Networked Journalism and Al-Jazeera English: How the Middle East Network Engages the Audience to Help Produce News

Matt J. Duffy, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
College of Communication and Media Sciences
Zayed University
Abu Dhabi, UAE
matt.duffy@zu.ac.ae

Abstract
The author examines the concept known as "networked journalism" which, according to new media expert Jeff Jarvis, occurs when "professionals and amateurs (are) working together to get the real story." The paper offers a brief history of networked journalism and features a table of its most common manifestations. The author analyzes Al-Jazeera English, the Doha-based network recently cited for its embrace of networked journalism and audience engagement via the use of Twitter, Facebook, blogs and the user-generated mapping platform, Ushahidi. Al-Jazeera English's website and social media sites are explored to see how networked journalism is meshed into its content. The author finds examples of great use of networked journalism but also areas where improvements could be made.

Keywords
Networked journalism, citizen journalism, Ushahidi, Al-Jazeera, civic journalism, participatory journalism

Teaching journalism in the 21st-century can be a frustrating profession. The news business changes so rapidly – keeping up with new technologies and new terminologies can prove troublesome. Even a decade ago, journalism was a much more straightforward profession. Reporters wrote for the newspaper, broadcast journalists handled reports for the radio and television, and the fledgling World Wide Web was an afterthought in most organizations. If readers wanted to offer some input on the news, they could call the newsroom or send a letter to the editor. Those days are over.

Today's journalists must be prepared to handle a variety of tasks. With the migration of audiences to the Internet, traditional newspapers now expect reporters to be comfortable producing Web-suitable writing (e.g., fast turnaround, embedded links) as well as audio and video reports. Television and radio outlets also require reporters with expertise in the opposite direction – able to write quickly and cogently so that their reports can be read online as well as listened to or watched. But, one of the most important changes in the journalism business comes from the perspective of the audience. News distribution is no longer a one-way street – with the professional journalists doing the reporting and the audiences passively ingesting whatever comes their way. Audiences are increasingly involved in news production in ways impossible a decade ago. Twitter feeds, social media feedback, blog posts and reader comments all represent methods that audiences can interact with journalists regarding news content.

Some have coined this new paradigm "networked journalism" – the idea that audiences can work together with professionals to create effective, compelling journalism. A report from the Nieman Journalism Lab, Harvard University's journalism thinktank, recently referenced work from Al-Jazeera English as an example of networked journalism. The report noted that "the

channel's shows, its website and spinoff experimental sites tap into its audience to develop story ideas, gather data and deepen engagement"(McGann, 2010, para. 4). This study will examine Al-Jazeera English's efforts closely to see just how it is engaging the audience as well as what improvements can be made to its practices.

This study is important because too often journalism educators fail to track the real-world changes occurring in the news business. The article highlights current practices in an evolving journalism landscape. It's particularly important for Middle East media because so much scholarship overlooks this region. The author hopes this article helps lead journalism scholars to more fully understand and embrace "networked journalism" – particularly in the Middle East, where audience engagement appears to be lacking.

Models of journalism

Scholars have differed over how to categorize types of journalism, particularly as the media landscape has dramatically altered in the new millennium. Nip (2006) pointed to five broad categories of journalism: (1) traditional journalism, (2) public journalism, (3) interactive journalism, (4) participatory journalism, and (5) citizen journalism. Traditional journalism encompasses all "old-school" activities in which the producers create the news and act as gatekeepers, while the audiences simply digest whatever is delivered. The other four models involve differing levels of engagement with the audience. Public journalism, also called civic journalism, aims to include news consumers in the act of news creation – inviting them to editorial board meetings or taking polls to weigh their interests. Interactive journalism is not radically different but encourages such interaction with more technologically savvy means (e.g., online polls, comments). Participatory journalism goes further and invites the audience to help make the news. As Bowman and Willis (2008) put it, the audience plays

"an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information." The emphasis is also on publishing first and filtering later – breaking from the aforementioned models that still provide a heavy gatekeeping role for the media producers. Finally, citizen journalism encourages a wider range of participants to produce the news. It differs with the other models by eliminating the authority of the professional journalist altogether.

