



**ASIA'S MEDIA INNOVATORS
VOLUME 3: CROWDSOURCING
IN ASIAN JOURNALISM**

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Asia's Media Innovators Volume 3: Crowdsourcing in Asian Journalism

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Introduction

Crowdsourcing is a process where media companies solicit content from the audience. Much of the time that process involves digital tools and invokes social media and social networking platforms to collect that content. The context of this book is journalism, so the tasks discussed here will involve journalism. Crowdsourcing represents a grassroots initiative that potentially could produce better journalism.

The distinctions between what people have traditionally called user-generated content – a mouthful of a phrase usually abbreviated as UGC – and crowdsourcing tend to be blurred. Crowdsourcing uses digital tools to approach the audience to get a job done, usually with the understanding that the people who do the work will be paid. With UGC, the audience often volunteers content rather than being asked for it, and the people who supply those contributions usually are not paid, though sometimes they are rewarded in a non-monetary way.

Despite these distinctions between UGC and crowdsourcing, it is possible to regard both concepts in a complementary way as they relate to reporting. The point is to do better journalism by involving the audience.

But if this book focused solely on crowdsourcing where people were paid for their contributions, this would be a very short book indeed. Research conducted by the author in the Asian region suggests very few news organisations pay for content from the audience, whether solicited by the news company or volunteered by the public. So by necessity, this book will consider examples of crowdsourcing where people are not paid.

Cyril Pereira, based in Hong Kong, is a former chairman of the Society of Publishers in Asia (SOPA) and founding co-chair of the Asian Publishing Convention (APC). He has served as a senior executive at the South China Morning Post, was on the board of the Bangkok Post and publisher of Asia Magazine. He described crowdsourcing as a “loose term” that spanned the extremes of both paid and free content contribution. He said user-generated content or UGC for news was usually random and provided free, though it was better to pay for such content. “Where publications declare

a payment policy, they usually receive consistent and better quality inputs from dedicated contributors.” Contributions provided for free were rarely consistent or of a high standard, he said. “Game amateurs do it for fun to have their work reach a wider audience. That thrill wears out over time.” Special-interest publications often got quality input from group members who wanted to share knowledge and insights, and it cultivated community involvement and cohesiveness. “The ‘community spirit’ drives that. It depends on goodwill and can only be sustained long-term through a paid relationship where the publisher is ‘for-profit’ and not a social club. At the end of the day nothing of value can be expected free forever. Publishers have to come to terms with that.”

According to Wikipedia, itself a new paradigm of publishing modelled on the concept of audience contributions, the first written use of the term “crowdsourcing” was penned by Steve Jurvetson in February 2006, when he described a collective effort to manage an online discussion forum on Flickr, a photo-sharing site. Indeed, Flickr could be considered one of the early models of crowdsourced photography, in the sense that many professional photographers put their images on the site in the hope of being paid. Wikipedia said Daren Brabham was the first person to define crowdsourcing in the scientific literature in an article published on 1 February 2008: “Crowdsourcing is an online, distributed problem-solving and production model.” Brabham’s article appeared in the academic journal *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, volume 14 (1), pages 75–90.

Jeff Howe, a contributing editor at *Wired* magazine, developed a definition in a blog post connected to his print article in the June 2006 edition of the magazine. “Simply defined, crowdsourcing represents the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call. This can take the form of peer-production (when the job is performed collaboratively), but is also often undertaken by sole individuals. The crucial prerequisite is the use of the open call format and the large network of potential labourers.”

What are the advantages of crowdsourcing to media companies, apart from the obvious one of saving money? Actually, one could argue that some media companies are paying for crowdsourced or UGC content the audience supplies for free, because those companies need to allocate paid

staff to check and verify the content that arrives. Not all media companies monitor the content from the audience, relying on a system of policing by the crowd to regulate that content.

Because crowdsourcing allows a large number of people to work on a single task, the act produces massive amounts of potential data because of the range and number of people working on the process. Media companies thus benefit from a wide range of potential opinions, with broad geographical coverage given the global nature of the Internet.

