen billion are predicted in 2010 (Ali, 2010). An ambitious internal Twitter company forecast shows a target of \$1.54 billion in revenue (Arrington, 2009).

Twitter executives are famously tight-lipped about their plans to make money on Twitter's success. Monetization of the social network is moving more slowly than registered users. Revenue was predicted to be around \$4 million in 2009 (Levy, 2009). Revenue-generating ideas in the near future include licensing deals with companies like Microsoft and Google, which would allow those companies to mine Twitter for data. Other ideas to earn more revenue for Twitter include advertising and special accounts for corporate users that could net premium profits. One factor that could hurt Twitter's potential on the money-making side is its inability to attract online users, despite the fact that it is also a website. An anemic 30% of Twitter use is on twitter.com. Some 60% of users access Twitter via cell phones and third party

developers, like HootSuite, a special web application for sending, receiving and scheduling tweets (Johansmeyer, 2009). Third party developers thus become a double-edged sword for Twitter. These specialized applications are one of the reasons for the explosive growth of the service, but hold back all-important page views on the mother site.

A seminal study of 11.5 million Twitter users was completed in June of 2009. The study was conducted by Sysomo, a Toronto-based social media research and analytics company.

Among the findings:

1. 5% of Twitter users account for 75% of all activity
2. Less than 1 update per day: 85.3%
3. Never tweeted: 21%
4. Fewer than 100 followers: 93.6%
5. Follow fewer than 100 people: 92.4%

Kevin Weil is a member of the Twitter analytics team and shares his own facts and figures about Twitter on his blog.

1. 2007 – 5,000 tweets per day
2. 2008 – 300,000 tweets per day
3. 2009 – 2.5 million tweets per day

Today, Weil says there are 50 million tweets per day, with an average of 600 per second. (Note that this information does not include tweets from accounts identified as spam.)

The highest number of Twitter users is in the United States. Within the U.S., Twitter is used mostly in the larger metro areas with the biggest concentration of users in Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago. The United Kingdom, Canada and Australia dominate Twitter on a world-wide level after the U.S. (Cheng, 2009).

Another measurement of Twitter's growth in its short lifetime is a measurement from SnapStream, a media monitoring software company. In December of 2009, TV programs mentioned the word "Twitter" 300% more often than one year earlier. (In an interesting snapshot of 2009 in general, the most often-mentioned words overall were: Iran, Michael Jackson, Swine Flu, North Korea, AIG, Pirates, Hamas, Inauguration, Ted Kennedy, and Balloon [boy], a finding which paralleled the biggest news stories of the year) (Rao, 2009).

The bottom line for Twitter and journalism: The growth is staggering, as is the potential, but what is the real impact for news gatherers and their audiences?

Twitter's Meaning for Journalism

As a communication tool, Twitter is a comfortable companion to journalism. Twitter is not just a specific tool that mirrors the "one-to-many" concept of the traditional media, like print, television and radio, but also a utility device that can serve many models including one to many, many to one, one to one and more.

1. Journalists may use Twitter to communicate outward to many "followers" – subscribers – with specific news-related information, like breaking news, weather alerts, sports scores and more.
2. Newsrooms may use Twitter to "follow" users in the community to see what the community – real people as opposed to experts – is talking about, such as the President's State of the Union address or pop culture discussion of "American Idol," as examples.
3. Newsrooms may create internal "Twitter feeds" of credible news sources, such as politicians and state government entities, for use as a mini-wire service. Journalists can also use Twitter to get tips for story ideas through updates from other organizations. Fire

and police departments in many cities have accounts, as do the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and many other official entities.

4. Journalists may use Twitter to directly contact a resource via Twitter's internal message system, like a corporation, which may not be easy to reach by more traditional methods, via phone or email as examples.
5. Staff may use Twitter to direct message colleagues or managers about the status of stories.
6. News organizations can create useful lists within Twitter accounts like a list of resources during a damaging weather situation – FEMA, insurance companies, public health information – making it easy for users to find everything they need on that one topic at their fingertips.
7. News organizations may monitor trending topics to determine blanket topics of interest to the public on any given day.
8. Citizen journalists may become a voice for others by micro-reporting on narrow-expert topics like dairy farming.
9. Accidental journalists may emerge when citizens find themselves unexpectedly in the midst of a breaking news situation, like the Haiti earthquake or Iran post-election protests. Example: those using Twitter during the U.S. West Coast fires in fall of 2007 kept neighbors and family up-to-date minute-by-minute (Poulson, 2007).

“It’s not necessarily journalism,” Twitter CEO Williams told the BBC, “but it does enable people to report news” (as cited in Richmond, 2009). One could argue Twitter content is indeed journalism, if journalism is defined as the gathering, writing and publishing of news.

Twitter may not have originated as a news disseminator, but that is what it has become. While journalism originally may have not been the intent of Twitter's founders, information was.

With each world-wide breaking news event, Twitter becomes more firmly rooted in the norm of journalistic communication. With each universal cultural event, like the Olympics or Grammy award ceremony, Twitter is revealing itself as a smart-marketing tool. And with every passing day, news organizations are trying to figure out how Twitter can work for them.

The *Orlando Sentinel* has been an early user of Twitter technology since its first tweet in the late spring of 2007. "If we think, wow, this is something I'd want to know right now – the death of someone famous, a major road closure, charges in a significant ongoing case, something big from a major local company like Disney – then we would Twitter it, as well as send other alerts," said John Cutter, senior editor of online news (Tenore, 2007). The newspaper's first tweet occurred precisely at 2:25 p.m. June 7, 2007: "We are planning to Twitter during the countdown and launch of the space shuttle Atlantis, so if you want updates, please join" (@orlandosentinel, 2007). It is interesting to observe that the word "Twitter" was used as a verb in 2007 before "tweet" became commonly accepted as the action word for using Twitter.

For Cutter, breaking news is not the only content that works for the newspaper's social media strategy. He says, "I think it is the micro-blog possibilities – either at an event like the shuttle, or if one of our bloggers could extend his or her blog community to the Twitter community." Cutter adds, "That could be during an event – let's say the music critic uses Twitter at a big concert or festival to send tweets and receive them from readers at the show ... Same, say, with a sportswriter" (as cited in Tenore, 2007).

Some news organizations have evolved their Twitter and other social media strategies over time. One international example is Sky News in the United Kingdom, which started with

one person managing the Twitter communication. "We no longer ghettoise [*sic*] it to one person, but are in the process of embedding throughout the whole team," said Julian March, Executive Producer of Sky News online. More than 90 Sky News staff now communicate to audiences via Twitter (Oliver, para 2010).

The unintended journalist can emerge when a breaking news event occurs and a person signed up with multiple followers on Twitter shares relevant information with true audience benefit. One example was Twitter account holder @CharleneLi, a consultant traveling hours after a terrorist attempt on a flight from Nigeria to Detroit Christmas Day 2009. The incident occurred on Friday. By Saturday travel security measures were quickly changing which meant thousands of travelers were affected on a busy holiday weekend. @CharleneLi tweeted from a Montreal airport that Saturday morning, "New security rules for int'l flights into U.S. 1 bag, no electronics the ENTIRE flight, no getting up last hour of flight"(Carr, 2010). New York Times writer David Carr pointed out that the two-sentence tweet was not the entire story, but it came at a time when news outlets were working hard to get the new security information (and incidentally at a time when news outlets are notoriously understaffed, and the Saturday after Christmas, no less). @CharleneLi became an inadvertent journalist simply by being in the right place at the right time and tweeting about it.

Breaking news is where Twitter truly scores in terms of growth. In 2008, on the day of the presidential election, Twitter use grew 43% (Whitney, 2008). Just a few weeks later in the same month the Mumbai terrorist attacks in November of 2008 became another example illustrating Twitter's global appeal. People on the scene sent approximately 80 tweets every 5 seconds. Twitter users became mini-news organizations by tweeting emergency contact information and directing people to local hospitals needing blood. Twitter user @naomieve

tweeted, “Mumbai is not a city under attack as much as it is a social media experiment in action” (Busari, 2008).

A national survey confirms that a large number of journalists say they have come to rely upon social media sources, including Twitter. The study was conducted by research company Cision and Don Bates, founding director of the George Washington University’s Strategic Public Relations program. It was fielded in October, 2009 and released in February, 2010. Among the findings: 55% of respondents say social media is important (15%) or somewhat important (40%).