These five models – particularly the last four – tend to blur at the edges, making it difficult to easily categorize specific types of journalism. For instance, it seems counterintuitive to argue that interactive journalism is separate and distinct from public journalism. And finding the boundary between participatory and interactive journalism also seems to prove difficult. Context seems to determine the boundaries of citizen journalism. Is an amateur report still citizen journalism after it's published by a mainstream media outlet? Kperogi (2010) examined CNN's citizen journalism vehicle iReport and concluded that "the trend toward corporate-sponsored citizen media may, in the final analysis, blur the distinction between citizen and mainstream journalism" (p. 1).

Given the problems with these definitions, some scholars prefer to use the term "networked journalism" to describe the current incarnation of participatory, interactive journalism. New media expert Jeff Jarvis first coined the term "networked journalism" in 2006, suggesting it as a better term than "citizen journalism." He didn't invent the practice but merely described what he was seeing in journalism:

> 'Networked journalism' takes into account the collaborative nature of journalism now: professionals and amateurs working together to get the real story, linking to each other across brands and old boundaries to share facts, questions, answers, ideas, perspectives. It recognizes the complex relationships that will make news. And it focuses on the process more than the product. (Jarvis, 2006, para. 2)

One of Jarvis' main points is the idea of collaboration and the sharing of sources –
anathema to many traditional journalists. Reporters and editors embracing
networked journalism understand that that audiences can and do get their news
from a variety of news outlets, so linking to another news site or a supporting
document in an online news article shouldn't be considered taboo. Scholar Jay
Rosen holds that linking to other sites is part of the "ethic of the Web" that is a
focused on providing verification as a means to "connect knowledge to people"
(Rosen, 2008).Traditional news media outlets have historically avoided linking to
other sites because they don't want to encourage the audience to go elsewhere.
However, this intransigence goes against the "ethic of the Web" and the natural
tendencies of Web audiences.

In addition to embracing a culture of linking to other sources, networked
journalism also welcomes the audience as contributors to the news. Former
journalist and new media expert, Charlie Beckett, describes networked
journalism's approach as collaborative:

> In networked journalism, the public can get involved in a
> story before it is reported, contributing facts, questions,
> and suggestions. The journalists can rely on the public to
> help report the story; we'll see more and more of that, I
> trust. The journalists can and should link to other work on
> the same story, to source material, and perhaps blog posts
> from the sources. After the story is published—online, in
> print, wherever—the public can continue to contribute
> corrections, questions, facts, and perspective, not to
> mention promotion via links. I hope this becomes a self-
> fulfilling prophecy as journalists realize that they are less
> the manufacturers of news than the moderators of
> conversations that get to the news. (2010, p. 46)

The audience can respond and collaborate on the news via methods that would
have seemed like science-fiction only decades ago. Audiences can read a report
on a Web site and immediately comment about its perspective or veracity. They

can also set up a blog to use as an independent vehicle to comment and critique the news. Readers can also offer comments via their Twitter accounts or social networking sites. This reader commentary can include links to information that they view as important – providing a fact-checking service for the media outlets, a task once handled only internally. They can take video of news events with their cell phones and post it on YouTube or even on some news Web sites. They can send SMS messages from their cell phones to compile aggregated information about disasters. And audiences can work together to sift through thousands of documents and look for newsworthy information, a technique known as "crowdsourcing." For instance, the non-profit news site ProPublica asked users to help track federal stimulus spending in the United States (Jones, 2010).

As seen in the breadth of the previous examples, the permutations of networked journalism can appear endless. In Table 1, the author attempts to summarize the major categories of the reporting technique.

Table 1: Types of networked journalism

Category	Description	Type of engagement	Examples
Embedded links	Links to sources of information for news reports	Allows readers to double-check the accuracy of reporting by going to source material	Links to original documents, other news sites
Blogs	Independent blogs, news media blogs, reporter blogs	Allows readers to comment on news reports both through blog creation and via comments on blog posts; provide links to other sites, documents to increase trust	UK Guardian's Comment is Free, Al-Jazeera's Middle East Blog.
Micro-blogs	Twitter feeds	In 160 characters or less, news outlets can disseminate reports (with micro-links to back to Web site), ask readers for help in covering stories, listen to reader's reactions to coverage	London Times' religion reporter Ruthie Gledhill; main news feed from Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Facebook fan page	Social-network pages that offers updates to "fans"	Disseminate reports, engage in conversation with fans, allow readers to discuss their reactions to reports	Al-Jazeera English, The Atlantic Magazine
Ushahidi map	Platform provides user-generated mapping	Allow audience to SMS, form submit, email or twitter information to compile information during crisis; more reports from same location acts as verification.	Earthquakes in Haiti, Chile; violence in Kenya; Oil Spill off Louisiana.
User video reports	YouTube, Vimeo,	Users can cover news vents by using their	CNN's iReport; YouTube video