The essence of this book

Essentially this book describes, using case studies, a form of journalism where the audience contributes content and where media companies embrace those contributions, seeing the end product as a form of collaboration between audience and media with the aim of doing improved journalism. Crowdsourcing also appeals because of the relatively low cost of content from the audience.

One could say that crowdsourcing helps journalists keep their finger on the pulse of public opinion, or at least that part of the public who have access to the Internet and who use social networking tools. We could argue that crowdsourcing is creating a new business model for media companies, as those media companies struggle with splintering markets and declining advertising revenues. This idea is discussed in the next chapter.

It is almost a cliché to say that massive change has enveloped the world of journalism in the past decade. Technological improvements combined with social change have produced a revolution in the way journalism operates. The web has moved from being a source of information to a sphere of social communication. And the mobile phone has radically changed the way we live. In societies around the world, manifested in major disruptions like the uprisings of 2011-12 known as the “Arab Spring”, social life and meaning have been altered inexorably. Along the way, these changes could be seen to have revolutionised how the media works.

Inviting content from the audience is now part of the media ecosphere. It has evolved from being a new and innovative process to standard operating procedure at some companies. Reporters routinely retrieve valuable information from a citizenry increasingly empowered by technology like the mobile phone and the Internet. Social networking and communication are now interwoven into the process of what many journalists do, from

gathering and checking information to letting audiences know what is available.

Epi Ludvik Nekaj, founder and CEO of Crowdsourcing Week held in Singapore in June 2013, wrote that the changing environment of the new economy, mobility of working environments, digital connectivity and social media had produced a unique twenty-first century practice. "Everything you're hearing about [the] sharing economy, access economy, collaborative consumption, co-creation, collaboration, crowdfunding and open innovation all fall under [the term] crowdsourcing. Technologies are fuelling disruptive business models, and companies and enterprises can engage with their customers on a completely new level. Therefore for the first time we are seeing that social media as we know it [is] turning into social productivity."

When we look at the history and origins of crowdsourcing it is obvious that American examples dominate. One could argue that they still set the tone and agenda. Thus we have sites like Amazon's Mechanical Turk, eLance, oDesk and Innocentive. But innovations are arising around the globe. Freelancer.com.au in Australia claims to be the world's largest outsourcing and crowdsourcing marketplace for small businesses. As of mid 2013, it had more than 7.6 million members. "We connect users all around the world," the site said.

American crowdsourcing platforms offer three models that have been embraced around the world. Academics have labelled them the "tender", "competition", and "engagement" models. The tender model is the most common. A buyer puts a task on the platform and sellers bid for the task. The buyer selects the seller. In all cases, when the seller completes the task the platform takes a commission.

With the competition model, sellers are required to complete all or some of the task to be allowed to participate. The buyer chooses what they consider the best solution or product. Sometimes it is not the lowest bid. With the engagement model, workers are hired on an hourly basis. Some companies use this approach to hire staff for things like virtual call centres.

The above models assume payment for the people doing the work. Media companies appear to be unique, because very few of them pay for contributions from the audience. Because of this situation, this book has been forced to consider examples of crowdsourcing where people are not paid.

About this book's structure

This book will use history and case studies to highlight the spread of crowdsourcing in the Asian region. The concept started in the United States and Europe before it spread to Asia. Thus chapter 1 starts with a historical look at recent major players in the US and Europe.

Chapter 2 describes the pioneers of crowdsourcing in the Asian region. We travel to South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore.

Chapter 3 takes us to the Philippines, for a case study of Rappler.com, one of the most innovative media companies in the Asian region.

Chapter 4 looks at other examples of crowdsourcing in Asia – in China, Japan, India, the Philippines and Australia.

Chapter 5 considers the key issues that confront media companies who use crowdsourcing, such as how to verify the accuracy of information they receive, and ways to understand what motivates the audience.

Chapter 6 describes the range of crowdsourcing tools available to journalists and their wide range of publics. This chapter focuses on the mobile phone as the chief delivery mechanism.

Chapter 7 offers a range of resources to journalists interested in learning more about crowdsourcing, including web sites, videos and readings.

