Blog as a Medium of Freedom of Expression

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"Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties"

John Milton

ABSTRACT: In the context of this article, the term 'blog' bears the sense of 'personal news journalism'. Blogging has become global phenomenon and has exploded in popularity to the point where are now more than 20 million blogs being tracked around the world. They have risen in prominence as well as in numbers, with some leading blogs challenging the established order of the mainstream press. Indeed, at times the mainstream media has been put in the unusual position of reacting to news that bloggers generate. Blogs have become a communicative alternative for society. As blogs have become a fixture in today's media environment, growing in number and influence in political communication and (mass) media discourse, research on the subject has proliferated, often emphasizing the high-profile conflicts and controversies at the intersection of blogging and journalism. The growing influence of blogs on users has sparked a controversy regarding the role of journalism in the new media landscape. Many observers, particularly journalists working in the mainstream media, have argued for a marked distinction between blogging and journalism, linking the former to freewheeling opinion and the latter to verifiable information.

OBJECTIVES: This article highlights the role of personal blogging as a medium of freedom of expression and how blog work as a platform of expression and thought. It also intends to focus on the various issues regarding the trend of personal blogging, its historical and concurrent stance in social media, and the its potential as an independent branch of journalism in the 21st century.

KEYWORDS: Blog, social media, journalism, social networking, freedom, civil right.

INTRODUCTION

Freedom of expression is a primary right of men. Each individual has a birth right to know. The baby just born cries out to seek and know his/her parents. For most of human history, when people have spoken critically of the socially of the social, religious, and political views of those in power they have done so at great personal peril. Even today, despite the advances of democratic values, which have swept away many totalitarian regimes, some national governments consider critics of official policies enemies of the state, to be tortured, imprisoned, or exiled (Holsinger & Dilts; 1997:26). Freedom of expression is an internationally recognized right which is enshrined in the Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this article said, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions

without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (UNIC; 2007:11). It is true that in every era of societies reasonable restrictions are imposed on freedom of expression. But people have raised the question whether freedom is affected by imposing what is called reasonable restrictions? It is a common saying that thought is free. A man can never be hindered from thinking whatever he chooses so long as conceals what he thinks. The working of his mind is limited only by the bounds of his experiences and the power of his imagination. But this natural liberty of private thinking is of little value. It is unsatisfactory and even painful to the thinker himself, if he is not permitted to communicate his thoughts to others, and it is obviously of no value to his neighbors. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to hide thoughts that have any power over the mind. If a man's thinking leads him to call a question ideas and customs which regulate the behavior of those about him, to reject beliefs which they hold, to see better ways of life than those they follow, it is almost impossible for him, if he is convinced of the truth of his own reasoning, not to betray by silence, chance words, or general attitude that he is different from them and does not share their opinions. Some have preferred, like Socrates, some would prefer today, to face death rather than conceal their thoughts. Thus freedom of thought, in any valuable sense, includes freedom of speech (Bury, 1951, p-1). At present, in the most civilized countries, freedom of speech is taken as a matter of course and seems a perfectly simple thing. We are so accustomed to it that we look on it as a natural right. But this right has been acquired only in quite recent times, and the way to its attainment has lain through lakes of blood (Bury, 1951, p-2). It has taken centuries to persuade the most enlightened peoples that liberty to publish one's opinions and to discuss all questions is a good and not a bad thing. Human societies have been generally opposed to freedom of thought, or, in other words, to new ideas, and it is easy to see why.

HISTORY OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

There was, however, one illustrious Athenian, who thought differently – Socrates (470-399 BC), the philosopher. Socrates reached old age, pursuing the task of instructing his fellow-citizens, without any evil befalling him. Then, at the age of seventy, he was prosecuted as an atheist and corrupter of youth and was put to death (399 B.C.). After seventy years later, philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) left Athens because he was menaced by a prosecution for blasphemy, the charge being a pretext for attacking one who belonged to a certain political party (Bury, 1951, p-24).

At the end of the twelfth century Innocent III (1198-1216 AD) became Pope and under him the Church of Western Europe reached the height of its power. He and his immediate successors are responsible for imagining and beginning an organized movement to sweep heretics out of Christendom (Bury, 1951, p-40). The organized system of searching out heretics known as the Inquisition was founded by Pope Gregory IX about 1233 AD, and fully established by a Bull of Innocent (1252 AD) which regulated the machinery of persecution 'as an integral part of the social edifice in every city and every State'. This powerful engine for the suppression of the freedom of men's religious opinions is unique is history (Bury, 1951, p-41-42).