	news sites	video cameras, cell phones	footage of woman's death in Iran amid election violence.
Crowdsourcing	Generic term meaning using many users to cover one issue	Users collectively cover an event or issue; results are combined and analyzed by some central authority.	ProPublica's ShovelWatch, tracking U.S. stimulus dollars; Huffington Post's OfftheBus, which asked users to cover U.S. candidate appearances

Beckett and Mansells (2008) stress that the news business should place more emphasis on providing trustworthy information and creating a healthy public sphere for discourse. The authors note that the "central responsibility of the journalist today arguably must be to support and encourage new spaces for dialogue in a manner that is ethical and enhances trust" (Beckett and Mansells, p. 94). This emphasis on dialogue and credibility represents a shift from the traditional normative guidelines of journalism. Journalism ethicists Kovach and Rosenthiel stress that the primary purpose of journalism "is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing" (2007, p. 12). The authors stress that journalism does little good if it fails to help people make informed decisions. Given the decline in media credibility,[1] perhaps the emphasis on dialogue and trust should replace the emphasis on merely providing information (Pérez-peña, 2009). Simply offering news does little good if audiences choose to not believe it. This paradigm shift – from the importance of providing information to the importance of providing trust – represents one of the most important aspects of why networked journalism must be embraced.

Beckett and Mansell see networked journalism as audience participation augmented with the professional polish offered by mainstream journalists:

---

[1] The latest U.S. poll shows that only 29 percent of respondents believe that the press "get the facts straight."

"Successful networked journalism providers might offer the premium service of skilled journalistic functions: editing, analysis, technical support, and information packaging but this would become integrated into the flow of information from users" (2008, p. 97). Journalists would diminish in their role as gatekeepers and increase their role as moderators or facilitators of discourse and information. The authors stress that networked journalism needs encouragement from the public and political classes. Of course, networked journalism can represent a threat against the hierarchy of governance, so the new paradigm may not be embraced by those who benefit from the status quo. Some critics see the new media innovations as conflicting with governments since few political systems operate on the basis of an informed, interwoven public (Monck, 2007).

Networked journalism has already made an impact on news dissemination in and concerning the Middle East. For instance, the independent Web site Little Green Footballs first exposed that a freelance photographer for Reuters news service had doctored photos during the Israel/Hezbollah conflict in 2006 to make Israeli air strikes look worse than reality. After receiving criticism from the interactive audience, Reuters quickly dismissed the photographer and tightened its standards (Holmes, 2007). A radio program launched by the BBC World Service Trust allows young people in Iran to communicate with each other about taboo subjects. They are encouraged to anonymously take part in the show, called Zig Zag, to address common concerns and engage with religious figures without fear of reprisal (*Trust launches Iran youth radio program*, 2006). A BBC website, My Life, features a program that allows young women in Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia to tell their stories (*Voices of young Arab women*, 2005). In Egypt, blogs run by amateurs have performed in roles usually associated with the traditional media. For instance, in 2005 a blog posted a video of a vicious police attack on a defenseless citizen, ultimately leading to the arrest of two officers

(Shokry, 2008). In 2009, a video shot of a young woman dying on the streets of
Tehran became a rallying point for Iranian protesters. A protester shot the video
from a cell phone camera and uploaded to the video-sharing site, YouTube (Fathi,
2009).

Beckett argues that networked journalism creates value for journalism in
three ways (Beckett, 2010). First, it foments editorial diversity, creating more
substantial and varied news reports. Second, it produces connectivity and
interactivity by distributing news in different ways. Third, it enhances relevance
of news reports by relating audiences and subjects to create new editorial and
ethical relationship to the news. The author believes a fourth element – networked
journalism helps increase trust – should be included in this list. Media outlets
increase trust and credibility when they provide links to their source material or
answer questions publicly from their readers. These four benefits should provide
motivation for journalism instructors and practitioners to embrace the methods
that create networked journalism.