Other significant findings include:

1. Use blogs for story research: 89%
2. Use social media sites like Facebook: 65%
3. Use microblogging services like Twitter: 52%
4. Use Wikipedia, the online encyclopedic resource: 61% (Loechner, 2010)

Although journalists have hit a tipping point in use of social media and micro-blogging, a different research firm has not reached that consensus. Pear Analytics analyzed 2,000 tweets during a two-week period in summer of 2009. Six categories of Twitter content were identified:

1. Pointless babble - 40.55%
2. Conversational messages - 37.55%
3. Pass-along value (retweets) - 8.70%
4. Self-promotion (by companies) - 5.85%
5. Spam - 3.75%
6. News - 3.60%

One might question whether the categories of “pass-along value” and “conversational messages” actually qualify as news, however. If a neighbor tweets an odor of gas in her

neighborhood and follows up with the fire department and finds there is a sewage problem in the area and tweets about it, one could describe that as pass-along value or a conversational message, while that same content could be the focus of a report later that evening on a 6 p.m. newscast. One could re-work the parameters of the survey and get a different set of results. In addition, the survey team excluded all Michael Jackson information (he died the previous June), which arguably was of news value to some Twitter followers and dominated news coverage during that time period.

The executive editor of washingtonpost.com sums up the importance of personal influence on Twitter. "People want to know what their friends think and what people respect. One way to get content in front of you is to have your friends recommend it; that's a social filtering of news" (Emmett, 2009).

The first decade of the 21st century is a troubled time for the news business. Hundreds of journalists have lost jobs across all news platforms. The tech bubble financial meltdown of 2001 and the banking and mortgage failures of the latter part of the decade have taken their tolls on an industry already imperiled by the web and changing audience behaviors. No review of Twitter's contribution would be complete without dialogue on how social networks can create revenue, perhaps more importantly, *new* revenue for the news industry. "The challenge continues to be how to monetize these users' activities successfully," says Eli Wendkos, product manager for social media at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Website. Wendkos says he is confident a model will emerge, but "The question is, when will it happen?" (Dumenco, 2010).

There may be little evidence that social media and micro-blogging will add significant amounts of new revenues to the news industry's bottom line, but James Brady of washingtonpost.com says that traffic on his site is up 43% in the past year. He credits sites such

as Twitter as helping generate traffic. "It's the stuff that gets your stuff into the ecosystem, like Digg or Twitter," he says. He says it isn't wise in today's new media world to wait for an audience to come to you. Instead, "the bigger play is to put your stuff directly into a social media site" (Dumenco, 2010). Brady embraces an outlook that may be key to a reinvention of journalism. "My attitude is for awhile you go with the flow and try as many new things as possible, and not get crazy on day one. Start playing in the sandbox and eventually find out if it's working for you. It certainly can't hurt" (Dumenco, 2010).

Ethical Considerations and Accuracy

In early 2010 the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) outlined guidelines for journalists' use of social media like Twitter and Facebook. A team of veteran journalists led by the Poynter Institute's Al Tompkins wrote, "The guidelines use the core principles of truth, fairness, accountability, and transparency, as well as bring in the important factor of protecting image and reputation" (Tomkins et al., 2010). In short, a simple starting point for journalists in answering questions they may have in using social media is: "How would we solve this dilemma within our traditional media platform?" But the wide-open world of new media present newsrooms with new challenges they have never faced before in traditional media. Therefore, a whole new set of procedures and guidelines are required.

Although some of the RTDNA guidelines are obvious for veteran journalists, it is important to point out that many newsrooms are not staffed by experienced professionals. Smaller market television stations have always hired an entry level workforce. Medium and large markets place entry-level employees in off-hour schedules, weekends and overnights. The newest members of the journalistic workforce are employees in their early twenties. The age of

these employees puts them in a demographic group which came of age on social networks, like MySpace, as teens. These employees may have posted photos of themselves online doing activities which would be considered unprofessional for someone who is representing a journalistic organization. These employees may have “friends” on social networks who are predominantly members of one political party. These employees may overtly share personal information of a religious nature that could compromise unbiased coverage of controversial theological debates.

The guidelines put forth by the RTDNA are basic, but thought-provoking, especially for entry level employees. The suggested rules are paraphrased below.

1. Information gleaned online should be confirmed just as you must confirm scanner traffic or phone tips before reporting them
2. Twitter’s character limits and immediacy are not excuses for inaccuracy and unfairness
3. Remember that social media postings live on as online archives. Correct and clarify mistakes, whether they are factual mistakes or mistakes of omission (Tomkins et al., 2010)

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the island country of Haiti, one of the most devastating natural disasters on record. Sysomos estimated that nearly 150,000 posts containing the key-words “Haiti” and “Red Cross” were sent through Twitter in the early days following the quake (Leberecht, 2010).

In the aftermath, scores of rumors and falsehoods were spread by Twitter. Some examples:

1. UPS would ship any package under 50 pounds to Haiti

2. Specific airlines would fly doctors and nurses free to Haiti
3. Scams promising to send funds to Haiti

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation warned Americans to be wary of requests to raise money in online communications via Twitter and other Internet sites. An FBI press release issued one day after the quake said in part, "Past tragedies and natural disasters have prompted individuals with criminal intent to solicit contributions purportedly for a charitable organization and/or a good cause" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, para. 1, 2010).

Cnet News' Tim Leberecht writes that relationships on social networks are "not based on trust but on authority – a currency that is easier to fake." He adds that Twitter by design is "prone to propaganda and misinformation" (Leberecht, 2010, para. 5). Journalists themselves agree that accuracy is a concern in the wild west of new media. In the Cision/George Washington study of journalism's use of new media, 84% of journalists said social media sources were "slightly less" or "much less" reliable than traditional media. Another 49% said that overall social media suffers from "lack of fact checking, verification and reporting standards." One of the study's authors, Don Bates, offers a cautionary framework for use of new media. "Social media provides a wealth of new information for journalists...getting the story right is as important as ever" (Loechner, 2010).

While using basic journalistic standards in managing new media is a first step, a companion step must be the design and follow-through of protocols for journalists to follow within the organization. Many broadcast companies are just now grappling with this task and are quickly updating company handbooks to include new standards for a new world of social communication.

In one example, one company explains that social media guidelines are to be followed by every employee of the television station, not just those in the news department. In this company's guidelines, any social media content produced by an employee is defined as representing the television station as a whole. That includes Facebook pages, Twitter content, blogs, and more. The directive reads in part,

We should remember that what we post online is open to the public. Our personal and professional lives merge online. The information you reveal and the journalism you produce and publish are tied together no matter how hard you try to separate them. You should assume that as a station employee whatever you post online will be connected to the station whether the information is journalistic in nature or personal. (Nilmeier, 2010)

Not surprisingly, employees are instructed to avoid filling out biographical material on social media sites that would lead to a perception of bias on story coverage, specifically information religious or political in nature. Further, the new policies shed light on the evolutionary nature of new media and how it can affect a journalistic organization. Employees are also prohibited from making disparaging remarks about the company. Negative remarks about co-workers on social networking sites can be construed as harassment (Nilmeier, 2010).

Other considerations are raised by the RTDNA guidelines. They include:

1. Procedures for fact-checking.
2. Protocols for corrections on social media sites.
3. Processes for copyediting on social media sites.
4. Any decision-making processes before something is posted.
5. In using photographs, does the individual who posted it have the rights to do so?
6. Could a photograph have been manipulated in any way?

Because many of these guidelines are being put in place after employees have established accounts on Twitter and other social networks, the jury is still out on how the battle will be fought to ensure employees adhere to the new ethical guidelines.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Little research exists specifically on Twitter's impact on journalism and the news business. One of the first mentions of Twitter in an academic journal regarding journalism came as recently as 2008 (Wilson, 2008). A small number of articles and studies relating the pair have appeared since, illustrating that Twitter is still settling in as a tool for content providers and is still ripe for further review and discussion among media professionals, academics and researchers. Although many of the studies and theoretical frameworks cited in this study predate Twitter, many reflect what Twitter is and what Twitter and Twitter-like entities can become for journalism.

Technologies like Twitter are both exciting and threatening to journalism. News media have helped shape the "social order by controlling information" for centuries (Robinson, 2007). New technologies are disruptive to the established order. "New media are bringing about a realignment between and among news organizations, journalists and their many publics, including audiences, sources, competition, advertisers and the government" (Pavlik, 2001, p. 1). New technologies have created a sea change for journalists and the business of journalism. The World Wide Web and the social media that followed bring about new questions for news providers.

1. Do journalists become involved with social media?
2. What is appropriate or inappropriate in that involvement?
3. Is social media important from a news-gathering stand-point to audiences?
4. What is the audience's role?

5. How does involvement in new technologies change the structure of an established news environment?
6. What kinds of news information are best-served online, as opposed to the kinds of news information best communicated via more traditional print or television news?

Some journalists see the advent of new journalistic technologies as an opportunity to provide more transparency, authenticity and audience experience to the work of news-gathering. Edward R. Murrow once had to fight with the British government and his network to bring World War II live to audiences in the U.S. Now, one person with a keyboard, a camera or a video camera can bring news-worthy experiences to audiences via a variety of mediums – from online still pictures to video sold or given to a television station to podcasts from the scene.