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600 AD), accepting the recent discovery of Copernicus that the earth revolves round the sun, Bruno took further step of regarding the fixed stars as suns, each with its invisible satellites. Leaving Italy, because he was suspected of heresy, he lived successively in Switzerland, France, England, and Germany, and in 1592, induced by a false friend to return to Venice he was seized by order of the Inquisition. Finally condemned in Rome, he was burned (1600) in the Campo de' Fiori. At Toulouse (1619 AD) Lucilio Vanini, a learned Italian who like Bruno wandered about Europe was convicted as an atheist and blasphemer; his tongue was torn out and he was burned (Bury, 1951, p-64-65).

The observations of the Italian astronomer Galileo de' Galilei (1564-1642 AD) demonstrated the Copernican theory beyond question. His telescope discovered the moons of Jupiter, and his observation of the spots in the sun confirmed the earth's rotation. In February, 1616 AD the Holy Office decided that the Copernican system was in itself absurd, and, in respect of Scripture, heretical. Cardinal Bellarmin, by the Pope's (Pall IV) direction, summoned Galileo and officially admonished him to abandon his opinion and cease to teach it; otherwise the Inquisition would proceed against him. Galileo promised to obey. The book of Copernicus was placed on the Index (Bury, 1951, p-67).

Pope Alexander VI inaugurated censorship of the press by his Bull against unlicensed printing (1501). In France, King Henry II made printing without official permission punishable by death. In Germany, censorship was introduced in 1529.

HISTORY OF CHANGE

Hobbes, (1588-1679 AD) who was perhaps the most brilliant English thinker of the seventeenth century, was a freethinker and materialist. Yet he was a champion not of freedom of conscience but of coercion in its most uncompromising form. The thinker whose writings appealed most to the men of his age and was most opportune and effective was John Locke (1632-1704 AD), who professed more or less orthodox Anglicanism. His great contribution to philosophy is equivalent to a very powerful defense of reason against the usurpations of authority. The most energetic and forceful leader in the campaign

against intolerance was Voltaire (1694-1778 AD) and his exposure of some glaring cases of unjust persecution did more than general arguments to achieve the object. For constructive thinking we must go to the other great leader of French thought, Rousseau (1712-1778 AD), who contributed to the growth of freedom in a different way. He was a deist, but his deism, unlike that of Voltaire, was religious and emotional. One German thinker shook the world - philosopher Kant (1724-1802 AD). His *Critic of Pure Reason* demonstrated that when we attempt to prove by the light of the intellect the existence of God and the immortality of the Soul, we fall helplessly into contradictions. The reasoned justification of liberty of thought is due to J. S. Mill (1806-1873 AD), who set it forth in his work *On Liberty*, published in 1859. This book treats of liberty in general, and attempts to fix the frontier of the region in which individual freedom should be considered absolute and unassailable.

MEDIA OWNERSHIP

More than a century ago Karl Marx observed that those who control the material means of production also control the mental means of production. So in every epoch ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. Indeed, it seems so today. Freedom of the press, A. J. Liebling once said, is for those who own the presses. Who specifically owns the mass media in the United States? Ten business and financial corporation's control the three major television and radio networks (NBC, CBS, ABC), 34 subsidiary television stations, 201 cable TV systems, 62 radio stations, 20 record companies, 59 magazines including Time and Newsweek, 58 newspapers including the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal and the Los Angles Times, 41 book publishers, and various motion picture companies like Columbia Pictures and Twentieth Century Fox. Three quarters of the major stockholders of ABC, CBS, and NBC are banks, such as Chase Manhattan, Morgan Guaranty Trust, Citibank, and Bank of America.

Relatively few of these have anything to do with meaningful political and social affairs. Most are devoted to mass media distractions and mass market consumerism. The diversity of publications, both serious and trivial, should not be mistaken for a plurality of ideas and ideologies, or a wealth of political information.