The term "networked journalism" appears to describe several of Nip's
(2006) categories of journalism but doesn't create any limits upon it. For instance,
much of the previous descriptions could be accurately defined as "participatory
journalism." But, embedded links in articles doesn't fit into that category.
Similarly, audiences allowed to offer feedback on a Facebook page is a form of
interactive journalism, but doesn't approach the definition of citizen journalism.
The breadth of the networked journalism definition offers a uniquely well-suited
category to define the current new media journalistic landscape.

Al-Jazeera English and networked journalism

Al-Jazeera English is a 24-hour English-language news and current affairs
TV channel and Internet news site. Headquartered in Doha, Qatar, it is the sister
channel to the Arabic-language Al-Jazeera network, famed for its international

news coverage that is often at odds with Western news outlets. The station offers news features and analysis, debates, documentaries, business, technology, sports. Al-Jazeera English features no centralized command but instead broadcasts from four cities – Kuala Lumpur, Doha, London and Washington, D.C. – over its 24-hour news cycle. The network's stated objective is to "give voice to untold stories, promote debate, and challenge established perceptions" ("About us," 2009).

The new network is not without its controversies. Al Jazeera and the United States have historically had an adversarial relationship. U.S. government officials chastised the network for its coverage of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly for its focus on civilian casualties and the airing footage of coalition prisoners of war (Al Jenaibi, 2010). For its part, the network accused the United States of purposefully targeting its reporters covering those wars. More recently, Al Jazeera has provoked the ire of Arab governments – helping the network's claim of objective, unbiased reporting. Some Palestinians were upset with its dissemination of the secret "Palestine Papers" which showed unfavorable negotiating stances from its leaders (Ephron, 2011). In 2010, the Committee to Protect Journalists reported closures of Al Jazeera bureaus in Morocco, Bahrain and Kuwait as well as other threats against its journalists in the Arab world ("Committee to Protect Journalists," 2011). Observers widely praised the network for its comprehensive coverage of the protest movement in Egypt while under oppressive conditions (Stelter, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, Al-Jazeera English was recently cited for its networked journalism initiatives (McGann, 2010). The outlet operates a beta Web site called "War on Gaza" in which users in the region can submit events such as incidents of violence or protests via SMS (cell phone text messages) or Twitter. The site uses the Ushahidi technology, a tool designed to crowdsource crisis

situations. Ushahidi melds information from users with a Google Map, allowing users to help generate news. The technology was used to help map violence in Kenya following a disputed election and during Haiti's earthquake disaster to help locate victim's (Fildes, 2010). On the Gaza site, submissions are tracked on a map with color-coded dots, allowing for a geographic understanding of the conflict. When multiple users report the same incident in the same location, then the dots get larger (see Figure 1). As McGann put it, "Al Jazeera, which has reporters in parts of the Arab world other cable networks do not, can follow up on events, mixing in the work of professionals with the wisdom of the crowd" (para. 6).