Sue Robinson (2007) studied new media's effects on journalism by interviewing 35 writers, photographers and editors in an in-depth study. In her findings she reports:

Journalistic authority in terms of its institutional cache cannot help but become diluted as it makes room for such expansions. With these changes to journalistic missions, routines, and societal relationships, newspapers and their websites are turning into an interactive public sphere that just may be forming a new kind of institution, one whose enduring boundaries are malleable and constructed as much by the content receivers as by the information producers. Such changes must have implications for the press's power to dictate knowledge to society. The institution of the press is still fully functioning, but *the news is no longer the sole purview of the press*. (Robinson, 2007. p. 318, emphasis added)

“News is no longer the sole purview of the press” partly because of the explosion of social media and the more sedate growth of citizen journalism. Both social media and citizen journalism are connected to Twitter because of their relationships to the medium Twitter represents. Thelwall (2007) defined social networks as websites that allow visitors to register and connect to communicate and share resources. Under such a definition, Twitter is widely accepted as a cousin to social media like Facebook and mySpace. Citizen journalism is also in

the family tree of Twitter. In that vein, Goode (2009) writes that citizen journalism is defined as the creation of original content by citizens. “Citizen journalism also refers to a range of web-based practices whereby ‘ordinary’ users engage in journalistic practices,” Goode notes (Goode, 2009, p. 1288). Twitter is related to citizen journalism in that the second-by-second content creation by users includes news-oriented information supplied to followers who may be representatives of professional news outlets – or ordinary non-news-related citizens.

Social Media, Citizen Journalism and Twitter

The study of social media is still in its infancy, because social media itself is a category relatively new in the span of the complete work of journalistic study. Yet the study of the “new” social media often returns to the roots of academic journalism writings and study. In *Information Please: Culture and Politics in the Age of Digital Machines* (Poster, 2006), the author seeks to relate modern information culture to existing cultural theory (Royal, 2008). For example, the author compares digital culture with traditional folk culture. “The Internet encourages a new cultural practice of resignification, something possible in the small agricultural communities of the past, but then limited to the immediate members of the group” (Royal, 2008, p. 411). This concept resonates greatly with how large populations engaged in social media can create small, robust spaces for discussion and communication on obscure, sometimes folk-related activities and concepts. Another book, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (Jenkins, 2006) echoes a similar sentiment. Jenkins writes, “Popular culture is what happens as mass culture gets pulled back into folk culture” (Royal, 2008, p. 411). In essence, the communication of digital and social media allow folk culture to flourish because of the ease of the distribution system. Knitting enthusiasts may join specific groups on Facebook to talk about

their craft and learn new techniques. People who cultivate heirloom vegetables may search the word “heirloom” on Twitter to find others who are interested in growing old lines of produce.

Facebook and mySpace are somewhat frequently cited in academic writings as new tools for journalists. The two sites have become particularly rich resources because of their users’ frequent posting of photos. Examples of journalism’s new use of this visual treasure trove are everywhere, including the Virginia Tech campus shootings in 2007. The campus newspaper mined social networking sites and was able to publish a list of victims early in the morning the day after the shootings. Reporters across the country routinely review the pages of fallen soldiers to find photos and character aspects which help to tell the stories of those who have died in the line of duty. It has become common practice on a reporter’s to-do list to always seek photos on social media sites when reporting on stories of people who have died in newsworthy events.

There is a down side to this easy access of information. Two Salt Lake City reporters used information from a fake mySpace page in reporting on the arrest of a neo-Nazi. Brant Houston, the James L. Knight Chair in Investigative and Enterprise Journalism of the University of Illinois cautioned, “You have to follow the same checks. People may put something exaggerated on their mySpace pages. You still have follow up to do” (Spencer, 2007, p. 36).

Journalists must keep another important caveat in mind as they navigate the waters of social media: not everyone uses it. A 2009 survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 47% of U.S. adults use online social networks, with 19% using Twitter or similar status update services. Not surprising, 37% of 18-24 year olds use Twitter, as do 31% of 25-34 year olds. “An over-reliance on these tools for sourcing or drawing conclusions based on

using them as the sole source for research could result in skewed or inaccurate assumptions” (Gresing-Prophal, 2010, para. 24).

A 2010 Pew study portends the future in many ways in that it focused on Millennials, people currently aged 18-29. Seventy-five percent of those surveyed have created an online profile compared to only 30% of Baby Boomers who have done so. Millennials (like Generation X) say their generation is distinguished by technology (in comparison to Baby Boomers who say they are distinguished by their work ethic). These findings have important ramifications for the future of journalism and younger people. Their use of social media in combination with their identification with technology in general continue to forecast where they will choose to get their information: on the web.

Statistical studies don't readily showcase the tidal wave of change that is reverberating through newsrooms around the world. Traditional journalism practice has helped shape social order by combining information dissemination with a very structured environment. But new interactive technologies have allowed audiences to take some control. Scholars don't necessarily agree whether such changes are “revolutionary, or merely evolutionary” (Robinson, 2007). Some have argued that the web is becoming normalized (Resnick, 1998), while others believe it is still in a state of flux and its potential has no limits (Kellner, 1998). In *Politics of Cyberspace*, both authors write of the cyberspace's impact on the audience, including that once users educate themselves about technology use and communication, a healthier democracy occurs.

Online journalism and communication have a direct relation to the study of citizen journalism. Digital media and democracy also connect to citizen journalism. Yet, “the ideal of the informed citizen is breaking down,” writes Jenkins, “because there is simply too much for any individual to know” (Royal, 2008, p. 411). Jenkins believes new skills in collaboration will

be necessary to create a new basis of knowledge sharing that will allow people to think about information together.

For those who have studied the subject of citizen journalism, its boundaries are still undefined (Lasica, 2003). One may form a narrow, “strict” definition or one that is “looser.” However, the more inclusive the definition, the more unwieldy the topic gets. But the more narrow definition artificially restricts the subject (Goode, 2009).

The historical view may also be restrictive. Some see citizen journalism as a movement akin to the historical model of Thomas Paine and his pamphlets of the Revolutionary War era (Goode, 2009). But there is more to citizen journalism than those who would aspire to be the alternative to the “mainstream” media. Twitter is both alternative and mainstream at once in that it is inclusive to all who create profile pages and begin to disseminate content. A user may be one who purposefully endeavors to be alternative or one which is a traditional media outlet like a newspaper or television station.

Goode writes the relationship connecting social news to citizen journalism can underscore the relationship of news to democracy (2009). The theme of how democracy can be strengthened and enriched by citizen involvement in journalism and politics is one that appears throughout the academic literature. One framework to examine is the communitarian view, which focuses on the relationship between the individual and the community; the good of the individual is dependent on the good of the community (Hodges, 1996). The communitarian view argues that a new virtual world can create a platform for more political involvement by citizens (Tumber, 2001). Tumber wasn’t necessarily advocating for communitarianism, only citing it as one example of how democracy is affected by electronic media. “Some argue that the new electronic technologies are empowering citizens to participate in new democratic forums not

only between government and the governed but also amongst citizens themselves,” he wrote (Tumber, 2001, p. 100). He also points out that democracy can be better served – at least from a politician’s point of view – when elected officials can bypass media and communicate directly with constituents in a virtual world. In 2001 when Tumber’s article was published, Twitter was still half a decade away from development. Yet his thoughts on newer forms of citizen communication parallel what Twitter can mean for both journalism and democracy. Constituents may hear directly from politicians via Twitter, as can journalists. Reporters and readers alike may learn something important at the same moment from a lawmaker via Twitter. The meaning of democracy is affected by the way a government’s politics is communicated and conducted (Tumber, 2001).

The communitarian framework came about as a reaction to “liberal theory,” defined here as the social philosophy adopted by the United States’ founding fathers, promoting individuality and enlightenment (Hodges, 1996). Twitter can ascribe to both a communitarian way of thinking as well as to the liberal process, in that users may promote the community ahead of the individual and vice versa.

Citizen journalism may be alive and well in the sphere of blogs, social media and the world of Web commentary, but its presence does not mean professional media organizations are no longer setting the agenda for what is news. Traditional media are still breaking news and interpreting news in the online world and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future (Goode 2009). While citizens may report, witness and share interesting pieces of content, professional news organizations will generally use standards developed in the last century to determine what appears within the traditional media including print, television and radio. With Twitter, a “concurrent process” of agenda-setting is occurring. It may be argued that almost any

person registered and communicating on Twitter *is* a citizen journalist, regardless of intention, because most individual's tweets are available to be followed or to be seen (some users may opt out of being followed by those they don't know, but that is the exception, rather than the rule). Every user of Twitter then may become a "concurrent agenda-setter," by accident or on purpose, thereby influencing the professional agenda-setters simply by sharing interesting, timely and relevant information, especially when that information may be shared by dozens, hundreds or thousands of users thereby becoming a "trending" topic on Twitter and further influencing agendas of traditional news media organizations like newspapers and television newscasts.