MEDIA CONSOLIDATION

One of the topics of most concern to media critics of the media is increasing global consolidation of the media. If the media have the ability to shape the consciousness of large numbers of people and media organizations claim that they have power when they sell advertising space or time then the fact that a relatively small number of people control the media is alarming.

As Ben Bagdikian, who was for many years dean of School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, noted in a 1987 article:

> "In 1982, when I completed research for my book (The Media Monopoly), 50 corporations controlled half or more of the media business. By December 1986, when I finished revision for a second edition, the 50 had shrunk to 59. The last time I counted, it was down to 26."

Currently, something like half a dozen giant corporations dominates the media all over the world. These giant organizations further consolidate their power through alliances with other media corporations (Berger: 2005).

Media giants such as those listed above are concerned primarily not with the public interest but with profits. They also often have political agendas, such as favoring the election of politicians who will be friendly to them and pass laws that will be favorable to their interests. Thus, for example, the major media corporations favored a recent change in Federal Communications Commission policy that made it possible for them to purchase television stations in certain markets where they already owned media outlets, making it possible for them to consolidate their power further.

MEDIA TRANSFORMATION

All media were with the people in people's struggle for justice at any sphere of life. The unwritten motto of media was "Humanity is above all". One cannot expect that media will only serve the society despite making loss and loss. But the point is very clear that it is totally a different type of business. That's why it is called "The Forth Estate". Justice P.B. Sawant of India goes further on this point (2001:47):

> "The argument forgets that certain professions cannot be run and should not be allowed to be run as business, and commercial practices and values should never enter them. The media like the legal, medical

and teaching profession and the media institutions like the educational, the medical, the religious and the social service institutions cannot be permitted to run on a commercial basis."

Ideals do not work more in today's media world. Both the profit and prestige are the main reasons for bringing out media. In fact, it can protect a businessperson from other troubles or disturbances from every quarter in society. In addition, it adds a status quo to the owner and the publisher. Capitalizing on this, the owner or the publisher tries to do power practice with a view to increasing her/his power, position and even wealth in a negative way. A renowned poet, writer and journalist of Bangladesh, Abu Hasan Shahriar, (2004:32) puts it in this way:

"In earlier days the rich-man used to pet dog to watch and to guard his wealth; now that rich man pets a Daily. A Daily in the twenty first century is an obedient dog at rich-man's house. Sometime its master incites it to here and there. The daily is used to take possession of land and also business."

BLOG

Definition: Beyond economics and social changes, technological innovations have played no small role in the changing nature of news. Communication and technology theorists contend that the Internet will change journalism and the nature of news (Barnhurst and Nerone, 2001; Singer, 2001). Tom Koch proposes that the online abilities of journalists allow them to 'redefine the form of news in specific and of public information in general' (1991; xxiii). Stovall (2004: 12) believes the migration of journalism to an online environment may mean that the fundamental nature of journalism will change. Pavlik (2000) notes the changes thus far range from evolving story structures that ultimately de-emphasize traditions such as the inverted pyramid to re-conceptualized relationships between reporters and audiences as well as between reporters and news organizations. One manifestation of this new level of connectivity is the relatively recent phenomenon of web-based personal 'logs', also called weblogs or 'blogs' the online postings of comments by citizens, groups, and news professionals, outside of the normal venues provided by the mainstream news organizations (Reese and Others: 2007). According to online encyclopedia Wikipedia, the term 'weblog' was coined by Jorn Barger on Dec. 17, 1997. The short form, 'blog,' was coined by Peter Merholz. He broke the word 'weblog' into the phrase 'we blog' in the sidebar of his weblog in April or May of 1999. Since 2003, blogs have gained increasing notice and coverage for their role in breaking, shaping, and spinning news stories. Bloggers provide nearly instant commentary on televised events, creating a secondary meaning of the word 'blogging' to simultaneously transcribe and editorialize speeches and events shown on television.

In 2004, the role of blogs increasingly became mainstream political consultants, news services and candidates began using them as tools for outreach and opinion forming. Appropriately, that year Merriam Webster's Dictionary declared 'blog' as the word of the year. Weblogs, in particular, could become an ultimate from of news. Wendland (2003: 94) notes that blogging consists of 'news that is happening now almost in real time not filtered, edited, or delay delivered, as with traditional media'.