CHAPTER 1

Recent major crowdsourcing initiatives

In April 2013, *The Guardian* in the United Kingdom launched a new platform, *GuardianWitness*, designed to gather and curate crowdsourced content from the public from around the world. People deliver their content via mobile phone and desktop computer.

That same month a bomb exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon in the United States. In the wake of the bombings, crowdsourced mobile phone videos and photographs added significantly to the information published by local and international media. Like the images of the 7 July 2005 bombings in London, the Boston Marathon photographs became recognised as watershed moments in journalistic history.

A mobile phone image taken by a member of the public provided the clearest photograph of one of the suspects available to authorities. *The New York Times* reported that David Green, 49, watched two bombs explode in front of him at the end of the marathon. He photographed the scene with his iPhone before helping the wounded. The image was time-stamped at 2:50pm on 15 April 2013. Green put the photograph on his Facebook account along with a report of his experiences. The F.B.I. later requested a copy and Green told *The New York Times* the agency considered his photo the best available.

Crowdsourcing, which involves soliciting images, video, data, information and ideas from the public, can quickly produce a range of stories previously unavailable to journalists. It is one of the most exciting possibilities for modern media companies. It offers many advantages and some disadvantages.

GuardianWitness is part of *The Guardian's* open journalism initiative based around diversity and plurality. Its origins appear to be based on a report the company published in 2011 on how to sustain journalism and the newspaper. *The Guardian* decided that user-generated content would

be the future for the news organisation. At *GuardianWitness*, Guardian journalists request and review content from the public and the best pieces feature on the Guardian site.

The *GuardianWitness* platform is an example of a surge in the number of news organisations curating user-generated content. Some such as CNN's iReport do their curating independently, while other organisations use external platforms such as Scoopshot (www.scoopshot.com/) and Newsflare (www.newsflare.com/). These sites allow people to shoot video with their mobile phones, and sell or give it to media organisations. They are discussed in chapter 6.

Joanna Geary, social and communities editor for The Guardian, told the Journalism.co.uk web site that *GuardianWitness* "more deeply integrates the way we want to do open journalism on our sites".

"It allows us to set assignments when we're working on stories that allow us to work with our audience but it also allows our audience to suggest ways they may want to work with us in the future," she said. In a blog post announcing the new platform on the Guardian website, Geary explained how the Guardian's audience had expanded over the world, which meant readers had contributed to some of the biggest stories of the past few years. About a third of the web site's audience is in the United States.

"We are in an era when we have more communication tools than ever before in order to reach out to people across the globe," Geary wrote. "Those people across the globe are reaching out to their friends and other people around the world to talk about stories. Bringing the two worlds together and collaborating creates greater, richer, more interesting stories. We become better journalists and we do better journalism as a result when we bring those two worlds together."

Advances in mobile phone technology make *GuardianWitness* possible. The project is supported by EE, the first provider of 4G mobile phone networks in Britain. In terms of mobile phone speeds, 4G can be up to five times faster than 3G meaning videos can be uploaded quicker. The author of this book has uploaded videos from 2.5G and 3G networks around the world and large video files can seem to take forever to be uploaded. So 4G is a major advance.

Geary said *GuardianWitness* was developed using n0tice, the Guardian's mobile publishing platform, launched in partnership with EE in May 2012. The free toolkit offers a range of features that news sites can use, including

the ability to create “crowdmaps” based on information posted by the public on n0tice.

“I think we’ve reached a point with technology where it really is the moment for this sort of platform and we know that it’s more likely to work and work well,” Geary said. “It’s an essential part of our future and we believe that our ability to collaborate and do open journalism is essential in the digital age.”