McQuail has defined journalistic gatekeeping as "the process by which selections are made in media, especially decisions whether to admit a particular news story to pass through the 'gates' of a news medium into the news channels" (Bruns, 2003). Bruns (2003) argued for "gatewatcher" as a better term than "gatekeeper" to apply to online news, especially given that the Fourth Estate, journalism, is increasingly influenced by what some have dubbed the "Fifth Estate" – spin doctors, public relations experts and opinion-setters. Those who navigate the Web are their own gatekeepers, but *gatewatchers* also play the role of passing along content rather than being the original creator of it. Gatewatchers share news, rather than originating it, and they do not require special journalistic ability (Bruns, 2003). Gatewatchers do need to have basic online research abilities. Twitter users follow the gatewatcher model because with a limited amount of space in which to write, a large number of Twitter users cite Web addresses of interest for their followers or pass along tweets (retweets or RTs) of interest.

Citizen watchers of news and journalistic experts also monitoring the Web do not prevent significant errors and mistakes from occurring. In the Internet world, important stories may be buried because they do not capture the public's interest. In addition, content may be

exaggerated, changed or accuracy may be compromised. Pierre Salinger, the former press secretary to President John F. Kennedy, famously believed and communicated a fake document from the Internet regarding the crash of TWA Flight 800, as an example of the level at which inaccuracy may occur (Harper, n.d., para. 3). Anybody can say anything on social media sites, with few exceptions, including obscenity, spamming and false identity. In this vein, the “gatewatcher” may include all citizens who are reading, monitoring and occasionally flagging inappropriate or questionable content.

Another view emerges from Website editor Steve Yelvington in announcing the traditional role of the journalist as gatekeeper has ended. “There are no gates to be kept, the city walls are down” (Tumber, 2001, p. 107). Instead, he describes the role of journalist heading into the 21st century as “trusted guide.” Aufderheide offers a view that journalists are more facilitators of ‘responsible public discussion,’ rather than the guardians of public knowledge. In this role journalists are ‘the people who help us make the connections between pieces of information that we are too busy or harried or ignorant to make for ourselves’ (Tumber, 2001, p.108). Aufderheide’s ideas are underscored by the view that new technologies do not make this responsibility any easier.

Academic Research and Theory

Industry research has focused on usage, statistics and demographics of Twitter. The academic research has been slower to develop, especially since Twitter is still a relatively new phenomenon, arriving on the scene in 2006. The industry implications have a potentially tremendous profit potential, which is one of the motivations for frequent research, especially within corporate and marketing entities. However, academic research is rich in the category of

the Internet and how it has affected the workplace and communication. Hossjer (2009) cites a number of studies relating to the online world. In each example, one can imagine how the study of a website like Twitter could have similar results. Waldovogel explained that “lean” mediums (like email) can create rich information (2007) and cited numerous studies that bear this out (Abdullah, 2003; Huang, Watson, & Wei, 1998; Markus, 1994). For a lean medium to create rich content, a few ingredients are needed.

The extent to which email is able to do this is largely dependent on the relationship between the communication participants and the kind of organization to which they belong. The active construction of rich meaning is accomplished most effectively between participants who have a well-established relationship in organizations with a similar culture. (Waldovogel, 2007, p.123)

With only 140 characters in which to write, Twitter may be the leanest medium of all. One could argue that when a collective of tweets on one topic is generated, especially during an event like the 2010 Haiti earthquake or 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai, a lean medium produces rich content.

In earlier studies by Sproull and Kiesler (1991), email led to significant changes within organizational communication, specifically leading to a flattened hierarchal structure (Hossjer, 2009). Twitter’s follower-and-followed format allows for a regular citizen to communicate to governmental entities, journalistic organizations and opinion-setters, thus “flattening the hierarchy” and leading to communication where there once was none. Contact may be based on common interest rather than social standing or professional status.

Research in the online world has focused on this “flattening” concept. Rheingold (1993) concurred that when people come into a level playing field, “asymmetrical” characteristics can emerge in comparison to a traditional model in a non-Internet world (Goode, 2009, p. 1303). In a journalistic environment, for example, the power holders are typically publishers, editors, news

directors and corporate owners. One push from any power holder can elevate news content to a front page or multi-part coverage. In the Twitter world, one may not know the status of individual users (depending on how much information users supply on profile pages). It can be argued that the anonymous president of a company is equal to an unemployed blue collar worker when it comes to content on Twitter, thus proving Rheingold's point of "flattening" the hierarchal structure in this online environment.

Many theoretical frameworks can be applied to a study of Twitter and other new social media and citizen journalism endeavors. Goode (2007) discusses the relevance of the "cognitive mapping" theory relating to citizen journalism. Attributed to Jameson (1990), the cognitive mapping theory relates to how citizens try to make sense of their surroundings, locally, nationally and globally. A citizen in Lima, Ohio may be able to unexpectedly or randomly communicate with a citizen in Lima, Peru via Twitter. This kind of "unforeseen consequence" communication allows users to engage in a different way, allowing them to explain, communicate and understand the world around them, however local or global that world might be.

Hossjer's findings include the outcomes of email communication and diminished understanding. Three valid theoretical frameworks include the reduced cues perspective, social context cues perspective and the social presence theory. The reduced cues perspective is defined as the result when a lack of communicative cues may lead to misunderstanding. The social context cues perspective is one by which an absence of social context affects communication. The social presence theory is related to the others, but adds a poor perceptive ability on the part of the communication partner (Hossjer, 2009). In other words, in a "lean" medium, such as email, communication loses the human touch. This is also true for Twitter because

communication is limited, and the only context is the words on the screen – and a limited number of words at that. As Mark Twain wrote, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug” (Ayers 1987, p. 252). On Twitter, the wrong word, punctuation or upper-case type can send the opposite message of that which was intended. Additionally, Hossjer notes that when there is little knowledge about communication players, stereotypes may be reinforced. This could be relevant for Twitter users because photographs and graphics may be added to each user’s main page. Imagine that one user chooses a bold red background with a patriotic backdrop and another user chooses a blue tone with a Barack Obama-style photograph. A political stereotype (red state, blue state) could be reinforced. Under those circumstances the communication may be judged before it is received. Some positive effects can occur when few cues are offered. An alternative to the “cues-filtered-out” perspective can be that fewer non-verbal cues can be advantageous for email writers. According to a model offered by Walther (1996) the distance offered by email writers allows them more control than face-to-face communication. The planning, writing and delivering of the content allows for more polite exchanges under this model (Waldovogel, 2007).

The quality and credibility of information received online is also worth review. Several studies have examined the trust factor online between the web and web users. Research shows people who tend to be more trusting in general find the Internet more trustworthy as well (Katz & Rice 2002). In one United States study, researchers found people who are less trusting of people overall are more likely to see the Internet as threatening (Uslaner 2000). Another study asserted a “U-shaped” relationship for online users. In Donald MacKenzie’s 1999 research analysis he described this relationship as one pitting certainty of information against uncertainty (MacKenzie, 1999). The findings demonstrate that those who know the most and the least about

the Internet have the least trust in it. MacKenzie posited that people closest to the web, such as web surfers and information technology experts, may have a higher level of distrust because they have the highest level of knowledge about all the pitfalls that can occur online, like reliability, security and privacy issues. As the least-experienced web users learn more – even by simply becoming a user – a higher level of trust may occur. This “U-shaped” relationship theory has an interesting potential outcome for social media and news online. Those just starting out online and/or beginning to use a service like Twitter may not have a high level of trust in the information. Those who are news professionals will also be more wary of information passed along, because as in MacKenzie’s example, as experts they will be less likely to believe everything they read. Journalists who see a startling piece of information will want to double-check sources, just as they would in gathering news in more traditional, old-fashioned ways (Dutton, 2006).

Clearly, information and communication technologies can shape communication patterns. As academia and the business world adjust to new forms of communication that are technologically advanced, consideration needs to be given to the idea that when new technology is introduced one cannot predict how people will respond (Dutton 2004). Consequences may not immediately be known because social shaping (MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1985) begins to occur (Thelwall, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY

Traditional Media in Tulsa, Oklahoma

The preceding overview and literature review provide an understanding of Twitter's evolving usage, giving context and additional knowledge on journalism and social media, as well as helping to establish a benchmark of this place in time for television, radio and print journalists' use of Twitter. Certainly, the meaning and usage of social media for journalists is still evolving. The goal of this research project is to provide a baseline view of Twitter use in a typical media market in a medium-sized city in the U.S.

Tulsa, Oklahoma was selected, in part, because it is in many ways a typical mid-American media market. There are 4 news-producing television stations, with a diverse array of ownership from the well-known media corporation, Scripps (NBC), to a family-owned operation (CBS). There is a family-owned local newspaper, the *Tulsa World*, as well as two radio stations with news staffs.