Fig. 1: War on Gaza Ushahidi map
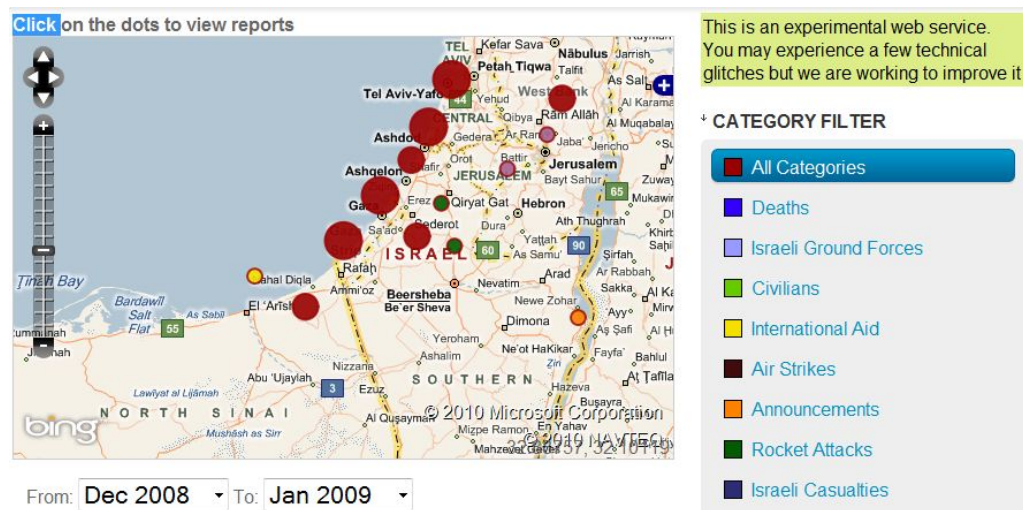
In other examples of networked journalism, McGann interviewed an on-air personality who said he uses audience input to help determine topics on his show. Richard Gizbert, who hosts media criticism show called The Listening Post, said he draws comments from the show's Facebook page and tweets, and he even airs videos from viewers (McGann, 2010).

Qualitative Analysis

The next part of this paper is a qualitative analysis of al-Jazeera English's Web site, Twitter feed and Facebook fan pages. The network's content will be evaluated according to the tenets of networked journalism. The author will identify where al-Jazeera English is practicing networked journalism and where the network is missing the mark. The author conducted the qualitative analysis in late May 2010 by closely examining the Web site, Twitter feeds and Facebook fan pages.

The analysis found many instances of networked journalism but also several examples in which the network missed opportunities to create more engagement. The level of networked journalism tended to vary greatly depending upon the medium.

Al-Jazeera English has quite a commanding presence on Facebook. Its flagship "fan" page features more than 70,000 members. The site frequently provides updates of the fan page with clips of their video reports. A typical report will receive several hundred "likes"[2] as well as between 100 and 200 comments. Oftentimes, the comments merely devolve into political arguments (e.g., one featured a one-sided debate on the morality of Israel's blockade of Gaza.) However, at other times, the comments are probably useful for the network to gain an understanding of their audience's perspectives. For instance, one video featured an interview with scholar Robert Fisk about the relationship of hegemonic interests and media power. The audience's reaction showed that they clearly saw the Western media as biased in their coverage of world conflicts including Palestinian and Afghanistan causes. After initially posting the videos,

---

[2] On Facebook, audiences can either comment on a post or simply click on a button that says "like." The latter is a quick way to register approval of the topic and users will be alerted to all follow-up comments after that point.

the network doesn't engage with the audience further. But, they do presumably read the comments on the reports to gauge audience sentiment.

Al-Jazeera English has seven fan pages specific to particular programs, all of which are linked from the main fan page. The sub-pages are: "The Listening Post," the media criticism show; "Fault Lines," a documentary show covering world events that promises to hold "the powerful to account"; "Witness," another documentary program; "48," a show dedicated to entertainment and culture; "Empire," a program that "questions global powers and their agendas"; "Riz Khan," named for the host of the interview program; and "The Fabulous Picture Show," dedicated to international cinema.

These program fan pages encourage more interaction than the main fan site. The "Witness" page, for instance, asked its 700-plus fans to recall their favorite show. After one day, ten fans had offered their opinion. The "Riz Khan" interview program announced that a former Afghani presidential candidate would be an upcoming guest and asked its 5,000-plus fans to submit questions. After two days, more than 20 users had commented on the query. These instances are clearly examples of audience engagement, but do they rise to the level of "networked journalism"? At first glance, the gathering of questions to ask an upcoming guest appears to be the clearest example of networked journalism – with the audience actually helping to shape the news. However, even the comments on the stories appears to meet Jarvis' definition of networked journalism – sharing "facts, questions, answers, ideas, (and) perspectives." Of course, this assumes that producers of the content are reading the comments – and the fan pages offer no clues that they are doing so. During the review, neither the official fan page entities nor any Al-Jazeera English figures answered any reader's questions or chimed in on their discussions at any time. The network could easily increase its engagement by commenting later on posted articles –

even something as innocuous as "thanks for all this discussion" would show audiences that someone at Al-Jazeera English was paying attention to the user dialogue.