Of interest here is a particular form of online journalism: current events blogs. A blog is a more dynamic version of a personal websites, being updated at least weekly, and sometimes daily, hourly or even more frequently with the most recent entries appearing first (Wall, 2005). Blogs rely on hyperlinks to other sites to enhance their own posts. The blogger often scouts the Web for interesting news and links to that information. The blogger may briefly summarize the link's content or may provide commentary, criticisms, or other personal thoughts about the information to which it is linked. Today's blogging movement was fueled by the opening of commercial services such as weblog software Blogger which made it possible to post without any technological knowledge (Blood, 2002a).

Blogs allow ordinary people to become content creators, able to publish and potentially globally distribute their writing (Blood, 2002b). Content may be about world affairs or what the blogger ate for breakfast that morning as blogs blur the lines between private and public. Most bloggers tend their blogs on the side: they don't get paid. Many of the blogs cultivate a relationship with the audience. Most used the standard blogging software which includes a link at the end of each post labeled 'comment' or some other word inviting response. Here, audiences can link to other readers' responses as well as post their own. While other visitors would have to click on the comments sections in order to read this update, it still provides readers with an opportunity to participate in the production of content. Some bloggers respond to reader posts and even post in the readers' comments section. Blogging which might be a new word to many readers, is being grasped both here and abroad not only as the future of press freedom but also as an opportunity to develop media careers.

A cross between a column, a news story and a journal, the journalist's weblog (or J-blog) has started to serve as daily news in the mainstream online press. The creators of blogs contend the Web is a perfect place to display short-form reporting, short form analysis and short form writing (Dube, 2004) perfect to spur national debate about anything and everything. At first, blogs were a way for people 'out there' to take back their news, to comment on mainstream journalism and to present their own analysis of news events a sort of 'black market' journalism, according to Wall (2004). However,

mainstream publications have now started their own blogs in an attempt to recapture journalism authority. Thus, blogs represent reconstituted journalism both renegade and legitimate reporting and writing and have become part of the fabric sewn by the press.

While blogs can focus on any topic, the blogs of interest here are news blogs, which feature current events items. Although these are news blogs, typically such individually run blogs do not generate original content but rely on the sources for their links and as inspiration for their commentary. These blogs have been described as outside mainstream journalism norms with fewer gatekeepers or filters and little or no reliance on big corporate sponsors (Lasica, 2002a; Levy, 2002). Bloggers and their supporters argue that blogs are now breaking stories and sometimes driving news cycles (Kurtz, 2002). Some professional journalists have also started blogs and media outlets are sponsoring blogs. Indeed, the premise of this article is that blogging is changing journalism, creating a more conversational, dialogic, and decentralized type of news (Delwiche, 2004; Sullivan 2004). Because news media organizations have been so closely identified with the establishment of news routines, we would expect these routines and their resulting product to change with different sponsorship and production patterns.

BLOG JOURNALISM

Enter the j-blog: J-blogs are popular because 'they allow the reader to see the journalist as a human being, connecting with them without the stiff, imperial voice that turns so many young people off, And most blogs allow indeed thrive on reader interaction' (Pohlig, 2003: 25).

During US-Iraq war, spring of 2003, the mainstream media, as is historically its pattern during war, became less critical of the government and military actions and more prone to repeating propaganda both in the lead-up to and during the war (Knightley, 2004; Tumber and Palmer, 2004).

By 2004, j-blogs published by mainstream journalism publications used the Web space to compete with the independent news blogs, who were attempting to bypass traditional media news channels (Wall, 2004). Dissecting each bog for its compliance to professional norms and values provides an answer to whether these blogs could be called journalism, or if they are assuming a new form to meet the needs and desires of a new, postmodern society (Robinson, 2006).

Hyperlinks allow readers to change endings (and even extend them indefinitely), establish a nonlinear story format and bring in other authors (Landow, 1997). Wall (2004) considers blogs in general to be postmodern news in the tradition of New Journalism, in which seems to extrapolate from the given facts and expand upon them for the sake of a good story.