A typical week in the life of the Tulsa market was selected for the study: May 3, 2010-May 9, 2010. Every tweet sent by these traditional media outlets during the week was analyzed and categorized for content and context. Twitter content before and after the study week was monitored to provide additional informational context. Once analysis of the Twitter content was complete, a follow-up questionnaire was sent to 6 of the media outlets mentioned above. One of the 2 local news radio stations ultimately was not included in the study, because almost 100% of its tweets from the study week were sports-related, which would have skewed the news content findings. In follow-up interviews, two news directors and one web content coordinator were

interviewed. The radio station and two television station managers were contacted via phone, email and direct message on Twitter, but did not return the questionnaire.

The body of knowledge on journalism and the news business has frequently been enriched by the interviews of journalists and managers. Robinson's 2007 study of the online impact on journalistic practices involved the interviews of 35 journalists. In her findings, Robinson cited Deuze (2005) and Gieber (1999 [1964]) whose interviews with journalists helped provide more insight into journalistic norms on identity and the craft. Interviews with journalists and journalism managers can provide information that can enrich numerical analysis.

Findings

The output of numerically separate pieces of content via Twitter was somewhat consistent on a daily basis, not including weekends during the week of May 3-9, 2010. The number of tweets for all stations and the newspaper combined each day ranged from a high of 179 (on Monday) to a low of 97 (on Sunday) for a total of 1,008 for the week. KFAQ radio sent the highest number of tweets on a daily basis with an average of 76.7 per day.

Content was analyzed across 9 broad subject categories: local, state, national, international, weather, entertainment, sports, programming and other. Some of the media outlets ignored some content areas, while seeming to specialize in others. Content was further broken down into a subset of local news: crime, government, health, business, traffic/accidents, immediacy and feature.

Two important graphics show at a glance how journalists in this American city are communicating with Twitter. The first table shows the entire week across all media including all content areas. The second table shows each media entity's Twitter statistics.

Table 1

All Tweets from May 3-9, All Content Areas

Content	<i>TULSA WORLD</i>	KOKI FOX	KOTV CBS	KTUL ABC	KJRH NBC	KFAQ Radio
Local	6	52	68	71	6	23
State	0	35	9	37	0	27
National	0	0	5	0	0	202
International	0	0	0	0	0	41
Weather	0	39	6	125	0	163
Entertainment	0	0	0	0	0	35
Sports	0	0	0	0	0	22
Programming	0	0	0	2	0	14
Other	5	0	0	1	4	10
Total	11	126	88	236	10	537

Another snapshot of the Tulsa media market is each media entity’s unique Twitter footprint or statistics. These numbers were gathered on May 12, 2010 at the conclusion of the May 3-9 content analysis.

Table 2

Tulsa Media Twitter Profiles

Statistics	<i>TULSA WORLD</i>	KOKI FOX	KOTV CBS	KTUL ABC	KJRH NBC	KFAQ Radio
Followers	3646	3245	3121	2070	1794	922
Following	2827	2690	3227	24	919	85
Tweets	18019	7782	9620	15833	179	18375

The *Tulsa World* has the most followers at 3646 and KOTV follows the most people at 3227. Followers are defined as individuals who link their Twitter accounts to the media outlets to receive tweets from them. KFAQ radio sent the most tweets overall at 18,375 as of May 12, 2010.

A closer look at the first graphic suggests the distinct content personalities that emerge from each news provider. In order of presentation on the graphic:

1. The *Tulsa World* places little emphasis on Twitter during the study week with only 11 tweets total, yet it is number one in terms of followers.
2. KOKI (Fox) emphasizes local news, with a second tier of emphasis on state and weather information.
3. KOTV (CBS) places the most emphasis on local news and little to no emphasis on most other categories like weather, national, entertainment and sports.
4. KTUL (ABC) places a strong emphasis on weather with hourly updates, as well as the most overall emphasis on local news coverage with the highest number of tweets in this category. KTUL follows the fewest number of people, and therefore may be limiting the amount of information coming in to its own Twitter feed.
5. KJRH (NBC) places little emphasis on Twitter overall with only 10 tweets for the entire week.
6. KFAQ radio has by far the most content output of all the media outlets, with most of its emphasis on national and weather information. (Almost all of KFAQ's tweets originate from the Associated Press, which explains the numbers of national, international and entertainment information.)

A majority of tweets (68%) analyzed in this study included a link with a longer report to the broadcaster or newspaper's website or Facebook page. When short content like current weather conditions are excluded, the number of tweets linking to station websites jumps to above 90%. The traditional media place a priority on generating as much traffic to their websites as possible. Although websites are not the profit centers managers desire, the goal is that more clicks will someday equal more money.

Many of the newsrooms also allow individual journalists to have their own Twitter accounts. This is discussed more thoroughly later in this study, but the tweets analyzed in the first week of May 2010 only include the main media source and what the main entity's brand is communicating to its audience via Twitter – not what individual reporters are communicating.

The week of May 3-9 included 3 stories of national significance: the early days of the British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the extreme flooding of Nashville, Tennessee, and the arrest of the man accused in the Times Square terror plot. Some punctuation, spelling and typographical errors were transmitted during the survey week. The content of the tweets throughout the document are as they were transmitted. Examples of content on stories of national significance include:

KOTV (May 3, 2010): *Ala. Gov.: booms breaking down due to bad weather*
<http://bit.ly/afvLAZ> (@NewsOn6, 2010)

KFAQ (May 4, 2010): *Video: Arrest Made in Attempted Times Square Bombing*
<http://bit.ly/clyleoQ> (@KFAQ, 2010)

KFAQ (May 6, 2010): *Video: Waters Recede to Show Ruined Nashville*
<http://bit.ly/cszOOO> (@KFAQ, 2010)

Stories of local significance for Tulsa included the arrest of a school administrator accused of child molestation and several follow-up reports on Oklahoma's new restrictive abortion law, a story that had also received national attention. Examples of tweets on these stories include:

KTUL (May 3, 2010): *Updated: Attys Agree To Block On Abortion La:*
<http://clkurl.com/i.cfm/tw732066> (@KTULNews, 2010)

Tulsa World (May 5, 2010): *Tulsa assistant principal charged in student molestation case* <http://bit.ly/9god7e> (@tulsaworld, 2010)

KOKI (May 5, 2010): *TPS Administrator Charged With Sexual Abuse* <http://bit.ly/bQpazk> (@FOX23, 2010)

The 6 news providers tweeted 234 local stories during the 7-day study period. Local news in this study is defined as news either happening within the confines of the Tulsa media market coverage area, also including news from the Capitol city of Oklahoma City with a major impact on the Tulsa area. The 8 local news categories in the order of number of tweets on each category were:

1. Crime – stories involving criminal activity or the judicial process relating to crime. Example:

KOKI (May 4, 2010): *Trial Set In Death Of Alleged KKK Recruit* <http://bit.ly/cP84IM> (@FOX23, 2010)

2. Government – State, city, local governmental stories. Governmental involvement or regulation of public schools was also included in this category. Example:

KTUL (May 3, 2010): *Updated: Budget Panel OKs Tax Credit Elimina:* <http://clkurl.com/i.cfm/twtw732162> (@KTULNews, 2010)

3. Traffic and accidents – Traffic tie-ups or accidents. Example:

KTUL (May 8, 2010): *Vinita Man Dies In Motorcycle Wreck* <http://clkurl.com/i.cfm/tw734041> (@KTULNews, 2010)

4. Feature – Entertainment-related or specialized human interest stories. Examples:

Tulsa World (May 3, 2010): *Black Keys announce Tulsa tour stop* <http://bit.ly/cAUMjs> (@tulsaworld, 2010)

KOTV (May 5, 2010): *An Inside Look At Where Oklahoma Soldiers Live and Work On The War Front* <http://bit.ly/bnOegR> (@NewsOn6, 2010)

5. Business – economic stories relating to the local business community. Examples:

KOTV (May 5, 2010): *American Airlines, Transport Workers Union Reach Tentative Agreement* <http://bit.ly/bA6E7F> (@NewsOn6, 2010)

KJRH (May 6, 2010): <http://bit.ly/au9wDX> (Note: the story was about jobs coming to a Glenpool company upon linking to the site, although no headline was included in the tweet itself [@KJRH2HD, 2010])

6. Immediacy – stories of a breaking nature or stories which could potentially have immediate effect on the recipient of the tweet. Examples:

KTUL (May, 3, 2010): *MTTA Bus Involved In Accident:* <http://clkurl.com/i.cfm/tw732281> (@KTULNews, 2010)

KOTV (May 4, 2010): *Missing Fort Gibson Man May Be In South Central Oklahoma* <http://bit.ly/dr4llb> (@NewsOn6, 2010)

7. Fire – Home or business fires. Example:

Tulsa World (May 5, 2010): *Knotty Pine restaurant closed by fire* <http://bit.ly/93XIUK> (@tulsaworld, 2010)

8. Health – stories involving medical issues. Example:

KOTV (May 9, 2010): *Confirmed Case Of Rabies In Oologah Prompts Warning To Pet Owners* <http://bit.ly/bG7buB> (@NewsOn6, 2010)

The graphic on the following page shows the Tulsa broadcast stations and newspaper with a list of the content categories mentioned above and the numerical breakout of each category for each newsroom.