According to the *GuardianWitness* site, contributions fall into three main categories:

- 1) Assignments. This is where Guardian editors request input from the public on specific topics.
- 2) Live news tie-ins. Editors and reporters establish live blogs that relate to breaking or fast-moving stories. This from the *GuardianWitness* site: “We’ll include the best contributions in the live blog – for instance your experiences of austerity protests around the world or your videos of the latest extreme weather event.”
- 3) Open suggestions. This reflects a more serendipitous aspect of news, where the public offers items that are not requested. They fall into two categories, as explained by the *GuardianWitness* site:
 - A: “Send us a story: This might be a tip-off or something you may have witnessed in your local area that you think we might want to see. We’re always looking for unreported stories, so we would like to hear about things that we might decide to follow up as a story for The Guardian.” In other words, *The Guardian* is asking its audience to be reporters in parts of the world where the news organisation does not have any staff.
 - B: “Send us your assignment ideas: Have you got an idea that you think other Guardian readers would like to participate in? It might be a simple but beautiful idea such as asking everyone to take a picture at a certain time of a day or it might be a way of investigating an issue in more detail. For example asking everyone to share the cost of parking at their local hospital. Or it might simply be an interesting or funny assignment idea which doesn’t fit into any of our current assignments.”

Here The Guardian is asking its audience to be its ears and eyes in parts of the world where the news organisation does not have any staff. The most interesting question is whether *The Guardian* is exploiting its audience by seeking free content, or appreciating the fact that as a news organisation it will never have enough staff to report everything and therefore must rely on its audience for help. In the latter case this is partnership rather than exploitation.

Because of the ever-changing nature of online news, *GuardianWitness* constantly updates assignments. The *GuardianWitness* “badge” that highlights requests for content appears in various parts of the Guardian web site, and the public is encouraged to look for it in their favourite areas of the site.

The business model for crowdsourcing seems highly attractive to newsroom managers, because in many cases the public supplies content for free. That will be discussed more in the concluding chapter.

It must be accepted that crowdsourcing has its challenges. The Boston Marathon news event is generally acknowledged as a triumph for crowdsourcing because of the way that photographs, like the one David Green took with his iPhone, helped authorities find the alleged bombers. But it also showed the dangers of relying on crowdsourced information without verification. Innocent people were falsely identified as suspects in the days after the bombing.

Despite these issues, crowdsourcing appears to have a bright future in the world of journalism. People will continue to speculate and investigate when news breaks. Thus it is vital that journalists contemplate and appreciate the potential of crowdsourcing, and know when it is appropriate to embrace it. That is one of the reasons for this book.

Good journalistic ethics means that reporters need to consider the validity, quality and ownership of the material that the public supplies. When used effectively, crowdsourcing is a unique way to engage audiences and gather information that provides a more comprehensive context of what is happening in the world.

CNN has been a pioneer of crowdsourcing. It launched iReport in August 2006, possibly in recognition of the success that news organisations discovered after the July 2005 London bombings.

Crowdsourcing is especially relevant and useful for major news events that capture the public's attention. An example was the second inauguration of President Obama in January 2013, when more than 800,000 people descended on Washington DC. CNN worked with Instagram to crowdsource a site to find out what compelled people to attend. Afterwards CNN reported on the trends they discovered. Katie Hawkins-Gaar, the editor of CNN iReport, wrote about her experiences of the crowdsourcing of the second inauguration, describing it as "a day meant to be documented".

President Obama's initial inauguration in January 2009 was a huge media event because he was America's first African-American president. This was history and about 1.8 million people packed the National Mall. CNN's iReport received a record number of contributions that day: almost 12,000 submissions covering the moment when President Obama took the oath of office.

But the second inauguration was not expected to attract anywhere near as much attention. Fewer people were expected to attend and turnout was indeed lower, at somewhere between 800,000 and 900,000. But the social media landscape had changed significantly in the four years between inaugurations.

CNN decided to invite contributions through Instagram, the photo-sharing site based around mobile phones that launched in October 2010. At the time of the inauguration in January 2013, Instagram had about 90 million active users each month. By May 2013 the number of active users had risen to more than 100 million, and they contributed about 40 million images a day. All Instagram photos are public by default which means they are visible to anyone using Instagram or visiting the instagram.com website.

The call to action was simple, wrote Hawkins-Gaar. "We invited attendees to take an Instagram shot of themselves during the inaugural festivities, tag the photo #cnn, and share why they made the trek to Washington." She described the result as "fantastic". "Between Sunday and Monday [January 20-21] we received more than 10,300 photos and showcased some of the best submissions in a custom interactive. Others uploaded photos to iReport, CNN's global participatory news community."