Various attempts have been made to identify the type of journalism news blogs produce. These concepts include personal journalism, do-it-yourself journalism, black market journalism, 'we media', and postmodern journalism (Wall, 2005). Blogs have been describe as a form of 'personal journalism', in which individuals both amateur and professional provide first hand reporting, personal commentary, and places for others to contribute or respond (Allan, 2002: 127). They have also been dubbed 'do-it-yourself journalism', which does not 'follow the canons in fact checking, seeking out alternative or opposing views or attempted impartiality' (Halavais, 2002: 29). Indeed, such practice may lead to a form of black market journalism, providing an unsanctioned space for ordinary voices shut out of the corporate controlled journalism system but also unregulated and potentially exploitative of bloggers themselves (Wall, 2004). Finally, blogs have been called participatory journalism or 'we media', which is characterized by decentralization and powered by technological blogs might better be understood as postmodern journalism (Wall, 2003.)

BLOG AS THE POSTMODERN CONTEXT

In response, what some believed was a new style of journalism arose in the 1960s: New Journalism. Characterized by a writing style that imitated fiction with a reliance on character, scene, and dialogue, New Journalism broke the rules of professional journalism not just in terms of stylistic choices but more importantly in terms of abandoning the objectivity and faux detachment that journalism practiced (Hartsock, 2000; Wolfe, 1973). More importantly, the rise of New Journalism suggested that when political and cultural crises arose, new forms of news might also appear.

Indeed, some scholars see the possibility of a new form of postmodern journalism developing online (e.g. Landow, 1997; Murray, 1997; Wall, 2005). This project more specifically assesses the ways in which blogs contribute to our understanding of new genres of news in the 21st century (Deuze, 2003; Lasica, 2002a, 2002b). Blogs represent a new genre of journalism offering news that features a narrative style characterized by personalization and an emphasis on non-institutional status; audience participation in content creation; and story forms that are fragmented and interdependent with other websites (Wall, 2005).

Post-modernity is seen as response to modernity, a worldwide associated with scientific knowledge and other so-called grand narratives that legitimize certain epistemologies and focus on professional/elite control over knowledge (Lyotard, 1984). Post-modernity argues that reality is not fixed or knowable outside of the self. Instead, we concerns of interest here are changing notions about reproduction, representation, and legitimacy. In terms of representation and reproduction, post-modernity is a world of fragments with reality created through performances (Jameson, 1991). It is not a culture of creativity but of quotation or pastiche.

Some observers see certain postmodern characteristics embodied in negatives trends in journalism, connecting it to the increasingly blurry boundaries between news and entertainment and the overall celebration of commercial culture (Hartley, 1996). Yet others have attempted to flesh out a description of postmodern journalism that embodies more positive values. Ettema (1994) suggests postmodern journalism would consist of small, local stories about people that convey human suffering and would reject a meta-narrative. With the audience engaged in actively consuming stories and creating new meanings, post-modernity would give rise to non-official voices and versions of events. Likewise, Moore (1998) suggests that postmodern journalism would consist of small, localized stories; focus on suffering; provide less emphasis on objective data-gathering and rational analysis.

THE GLOBAL NEWS ARENA

The blossoming of citizen journalism stands as one of the Internet's most exciting developments. With millions of bloggers, tens of millions of Internet posters, and hundreds of millions of readers, online news sources have radically reshaped the way we access our daily news. While mainstream news organizations initially expressed doubt about the news value of online sources such as blogs, in recent months many have launched their own blogs, frequently maintained by some of their most distinctive voices. Indeed, the remarkable growth of the blogosphere is enough to convince even the most diehard skeptic that something important is afoot. Technorati, a blog search engine, reports that it tracks 75,000 new blogs each day. (World, 2006)

A more detailed look at blog growth was provided by British business Web Site, *Vnunet.com* "A new blog is created every second, adding to the 37 million that already exist, according to David Sifry, founder of the Technorati weblog data set and link search engine. This staggering rate of increase equates to a sixty fold growth of the blogosphere within the past three years. There are no geographic or demographic boundaries to blogging. Ray Valdes, a web services analyst at Gartner, observed that the total number of bloggers worldwide makes it difficult to conclude that one geographical region could have a higher concentration of blogging activity than any other.

The emerging world of blogs must be understood within the larger context of a changing global news arena, in which the public naturally seeks perspectives beyond one specific locality and nation (e.g. Croad, 2003). The migration of news and information to an online platform has disrupted old patterns of reading and changed the relationship between audiences and news providers. The internet has increased the speed, reach, and comprehensiveness of journalism available to the public and lowered the cost of entry to anyone seeking to participate. Thus, the online environment news such that the user, creator, and news subject need no longer share the same national frame of reference.