Table 3

All Local Tweets, May 3-9, Separated by Content Categories

Local Content	TULSA WORLD	KOKI FOX	KOTV CBS	KTUL ABC	KJRH NBC	KFAQ Radio	Total
Crime	1	26	24	26	3	14	94
Government	1	13	17	12	3	12	58
Traffic and Accidents	0	3	5	12	0	22	22
Feature	3	3	8	6	0	20	20
Business	0	2	5	3	1	1	12
Immediacy	0	1	3	7	0	1	12
Fire	1	1	2	4	0	2	10
Health	0	1	4	1	0	0	6
Total	6	50	68	71	7	32	234

In the total column, the top 3 categories were crime (94 content pieces), government (58), and traffic/accidents (22). Another way to form a numeric perspective is to break down the tweets into percentages. In some cases, the percentages have been rounded up or down. This is not a statistically-based study, but rather a benchmark based on a short period of time. In order to have more scientifically-based numbers a follow-up study during a longer period of time with a larger sample size is recommended.

The above graphic reveals a major finding from the study. Only 12 stories (less than 3%) were transmitted for the week which fit into the immediacy category. On average, fewer than 2 stories a day were tweeted which were of a breaking or developing nature. Twitter content can be delivered to a news consumer right now. A Twitter user may have Twitter content delivered directly into a cell phone that the user is holding at the moment. Therefore, the platform is more suited to news of immediacy than news that has already occurred. More than 90% of the local tweets delivered during the study week pointed users to a station web site or Facebook account. If enough time has elapsed to create a web story, the story is no longer immediate.

Table 4

Total Percentage of Local Content Categories

Local Content	Total	Percentage
Crime	94	40%
Government	58	25%
Traffic and Accidents	22	9%
Feature	20	9%
Business	12	5%
Immediacy	12	5%
Fire	10	4%
Health	6	3%
Total	234	100%

Crime and government easily top the content offerings via Twitter from the media outlets as a whole. Sixty-five percent of the local news tweets from the survey week were either crime or government-related. The other categories fall into the single-digits, with only traffic and accidents and the feature category occupying a mid-level with 9% each.

The following table directly compares the CBS, ABC and Fox affiliates local news profiles. KJRH, the *Tulsa World* and KFAQ radio have been removed from this graphic because of the small number of tweets from KJRH and the *Tulsa World* in the survey week, and because of KFAQ’s small number of local news tweets. As a percentage of overall tweets from each, KTUL and KOTV are almost exactly even in the number of content pieces involving crime at 35 and 37% respectively. KOTV and KOKI also share a similar number with 25 and 26% of total tweets in the government content category.

Table 5

Side-by-Side Comparison of KOKI, KOTV and KTUL Local Content

Local Content	KOKI FOX	KOTV CBS	KTUL ABC
Crime	52	35	37
Government	26	25	17
Traffic and Accidents	6	7.5	17
Feature	6	12	8
Business	4	7.5	4
Immediacy	2	4	10
Fire	2	3	6
Health	2	6	1
Total	100%	100%	100%

The above graphic reflects the sameness of the local news by the 3 television stations on Twitter, and perhaps on their local newscasts, as well. The numbers also reflect a major finding of the study: some of the mainstream local media in Tulsa use Twitter in a highly traditional way. Just as newscasts (and newspapers) across the country lean on crime and government

news, in this market the same is true. A non-traditional news platform is used to transmit highly traditional news. Additionally, the above graphic shows a traditional sense for other content areas one would expect to find: fire, traffic and business coverage.

Tulsa World

The strategic plan for our Twitter accounts changes based on feedback from users.

Lauren Cavagnolo, Web Content Coordinator

The *Tulsa World* is number one in number of followers. It is number two in number of tweets transmitted. However, for the survey week, the *Tulsa World* ranked at the bottom for number of content pieces sent with only 11 total, allowing the newspaper to edge out KJRH’s 10 by 1 tweet.

Table 6

Tulsa World Statistics

Newspaper Facts	<i>Tulsa World</i>
Ranking of followers	#1
Ranking of number of tweets sent	#2
News staff size	134
Web staff size	10
Strategic plan for Twitter?	Yes and no (explained below)
Importance of social media to overall marketing strategy	Somewhat
Social media rules of conduct for staff	No
Audience interaction	6 examples
How often audience interaction according to manager	More than once a day

Web Coordinator Lauren Cavagnolo says the newspaper’s Twitter strategy has evolved over time. “In the beginning, we made a lot of effort to follow people in Tulsa to try to gain followers. As it caught on, we have had to do less of that.” The *World’s* strategy has paid off,

making its Twitter account number one in terms of followers in the Tulsa market and also explaining why the *Tulsa World* may not feel the need to tweet frequently. “The basic plan for Twitter is to provide stories we think the community would find interesting, provide customer service and interact with our readers as much as possible.”

Cavagnolo says many reporters have their own Twitter accounts and are encouraged to do so. Those accounts are accessible from the newspaper’s website on the reporter’s blog pages.

Although the newspaper’s Twitter content for the study week was low, the *World* offered the most examples of audience interactivity. “The stories we post to Twitter tend to be either breaking news or some of our more unique, exclusive content,” Cavagnolo says. “We make it a point to respond to any @replies that we receive. We also use it as a way to start conversations about things going on currently in the community.”

Examples of the *Tulsa World*’s audience interactivity include:

More on Stamp Out Hunger. Put a food donation next to your mailbox and your letter carrier does the rest. <http://tinyurl.com/25psjzf> (May 6, 2010) This was retweeted from the Oklahoma Food Bank’s Twitter account. None of the other media entities did any retweeting during the study week.

Don’t forget about Mother’s Day this Sunday! What are you getting for your mom? (May 7, 2010)

The *Tulsa World* is also the only example of a back and forth dialogue with members of the public. The dialogue began as follows:

1. *Do any of you have /want an iPad?* (May 5, 2010)
2. *@tulsaworld I would love an ipad. Do you have one* (May 5, 2010)
3. *@linzhansen We have an office iPad that all of us are sharing...*(May 5, 2010)

KOKI-Fox, Channel 23

It's like having a public appearance every time you tweet or post – without leaving your desk.

Todd Spessard, KOKI News Director

KOKI has the second highest number of Twitter followers at 3245, approximately 400 followers behind the *Tulsa World*. The content of its tweets tend to be local news, state news and weather information. KOKI's local news footprint tends to be crime and government-oriented. Slightly more than 50% of its local content tweets involved crime news during the survey week. KOKI is a strong news presence in the market, generally ranked number two via Nielsen in adults 25-54, according to News Director Todd Spessard. Other station facts:

Table 7

KOKI Statistics

Station Facts	KOKI-Fox Channel 23
Ranking of followers	#2
Ranking of number of tweets sent	#5
News ratings	#2
Hours of local news programming	7.5
News staff size	46 (3 part-time)
Web staff size	1
Strategic plan for Twitter?	Yes
Importance of social media to overall marketing strategy	Very
Social media rules of conduct for staff	Yes
Audience interaction	0 examples
How often audience interaction according to manager	Multiple times daily

KOKI has been aggressive in its quest for Twitter followers. The station has a link to Twitter on its home page and reporter and anchor biographies on the KOKI website also link to their individual Twitter accounts. News Director Todd Spessard acknowledges that he believes technology like Twitter can have a huge impact. "It's a grassroots tool. Much like going door-to-door and shaking hands. The more followers or fans you get, the larger the audience."

For Spessard’s staff, Twitter and Facebook are not just for news, they are for building relationships. His quotient for success? “Seventy-five percent should be about them and building fans...the other 25% about promoting content.”

For KOKI, Twitter is not a profit-center, but Spessard says he is confident it is building viewership, which in turn will lead to profits.

KOTV-CBS, Channel 6

Any time we can engage people directly it is a good thing.
Ron Harig, KOTV News Director

KOTV’s Twitter personality is marked by several factors. Of the 6 media providers studied, KOTV had the fourth highest number of tweets during the survey week, but it had the second highest number of local news stories (68), only 3 tweets behind first-place KTUL (71). KOTV’s local news output skewed to crime and government information, both in double-digits. KOTV is doing something right when it comes to news presence. Nielsen (the television ratings company) ranks its newscasts number one overall in the Tulsa market, according to KOTV News Director Ron Harig. Other facts about KOTV’s news presence:

Table 8

KOTV Statistics

Station Facts	KOTV-CBS Channel 6
Ranking of followers	#3
Ranking of number of tweets sent	#4
News ratings	#1
Hours of local news programming	7
News staff size	68
Web staff size	5
Strategic plan for Twitter?	In development

(table continues)

Table 8 (continued).