Al-Jazeera English has a robust Twitter feed with more than 28,000 followers, but that number is pales in comparison to the 70,000 Facebook fans. Upon examination, the reason for the disparity may involve the Twitter feed's use. The network appears to employ it solely as a means to distribute news updates, ignoring its ability to interact with followers. While boasting more than 28,000 followers, the feed only follows 28 other entities.[3] By contrast, the Twitter feed for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper boasts 13,000 followers, and the U.S. news outlet follows more than 2,500 people. By following so many other twitter accounts, AJC journalists ensure that they can hear and respond to audience perspectives, tips and concerns. The AJC Twitter feed will often ask readers to help cover news – asking followers to offer information about local traffic as well as international disasters. Not all media outlets follow the AJC's lead. The *New York Times*, for instance, has 2.4 million followers but follows only 190 Twitter accounts. The reasoning behind media outlets decision to follow other Twitter accounts bears further study. Some news outlets see Twitter as a tool of engagement while others see it as merely a method to disseminate their reports.

The Al-Jazeera English Web site features a written version of most of its broadcast reports. Unlike many traditional news sites (e.g., NYTimes.com, Washingtonpost.com), al-Jazeera English does not allow comments on its news articles. Also, unlike sites such as NYTimes.com, al-Jazeera English's news reports don't contain links to other sources of information. But, the news site does

---

[3] Al-Jazeera English also set up a Twitter account dedicated to covering the "War on Gaza" in 2009, AJGaza. That account touts 12,000 followers but only follows 26 Twitter accounts.

embrace networked journalism in other ways. For instance, on a <u>page</u> covering the crisis in the Gaza Strip, the site contains a graphic that reads: "Send us your views and eyewitness videos." After clicking on the icon, readers are encouraged to submit a contribution either via email or by filling out a form. The page headlined "Your Media" asks:

> Have you witnessed or been involved in a news story? Do you want to share your views on a news story, tell us what stories matter to you or respond to Al Jazeera's coverage? We want to hear about the reaction to global news events where you are and about the stories you would like us to feature." ("Submit Your Contributions," 2011)

This request for audience submissions represents an overt attempt to involve the reader into the shaping and direction of the news, clearly in agreement with the tenets of networked journalism. During the review of the Web site, such a direct appeal for news stories was not seen again. Al-Jazeera English could increase its commitment to networked journalism by appealing for user involvement on a wider number of pages.

The main news portion of the Web site provides links to its Al-Jazeera Blogs section. Blog posts are written by Al-Jazeera correspondents and allow comments and encourage audiences to offer feedback. The blogs often link to other supporting documents. For instance, a critical blog post on a speech from President Obama provided a link to the full text. The posted ended with an invitation: "You tell me ... these are serious times that demand a serious discussion ... what do you think?"(Bishara, 2010, para. 42). The author, a senior political correspondent, has clearly embraced networked journalism – asking for the perspectives of his readers and offering links to outside sources. Al-Jazeera English's decision to segregate these elements to the blogs – rather than traditional news reports – works against the tenets of networked journalism.

An examination of the Ushahidi War on Gaza site finds that the platform received more than 400 crowdsourced reports during the Israeli offensive from December 2008 to January 2009. Most of the reports were attributed to traditional media outlets, simply putting a marker on the map for news reports of Israeli airstrikes or announcements of Palestinian casualties. Far less common were the eyewitness accounts from people inside Gaza marking actual incidents of violence. Examples of the latter include laconic reports such as: "Huge explosions heard in northern Gaza and close to the Rafah crossing on the border with Egypt" or "Explosions reported in Gaza despite a three-hour 'humanitarian corridor' being in effect." All of the reports said that they were "verified," although the site doesn't make it clear how veracity was tested. All of the reports have a button that allows users to rate whether the report should be considered credible; however, the ratings appeared to be untouched. Despite a platform designed to allow users to upload photos as well as text, no photos accompanied any other few eyewitness reports. Some of the entries lacked any type of verification. One report simply stated: "Mother and four children killed in their home in Gaza as death toll passes 500." With the death toll included, the report sounds like it probably came from a news outlet – however, no links to outside sources are included. Also, unlike other Ushahidi sites, the sizes of the colored dots don't appear to correspond to multiple reports of the same incident.