Taken as a whole, the photographs formed a mosaic of a major event – each image when considered as part of the whole told a story about the people who attended President Obama's second inauguration. Hawkins-

Gaar was fascinated by “the stories behind the photos”. “Renee Chrisman shared a photo of her husband, Gunnery Sgt. Bradley Chrisman, who was chosen to escort inaugural VIPs onto the stage. Renee and their children were glued to the television set at home in North Carolina hoping to see Bradley in action.”

Responsible use of contributions

Responsible media organisations that use material from the public always insist on explaining the relationship between the public and the media outlet. Here is an example from *The Guardian’s GuardianWitness* programme:

“Things you should know: If the image, video or text was originally created by you, you will still own it. If you were given permission by a copyright owner to use the contribution, they do. By using *GuardianWitness*, you are allowing us to use your content. Read our Terms and conditions to learn more.”

CNN’s iReport has a similar list of suggestions and advice for its users. The TVNewser blog (<http://www.mediabistro.com/>) described iReport as the “gold standard” when it comes to traditional media companies embracing user-generated content. In November 2011, iReport introduced a major re-launch to become a “social network for news”. Lila King, CNN’s participation director, told TVNewser that most people had a camera in their mobile phone and many had a desire to let their voices be heard. “As journalists and storytellers, I think we are heading to a place where storytelling is a much more collaborative enterprise,” she said. “It is much more than a conversation, it is the actual soup-to-nuts of a story. We are all carrying cameras, we all have something to say, and I think we all increasingly have an expectation to hear our own voices and see our work reflected in the media we watch.”

Ironically, the re-launch happened at the same time that CNN sacked dozens of journalists. CNN senior VP Jack Womack wrote in a memo to staff: “Consumer and prosumer technologies are simpler and more accessible. Small cameras are now high broadcast quality. More of this technology is in the hands of more people. After completing this analysis, CNN determined that some photojournalists will be departing the company.” This is probably the most extreme example of a media company deciding it needs fewer staff because it can get free content from the audience.

On 30 May 2013, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the other newspaper in the city, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, had sacked its entire staff of 28 photojournalists. The newspaper planned to use freelance photographers and would require reporters to shoot photographs and videos, the Tribune said. *The Sun-Times* released a statement suggesting the move reflected the increasing importance of video in news reporting. “*The Sun-Times* business is changing rapidly and our audiences are consistently seeking more video content with their news. We have made great progress in meeting this demand and are focused on bolstering our reporting capabilities with video and other multimedia elements. The *Chicago Sun-Times* continues to evolve with our digitally savvy customers, and as a result, we have had to restructure the way we manage multimedia, including photography, across the network.” Reporters would be expected to shoot more videos and photos, sources at the Sun-Times told the Tribune.

Journalism academic Jay Rosen reacted to the sackings with a blog post in which he said the more people who participated in newspaper reportage, the stronger the press would be. “The more people involved in flying the airplane, or moving the surgeon’s scalpel during a brain operation, the worse off we are. But this is not true in journalism. It benefits from participation, as with *The Guardian’s* investigation of MPs’ expenses, also called crowd sourcing. ... In 1999, I wrote a whole book on this idea: *What Are Journalists For?* It’s about what we now call engagement. But that was pre-Web. Today we can do a lot more. According to the Internet’s one percent rule, a very small portion of the users will become serious contributors, which is still a lot of people. ... That’s what I believe. But we still don’t know much about how to make these pro-am combinations work, because for a very long time the news system was optimised for low participation. Switching it over is extremely difficult. Even CNN’s i-Report - which claims 750,000 contributors worldwide - is poorly integrated into the main CNN newsroom. ... Most of the big discoveries lie ahead of us.”

Other writers have been noting the potential of “citizen reporting” to undermine traditional journalism. In his best-selling book *Big Ideas: The essential guide to the latest thinking*, James Harkin in 2008 warned: “Unscrupulous news outlets ... may use citizen reporters as an excuse to slacken the editorial process and penny-pinch on reporting budgets.”

In 2008, a group of researchers led by Dr Clare Wardle published a report about user-generated content at the BBC, entitled UGC@BBC.