Station Facts	KOTV-CBS Channel 6
Importance of social media to overall marketing strategy	Somewhat
Social media rules of conduct for staff	No
Audience interaction	0 examples
How often audience interaction according to manager	3 times a week

New media and newer social media platforms create more work for some individuals in the newsroom. During severe weather outbreaks, a television station meteorologist is needed to anchor live broadcasts. But communication on Facebook, Twitter or the web is also of value for audiences. Harig admits, “We have that internal debate going on. We have a very robust website. I wonder if the time (spent on Twitter) would be better spent on the website? Is it better for a meteorologist to update Facebook or live chat on the web?” The much-in-demand meteorologist can only be in one place at one time and managers have to make difficult choices about how to allocate each individual’s time.

Although Harig finds it challenging to keep up with online postings, he believes Twitter has its place in the newsroom hierarchy. “Any time we can engage people directly it is a good thing. And it deepens their relationship with the station and the company.”

Harig said reporters communicate with sources and viewers via their own Twitter accounts. “Some reporters and a few photographers have benefited (from Twitter). They’ve been able to get a good interview. How large the impact is questionable.” The KOTV web site doesn’t have an interactive element to link to reporter’s Twitter accounts.

KTUL-ABC, Channel 8

Although KTUL is not at the top of the list when it comes to followers, it is at the top of

the list when it comes to the number of local stories tweeted during the survey week. It also tweets the second-highest number of weather stories overall (second to KFAQ radio) and number one in weather information among the 4 television stations. No survey was returned by KTUL management, so the station Twitter profile is incomplete.

Table 9

KTUL Statistics

Station Facts	KTUL-ABC Channel 8
Ranking of followers	#4
Ranking of number of tweets sent	#3
Audience interaction	0 examples

KTUL has a link on its home page at www.ktul.com called “Follow Us.” It includes links to other Twitter accounts for weather, sports and *Good Morning Oklahoma*.

KJRH-NBC, Channel 2

KJRH is the least-distinguished of the television group in Twitter, ranking last overall in number of tweets and second-to-last in number of followers. During the study week, KJRH tweeted 10 pieces of content overall. However, despite its small numbers, the station seemed to be making an effort to engage the audience, although in an inconsistent way. Of the stations 10 tweets for the week, 4 went into the “other” category, which included attempts at audience interaction. Example:

Do you think the giant dome constructed to cap the oil leak in the Gulf will work?

<http://bit.ly/dsjxk7> (May 5, 2010)

Everyone seems to be excited that Betty White will host Saturday Night Live tonight!

Why do you think her... <http://bit.ly/bOBuPu> (May 8, 2010)

Both of these examples directed users to the station’s Facebook site for further interaction. Additionally, KJRH tweeted several content pieces which were links to station web sites with no other content attached. This means that KJRH’s Twitter followers don’t know what content they may be accessing. With limited timelines, audiences have no reason to access KJRH’s content. Why should a user attempt to access a web site if the user has no idea what is on the other end?

Blank spaces can communicate volumes. No survey was returned by KJRH management, so the station Twitter profile is incomplete.

Table 10

KJRH Statistics

Station Facts	KJRH-NBC Channel 2
Ranking of followers	#5
Ranking of number of tweets sent	#6
Audience interaction	2 examples

KJRH’s site includes a “Connect” link at the bottom of its home page. That takes users directly to KJRH’s Twitter feed. There are no links on reporter and anchor biographies to follow them on Twitter.

KFAQ Radio

Quantity does not always equal quality according to the findings of this study. The radio station, KFAQ, had by far the most tweets per day, with an average of 79.4 daily, number one in generating content overall among Tulsa’s 6 news content providers. Yet the bulk of its tweets were national in scope. Its local output ranged in the bottom tier on a daily basis. While KFAQ was not as prolific with local news as KTUL, KOTV or KOKI, its overall local news profile was

similar, skewing higher with crime and government stories (44% crime and 38% government). KFAQ also was the most prolific with programming-related tweets, 14 for the week. During the survey period, the station routinely tweeted information about upcoming guests to its followers.

In addition, KFAQ, with the highest numeric content also had the bulk of its tweets provided by the Associated Press, a ubiquitous news source available via a variety of news providers. In fact, in some cases, several of the media outlets tweeted the same content from the Associated Press, because all are subscribers to AP. This means the public received redundant information on some occasions, especially with stories of statewide interest. The dependence on AP occurs because the Tulsa news outlets don't necessarily have the resources to cover the entire state, like the legislature or important stories from cities outside the coverage area.

Table 11

KFAQ Statistics

Station Facts	KFAQ Radio
Ranking of followers	#6
Ranking of number of tweets sent	#1
Audience interaction	0 examples

No survey was returned by KFAQ management, so the station Twitter profile is incomplete.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: TRADITIONAL MEDIA ARE NOT PLANNING ADEQUATELY FOR NEW SOCIAL MEDIA

The body of literature and research specific to the ever-evolving Twitter medium is taking steps to provide a clear picture of how Twitter is affecting journalism and how journalism is affecting Twitter. This study takes another step with its results.

Traditional journalism is approaching Twitter in traditional ways. Managers and journalists need to think more about how the audience is using Twitter and tailor the message to the medium. The content analysis in this study shows that some in the Tulsa market do not provide local news in a robust fashion-- KFAQ with only 23 local news tweets or 4% of 537, as one example. Further, the study's content analysis shows that news of immediacy is woefully lacking in the Tulsa market when it comes to Twitter, with only 1% of tweets or 12 out of 1,008 for the entire week from all 6 media entities regarding breaking or immediate news. Twitter is the perfect tool for breaking and developing stories. That number can be higher, even on a slow local news week. Journalists need to reconsider their definitions of "immediacy" with regard to new media tools like Twitter.

Some news content emerges on a moment-by-moment basis. The outcome of some stories cannot be easily predicted. Rather than devoting resources to random acts of violence involving one person and chasing scanner traffic, newsrooms can devote more resources to stories that matter to people right now. Examples include news events which involve health and safety, like the recent scrutiny and interest in the H1N1 virus and rapidly changing and evolving weather stories, like flood coverage. Newsroom managers can ask themselves on a daily basis: "Are there any stories today which need to be covered on Twitter?" A difference exists in coverage and the automatic staccato blogging of random crime and fire stories. Additionally, a

difference exists in content needs for a scheduled newscast or newspaper versus a medium such as Twitter.

Tulsa media are not using the opportunities Twitter provides for full audience interaction. Only 1% of tweets were in the category of interaction for the study week.

Traditional media in Tulsa are using a traditional framework – communication of one-to-many – for a non-traditional medium which lends itself to many formats, including one-to-one and more.

Additionally, the lack of a social media policy on the part of some of the newsrooms is of concern. Newsroom employees need boundaries. Their managers need to understand the technology in order to provide the boundaries. Content on Twitter is immediate, permanent and available for all to see. Inappropriate communication is forever and could make a media entity the target of negative publicity and public backlash.

Furthermore, journalistic leaders are advised to think about and learn about any emerging form of media to better understand how and what to communicate whether it be Facebook or the newly emerging FourSquare. The most common forms of social media – Twitter and Facebook – are easily accessible. Managers and leaders should have their own social media accounts, if only to be hands-on with the sites and to understand their upsides and potential dangers.

A positive outcome for journalism and the business of journalism is more audience interaction resulting in a deeper bond between the news entity and its reader or viewer. Another positive outcome for audiences and potentially the business of journalism is a more robust variety and frequency of local news. The recommendations emerging from this study use that thought process as a baseline. Recommendations are amplified as follows:

1. Local news must be a priority for local media Twitter feeds. Local news needs to be updated frequently on Twitter and can be updated as stories develop. Local news

often has more direct impact on local users than national, international and entertainment news. Audiences have fewer opportunities to get local information. CNN, *The New York Times* and the ABC evening news are available at any given moment to provide national and international stories in a variety of different ways. News consumers in the Tulsa market have only a handful of local media providers on which to rely for relevant, in-depth local coverage.

2. News of immediacy (breaking news) is a priority for local media to communicate. Only 12 stories were transmitted for the week which fit into the immediacy category. With a medium like Twitter, this number can be higher. Any local news which can have an immediate impact on someone's life can be communicated as instantaneously as possible. The examples of the missing man, mentioned earlier, or the bus accident can have immediate result or effect on the news consumer or the life and safety of another individual.
3. Developing stories can be a higher priority with Twitter coverage. One example is the traditional way in which newsrooms have covered court cases in the past.