The War on Gaza site appears to have been a mild success, but missed an opportunity to be act as more of a crowdsourcing engine from residents in Gaza.[4] The vast majority of the reports submitted on the site (at least 95 percent) were media accounts or statements from governments, agencies or organizations. The organization of all these reports in one centralized location certainly has news value and can help contribute to the understanding of the Israeli offensive in

---

[4] In all fairness, the site warns users that it is in "beta testing" and that technical glitches are being worked out.

Gaza. However, the site would have benefited from more on-the-ground reports. This lack of direct involvement was likely hindered in due to a lack of infrastructure in Gaza – presumably sporadic Internet access and cell phone coverage. Also, Palestinians in Gaza may not have been aware of the interactive map and likely had more pressing concerns than posting an update via SMS. Still, future iterations of such Ushahidi maps should work to address some of the structural factors that lead to an imbalance between on-the-ground user reporting and more traditional reporting methods.

The network's War on Gaza Ushahidi site and the Al-Jazeera Blogs section sprang out of its Al-Jazeera Labs department. An examination of this area of the Web site shows that those two developments are the only creations that utilize networked journalism. The lab site announced developments such as an application to watch Al-Jazeera English on mobile phones and GPS-tracking software for their own reporters. However, the site hasn't developed any other crowd-sourcing applications or projects that encourage collaboration on the news.

Discussion

The findings show that Al-Jazeera English is engaged in networked journalism in many ways. For example, the network asks viewers for feedback on Facebook pages, provides links to other sources in its blogs, and uses the Ushahidi technology to crowdsource crisis coverage. However, the review also found that the network could improve its practice of networked journalism. For instance, the Al-Jazeera English doesn't offer links or allow comments in its news stories. The network uses Twitter as a means of news dissemination rather than a way to engage in a conversation with its readers. Its Ushahidi map could be tweaked to focus more on original reporting and also address apparent problems with the verification process. Also, the Al-Jazeera Labs department could be more focused on creating applications that encourage collaboration to cover the news.

Yes, Al-Jazeera English is using networked journalism in its coverage. However, other media outlets are engaged in networked journalism with different and even more beneficial methods. Al-Jazeera English should be praised for its networked journalism but not singled out as a normative ideal. Networked journalism requires a consistent effort to include the audience in the newsmaking process. The network should continue to innovate its journalistic practices to include more engagement with the audience. It should look toward news outlets that are on the vanguard of networked journalism for inspiration. For instance, London's *The Guardian* recently updated its social media guidelines to encourage its reporters to engage in conversation with its readers (Confino, 2010). And the U.S. web site TBD.com, regularly asks its readers to help with coverage through the use of Ushahidi maps, tracking such news as broken escalators, stolen phones and snow street closures (Anderson, 2010). These moves represent the best of what networked journalism can offer. Al Jazeera and other news organizations must continue to evolve and take advantage of the technology that can help journalism remain relevant in the digital age.

Conclusion

This paper has presented an analysis of networked journalism and the Al-Jazeera English network. It found that while Al-Jazeera English should be praised for its networked journalism coverage, the news outlet could improve further upon its embrace of the journalistic practice.

The analysis of networked journalism shows that journalists should embrace its approach in order to help journalism improve and evolve through this rapidly changing environment. One of the key benefits of networked journalism is the presumed increase in trust and credibility that accompanies such reporting. Trust increases when audiences receive links to information sources, engage in

conversations with journalists, and see the news as a collaboration of resources rather than simply a delivered product.

This qualitative analysis should also caution future networked journalism efforts to focus on substance rather than style. The "War on Gaza" map looked like an impressive use of Ushahidi technology prompting journalism observers to praise its use. However, a closer examination showed that the map actually offered very little news value. News organizations must follow up their intentions to engage the audience with actually examples of engagement.

Journalism instructors should use the discussion of Al-Jazeera English to stress the importance of networked journalism to students. The need for fundamentals of journalism – writing a good lede, telling a coherent story, employing accuracy and fairness – will never disappear. But, tomorrow's reporters and editors also need to embrace the changing nature of news. Journalists must learn that engagement and collaboration with the audience should not be considered an afterthought but rather an integral component of a brave new world.