The broadcaster recognised that staff needed guidelines on how to deal with this new trend. Since then, responsible media companies have come to appreciate that contributors need help. These people are not trained journalists and it is in the best interests of all parties to provide guidance on a range of topics related to crowdsourcing. For example, *GuardianWitness* lists a range of do's and don'ts on its site. These can be found at <https://witness.guardian.co.uk/faq#dsandds1> and include things like:

- Do not place yourself or others in danger
- Do get permission from the people who you are filming or photographing
- Do treat the people in your film and images with courtesy
- Do be particularly careful about filming or photographing children
- Do always get permission from the landowner before filming or photographing on private property
- Do not include confidential or private personal information in your film or photograph without permission
- Do not use material in your video or image that does not belong to you or which you do not have the right to use
- Do not include defamatory material
- Do not make films or submit images about criminal proceedings whilst those criminal proceedings are ongoing

The site also offers a comprehensive guide to media law and other legal matters relating to the gathering of content. Most journalists know these things, based on years of experience. But the public is generally not aware of the dangers, so *GuardianWitness* makes a point of explaining these important matters.

Editorial staff at the site review all submissions before they appear on *GuardianWitness*. This explains the delay before they appear. "Only submissions that meet our community standards and those of the set assignments will be approved for publication," the site notes. "Obviously, some times of the week will be busier and during some periods we will

have more cover available than others, so we ask community members to be understanding if we don't always manage to deal with things straight away."

Legal issues relating to the public

A major court ruling in May 2013 highlighted how relatively easy it is to defame someone using social media, and the potential dangers in using content from the audience. That month the UK's High Court ruled that Sally Bercow, the wife of the Speaker of Parliament, had defamed the Conservative Party peer Lord McAlpine by falsely suggesting on Twitter that he was a paedophile.

Britain's most senior libel judge, Mr Justice Tugendhat, ruled that Bercow's tweet was seriously defamatory of Lord McAlpine, a former Tory party treasurer, and had falsely labelled him as a paedophile. In his judgment, Mr Justice Tugendhat said: "I find that the tweet meant, in its natural and ordinary defamatory meaning, that the claimant was a paedophile who was guilty of sexually abusing boys living in care. If I were wrong about that, I would find that the tweet bore an innuendo meaning to the same effect."

The judge's ruling ended a six-month legal saga prompted by an untrue report in November 2012 by the BBC 2's Newsnight containing allegations about an unnamed high-profile politician. The BBC later paid £310,000 in damages to McAlpine. Dozens of Twitter users also made donations to charity over the false claims.

In a statement after the ruling, Bercow said the ruling should be seen as a warning to all social media users. "Things can be held to be seriously defamatory, even when you do not intend them to be defamatory and do not make any express accusation. On this, I have learned my own lesson the hard way."

In his judgment Mr Justice Tugendhat said there was no sensible reason for Bercow to include the words *innocent face* in her tweet, which sensible readers among her 56,000 followers would have understood to be "insincere and ironical". He decided that her tweet allowed readers to wrongly link McAlpine with the allegation of child sexual abuse. "It is an allegation of guilt. I see no room on these facts for any less serious meaning."

Lord McAlpine's solicitor, Andrew Reid, said the case showed that Twitter was "no different to real life". "The failure of Mrs Bercow to admit that her tweet was defamatory caused considerable unnecessary pain and suffering to Lord McAlpine and his family over the past six months. Mr Justice Tugendhat's judgment is one of great public interest and provides both a warning to, and guidance for, people who use social media. It highlights how established legal principles apply to social media, and how the courts take account of the particular way in which social media operates when reaching decisions on whether publications are defamatory."

Crowdsourcing versus crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a companion to crowdsourcing. The former occurs when journalists or media organisations receive small amounts of money from a large number of contributors to fund a piece of journalism. They use that money to produce a specific form of reportage, such as a documentary or a piece of investigative journalism. Once the story is sold, the investors get their money back or it is re-invested to fund another piece of journalism.