KFAQ: *Former TPS Teacher Trial Begins Today*. <http://bit.ly/cMs6Q2>

When the story is of importance to the community, journalists have the capability of tweeting from the courtroom or any other governmental meeting or hearing. Rather than waiting until a 6 p.m. newscast or the next edition of a newspaper, Twitter users may hear details as they occur and as important events unfold. (Judges do ban texting in some cases, which could affect the ability to tweet, as well.) The court story cited above may not have been of the importance level to have been tweeted from court and is only meant as an example.

4. The words chosen for Twitter coverage may be different than the words chosen for coverage via broadcast or print.

Current:

KTUL: *Gas Line Break Forces Hwy Shutdowns*. <http://clkurl.com/i.cfm/tw733303>
(May 6, 2010)

Recommendation:

I-44 Closed at Northbound Yale Exit. Full Story <http://clkurl.com/i.cfm/tw733303>

Twitter users may be receiving the news information as text messages in their vehicles. They may not have the time, attention or may have additional data charges for connecting to websites, depending on cell phone plans. News providers should not assume consumers of Twitter are sitting with rapt attention at a desk or willing or able to connect to a station web site. Words should be of a specific nature and information should be extremely timely.

5. Relevance is important. Relevance didn't always seem to be a priority with some of the news providers. News providers need to know their audiences and provide information that directly impacts them. People who live in Tulsa likely choose weather as the number one content area of interest, as do most people in most communities across the United States. Therefore, weather content is extremely relevant for news providers to share – on all platforms. Communities and local television stations generally have other content areas of interest based on geography and other demographic differences. Being relevant means being in tune with audiences and providing the information those audiences want. Relevance includes national news as well as local coverage. One national tweet worth discussion is the following on the Space Shuttle from KOTV.

KOTV: *NASA picks May 14 launch for Atlantis' last flight* <http://bit.ly/cHF5t2>

KOTV only tweeted 5 national stories during the study week (2 on the oil spill, 1 on Nashville flooding, 1 on a teen sex study and the one above). Two breaking stories of the week – the arrest of a terror suspect in the New York City Times Square bomb attempt and the stock market tumble later in the week (arguably with more impact and immediacy to local viewers) were ignored by all news outlets with the exception of KFAQ. As other important national stories unfold, newsrooms should think about whether their content choices are appropriate.

6. The communication tool itself should be considered as news is communicated. Users may get information via their phones or PDA's. This means that news affecting local travel, weather warnings and even technology stories need to be a higher priority in coverage. Users may not always have access to websites, or may incur higher fees with their mobile devices in checking websites.
7. Reporters' use of Twitter is a double-edged sword. At first glance, it seems that more accessibility can be achieved via reporter Twitter accounts. Ostensibly, any citizen with Internet access can communicate with a reporter on Twitter. But just who is accessible to these accounts? Government decision-makers who already have access to news gatherers? Or average people who normally do not enjoy easy access to the media? If reporters have Twitter accounts the information should be prominently posted in a "Contact Us" section or on reporter bio's typically found on the station or newspaper website. Social media guidelines need to be firmly in place and news managers should monitor reporter's Twitter accounts to make sure journalistic standards are upheld. As a result of follow-up interviews with newsroom managers, one concern that emerges from this study is how much supervision these reporter

- Twitter accounts get from managers and more experienced journalists. Relying on reporters who may not fully understand station or newspaper strategies could be dangerous from a business or journalistic standpoint. (See page 17 for other recommended guidelines from the RTDNA.)
8. Do not use only a web link for a news Twitter account, as KJRH did during the study week. Audiences are far too busy and attentions are scattered as news consumers multi-task. Twitter followers have no reason to click a link with no headline or content attached.
 9. Niches are good. Audiences don't need every local media entity to provide the same content. While KFAQ could benefit from an increase its number of local news stories, it differentiates itself with a wide spectrum of content. KTUL further differentiates itself by providing the most frequent weather updates. In the Tulsa media market, both KTUL and KFAQ have a niche with current weather information, which was tweeted roughly once every hour during the study week. No one station or newspaper is aggressive with forecast information which could be communicated in a variety of different ways via Twitter. Daypart (morning, noon, evening forecasts), weekend, school-day and hunting and fishing are examples of different kinds of forecasts which could lead to niches for any one media entity.
 10. Audience interaction was lacking, for the most part. While some of the news managers interviewed seemed to lean on the possibility that reporters are interacting with audiences, very little interaction was revealed via the main television station Twitter sites during the study week. Observance of tweets outside the study period revealed more interaction during major breaking news, like a tornado outbreak which

occurred one week after the study period. However, journalists need to find ways to communicate with audiences during non-breaking news cycles as well. Managers need to have some supervision over communications reporters have with members of the public. When a big story is breaking, the main Twitter source (not the reporter) needs to assist the reporter in news-gathering via Twitter by broadcasting questions regarding whatever information the newsroom is seeking. Personnel who manage Twitter need to monitor topics trending on Twitter throughout the day, as well as searching for local information via Twitter search options and via the people the station follows.

Journalists must transmit information in a way which suits the individual medium – in this case, Twitter – the best. Results will be more Twitter followers and a richer relationship with audiences which can translate to higher ratings, circulations and potentially higher profits.

This study brings up many questions for future research discussion. A companion study spending more time in the Tulsa market with a larger sample size of tweets for analysis would potentially yield additional rich data. This study has raised many questions regarding individual reporters and their Twitter followers. Further analysis of that communication would be beneficial and instructive to the field of study. Additionally, what are the best ways to train young journalists with both theoretical and online frameworks in terms of social media, and how can organizations instill ethical decision-making practices once journalists have already begun using Twitter?

Citizen journalism is another rich research area for Twitter in the future. How are the unintentional citizen journalists of Twitter affecting traditional – and intentional – agenda-

setters? What new forms of gatekeeping or gatewatching will be necessary for journalists to consider when utilizing information sources like Twitter?

Further, social theories like “hierarchal flattening” relate to Twitter, but only so much as the sender and receiver fit certain molds. An uninformed sender or receiver on Twitter may not be equal to an informed citizen who is getting information from multiple sources, as opposed to only Twitter or other social networks. More study will be needed to understand specific subsets of senders and receivers.

Twitter and other social media will continue to mature and new new media endeavors will emerge. Journalists will struggle to keep up in a meaningful, useful and ethically correct way as long as the approach continues to be from a traditional journalistic framework. As journalists and their managers work to improve current established forms of media and communication – often in an environment filled with cost-cutting and limited resources – it can be difficult to look forward, experiment and become expert in the new frontiers of news dissemination. Leaders, working journalists and the academic community teaching the next new wave of journalists must become the best students of new communication tools. This study shows improvement needed on all fronts in the planning, implementation and management of new media strategy and execution. Otherwise, the “greased pig” of new media will continue to elude the grasp of traditional journalists.

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Special note: if more than one individual is involved in filling out this questionnaire, please note that person's name and title. Initial the sections each person is completing.

1. Station:
2. Manager title:
3. Newscasts per day (if applicable):
4. Station's news ratings:
5. News staff size:
6. Web staff size:
7. Who manages Twitter? (Title?)
8. Twitter start date:
9. Does the station or newspaper have a strategic plan for Twitter (y or n)? _____
10. What is the strategic plan for Twitter?
11. How important is social media to your overall news marketing strategy?
 - Very
 - Somewhat
 - Not very
 - Not at all
12. What efforts do you make to get Twitter followers.
13. Does the corporation have a social media policy for employees (y or n) _____
14. What are the specifics of the social media policy?
15. Can employees have their own Twitter accounts to share station or newspaper information (y or n)? Please explain, if necessary.
16. If not addressed above, are there specific types of content your newsroom targets for Twitter? For example, breaking news, traffic or weather content? Explain.
17. What impact has the emergence of social media like Twitter and Facebook had on the newsroom information structure?
18. Does the day-to-day Twitter strategy change if breaking news or weather occurs? (y or n)?

19. If yes, detail how.
20. Is Twitter and/or web staffed differently on weekends (y or n). Explain.
21. How is Twitter used to communicate directly in a one-on-one way with audiences in your newsroom?
22. Give a specific example of a Twitter interaction with an audience member.
23. How often does one-on-one audience interaction occur in your newsroom generally via Twitter?
 - More than once a day ____
 - Once a day ____
 - More than once a week ____
 - Once a week ____
 - More than once a month ____
 - Once a month ____
 - Audience interaction is not a factor ____
24. Does Twitter make money (y or n)? ____
25. If Yes, please detail.
26. Have there been any meetings with the sales department about Twitter (y or n)? ____
27. Do sales department employees follow the station's Twitter account (y or n)? ____
28. What impact can Twitter have on viewership? Discuss ratings potential, web traffic, branding.
29. Any other observations you'd like to add?

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