References

About us. (2010, May 29). *Al Jazeera English - Corporate Profile*. Retrieved May
    29, 2010, from
    http://english.aljazeera.net/aboutus/2006/11/2008525185555444449.html

Al Jenaibi, B. (2010). New Age of Press Democracy in the Middle East: Arabic
    News Channels: Al-Jazeera. *International Journal of Academic Research*,
    2(4), 385-394.

Anderson, K. (2010, November 15). Networked news: the digital future of
    regional journalism. *The Guardian*. London. Retrieved from
    http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2010/nov/15/
    networked-news-digital-future-regional-journalism

Beckett, C. (2010, March 15). Editorial Diversity: Quality Networked Journalism.
    Director's Blog. Retrieved May 29, 2010, from
    http://www.charliebeckett.org/?p=2575#more-2575

Beckett, C., & Mansell, R. (2008). Crossing Boundaries: New Media and
    Networked Journalism. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, *1*(1), 92-104.

Bishara, M. (2010, May 30). Obama doctrine rehabilitates empire. *Marwan's
    Imperium*. Retrieved May 31, 2010, from
    http://blogs.aljazeera.net/imperium/2010/05/30/obama-doctrine-
    rehabilitates-empire

Committee to Protect Journalists. (2011, February 7). Retrieved February 7, 2011,
    from http://www.cpj.org.

Confino, J. (2010, October 21). New social media guidelines for Guardian
    journalists. *The Guardian*. London. Retrieved from
    http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainability/media-responsibility-social-
    media-csr

Ephron, D. (2011, January 30). Palestine Remains Calm Despite Leaks -
    Newsweek. *Newsweek*. Retrieved from
    http://www.newsweek.com/2011/01/30/all-quiet-in-palestine.html

Fathi, N. (2009, June 23). In a Death Seen Around the World, a Symbol of Iranian
    Protests. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from
    http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/23/world/middleeast/
    23neda.html?_r=1&ref=middleeast

Holmes, P. (2007). *Reuters toughens rules after photo affair*. Retrieved from
    http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/01/18/idUSL18678707

Jarvis, J. (2006, July 5). Networked journalism. *www.buzzmachine.com*. Retrieved
    May 29, 2010, from http://www.buzzmachine.com/2006/07/05/networked-
    journalism/

Jones, S. (2010). *Revised Tax-Cut Figure Pushes Stimulus Spending Higher*.
    ProPublica. Retrieved from
    http://www.propublica.org/ion/stimulus/item/revised-tax-cut-figures-push-

stimulus-spending-higher-420

Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2007). *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and The Public Should Expect*. Three Rivers Press.

Kperogi, F. A. (2010). Cooperation with the Corporation? CNN and the Hegemonic Cooptation of Citizen Journalism through iReport.com. *New Media & Society*, *12*(8), 1-16.

McGann, L. (2010). *Al Jazeera English as networked journalism*. Nieman Journalism Lab. Retrieved from http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/03/milton-wolf-seminar-al-jazeera-english-as-networked-journalism/

Monck, A. (2007, February 11). Why The Public Doesn't Deserve The News. Retrieved May 29, 2010, from http://adrianmonck.com/2007/02/why-the-public-doesnt-deserve-the-news/

Nip, J. Y. M. (2006). Exploring the second phase of public journalism. *Journalism Studies*, *7*(2), 212-236.

Pérez-peña, R. (2009, September 14). Trust in News Media Falls to New Low in Pew Survey. *The New York Times*.

Shokry, M. (2008, January 9). Analysis: Egyptian bloggers emerge as opposition voice. *BBC Monitoring World Media Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring*.

Stelter, B. (2011, February 6). Al Jazeera Hopes Reports From Egypt Open Doors in U.S. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/business/media/07aljazeera.html

Submit Your Contributions. (2011). Al Jazeera. Retrieved February 7, 2011, from http://yourviews.aljazeera.net/

Trust launches Iran youth radio program. (2006). BBC World Service Trust. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/mediadevelopment/story/2006/10/061020_iranyouth_radio.shtml

Voices of young Arab women. (2005). BBC World Service Trust. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/2015/story/2005/11/051011_my_life_digital_stories.shtml