In breaking down geographic limitations on access to information, the internet and the world wide web-based journalism and other communication it makes possible undermine the historic relationship between the press system and the national community. Morris and Waisbord (2001) observe that transnational forms of political participation have moved to a global public sphere.

FREE EXPRESS

The issue of free express is very important in discussions about blogs and blogging, as noted in London's business oriented Web site *Silicon.com* "In the same way that the Internet and technology provided the original facility for both sides those who want to be free and those who want to constrain it also provides new opportunities for communication and anonymity. Today, bloggers and citizen journalists increasingly shape the global media agenda. During the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Baghdad Blogger provided global audiences with a glimpse of what life was like for ordinary Iraqis stuck between an invading army and a brutal dictator. The Asian tsunami of 2004 was a global news story told largely with home video footage.

SHIFTING BOUNDARIES IN THE BLOG SPHERE

The concept of 'blogosphere' recall the public sphere idea of Habermas (1989), a provocative if elusive way to think about the social 'geography' of public communication – the realm of reason, argument and dialogue where public opinion emerges. Journalism has naturally been central to this process, with Carey (1989) suggesting that journalism ought to help encourage and amplify the conversation of the public. Thus, the public sphere is often thought to be mediated space, with the news media providing this visible forum of public voices. In this regard, the range of sources and perspectives permitted by professional news gatekeepers establishes the limits of the public sphere they manage. Alternatively, we may conceptualize the blog sphere as a conversation distributed charged with monitoring and reflecting public expression, citizens can now hold those conversations among themselves and, in a new twist, amplify the 'conversations' among journalists.

Research has begun to focus on how news practices and professional identity are changing in the wake of new technological capabilities (e.g. Allan, 2002; Deuze, 2004). Deuze (2003) observes that when journalism goes online it shares aspects of hypertextuality, multimediality and interactivity, changing and broadening its basic nature. He goes on to show how these changes range from mainstream news sites that simply transpose online their closed, traditional professional culture and relationship to the audience, to sites that encourage a more open 'dialogical' journalistic culture – an aspect that the blogsphere concept captures. Admittedly, technology has altered the nature of the profession itself, but more broadly journalism has been distributed and interlinked more fluidly with citizen communication. The blogsphere provides an interweaving of these different locations as it pushes users to a network of information, views and perspectives, thus bringing a broader journalistic conversation to life.

So, globalization and technology have produced a broader and more fluid journalistic conversation, a new global public sphere (Habermas, 1992) with shifting boundaries. The most important conceptual boundary highlighted in the blog sphere is that between 'professional' media and more informal, citizen-based, non traditional forms. The blog sphere is often regarded as set apart from traditional 'mainstream' journalism, but it may also be seen as enveloping both professional and citizen 'amateur' journalism in a larger network. By 'professional' we refer to a combination of features including a claim to 'authority' and the command of economic resources available to media organizations. The professional, traditional media draw their institutional authority and value from their casting of their work within the norms of journalism.

Citizen-based media originate from individuals and public interest groups seeking to express an idea or position within the public discourse. Its producers need not adhere to a professional journalistic code as a requirement for participation. By definition, these non-professional media command less commercial viability and may be based on a non-profit, subsidy, or no-revenue business model. They only require a motivated individual or group willing to speak to a public. They help create a more interactive online conversation on personal websites, non-governmental organization (NGO) websites, chain emails, Usenet discussion groups, and message broads.

CONCLUSION

In terms of their narrative style, the blogs are notable for their personalization. The sharing of personal information and sometimes providing diary-like personal accounts of events emphasizes the non-professional and non-elite status of the blogs. The use of personal opinion gives a certain intimacy to the blogs and suggests that the blogger is sometime the readers can believe they know someone who is not manipulated by a corporate boss or a filter of professionalism. The opinions expressed are often more vitriolic and sometimes go beyond what is acceptable for a mainstream news outlet. Most of the blogs seem to suggest that ordinary people can comb through information sources, redistribute what they find interesting, and provide intelligent commentary – all without sponsorship of a corporate news company.

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