One of the earliest successful examples of crowd-funding is Spot.Us in the United States (<http://spot.us/>), which David Cohn founded in San Francisco in late 2008. The innovation started in the Bay Area and later expanded to other cities. Cohn received a grant of \$US 340,000 as seed money from the Knight News Challenge, funded by the Knight Foundation. Much of the cash was used to write the code for the web site, and Cohn was happy to share the code with similar ventures around the world. One of those potential offshoots was the Foundation for Public Interest Journalism launched in Melbourne, Australia in February 2009 at Swinburne University.

The premise of Spot.Us is simple. It is based on what Cohn calls "community-funded reporting". A journalist posts an idea for an investigation on the Spot.Us web site along with a cost for the project, and the site accepts micro-donations associated with the story idea. Progress towards reaching the financial goal is charted on the site. All donations only go to the project that spurred the donation. "In some respect, our pitch to potential donors is as simple as this: 'Upset that your local news organisation isn't covering an issue you're passionate about? Donate \$25 to a reporter who will,'" Cohn said.

The site has rules that limit the percentage of donations from any individual to stop advocates or lobbyists becoming primary funders of a project. The finished content is licensed under a Creative Commons agreement, and Spot.Us aims to get the project published in as many places as possible. If a news organisation wants exclusive rights to the story, it needs to pay half the total budget. Supporters later get their money back to invest in a new story. Noted Cohn: "My sole and motivating mission is to figure out how reporting can thrive as we witness the death of the institutional model that traditionally supported it."

Despite his love for journalism, David Cohn emphasised that Spot.Us was not a news organisation and he was not an editor. "Spot.Us is a platform and I, along with others who have worked with me on this project, am its creator." Spot.Us was intended as a "collaborative marketplace" for public participation in the process of producing quality journalism.

Cohn believes success in the digital age happens for people who create platforms on which acts of journalism can be performed. YouTube and WordPress were pioneers of such platforms, Cohn said, but plenty of unexplored side trails were available where journalists could make their mark. One could argue that sites such as Scoopshot and Newsflare mentioned at the start of this chapter are examples of these new platforms. In March 2013, Rob Wijnberg, former editor-in-chief of the *nrc.next* newspaper in the Netherlands, proposed an idea for a new online journalism platform on Dutch national television. He asked for 15,000 people each to pledge €60 for a one-year subscription to an online newspaper, to be called De Correspondent (<https://decorrespondent.nl/>). His project raised half its goal in 24 hours and within eight days 15,000 people had subscribed. Many gave money as well as their subscription fee. This crowdfunding project raised more than €1 million (about \$US 1.3 million) for a news site that was not scheduled to launch for another six months, in September 2013. At the time of writing this book, in mid 2013, the site had reached 126 per cent of its goal.

Some critics suggest that crowdfunded journalism raises prickly questions of ethics. For example, how are people with an agenda willing to pay for an article different from a public relations company trying to place a positive article about their client? Cohn said Spot.Us controlled this possibility by limiting the amount any individual can give to a maximum of 20 per cent of the cost of the story.

Journalist Lauren Hockenson, in an article in the 10,000 Words blog on 22 January 2013, distinguished between crowdfunding and crowdsourcing and outlined three principles for crowdfunding a project. The former “fills in the financial gaps” when a journalist pursues money to pay for an in-depth project. “If you’re strapped for cash and looking to make your dreams happen, crowdfunding is one of the best ways to do it.”

If people wanted to get funds to make a video, she wrote, an engaging video attached to their funding appeal boosted their chances of full funding. “Do your best to honestly explain the goals of your project and let the stylistic storytelling [of the video] draw the viewer in. Your video should not only show off your qualifications to receive funding, but show off your project’s qualifications. If you make your subject matter interesting, people will turn out their pockets.”

Hockenson said the second part of the crowdfunding puzzle involved a reward system. “Offering gifts or incentives to fund isn’t only necessary to start a crowd funding campaign, it’s the only scalable tool at your disposal that can draw high-rollers as well as people who are willing to pledge a few dollars. Having smart and desirable objects that will pique potential funders’ interests is essential.”

This is sound advice, and suggests that large and relatively affluent media companies like *The Guardian* and CNN, in refusing to pay contributors, might be using crowdsourcing as a way to cut costs, disguised as ways to re-invent journalism. This question needs to be debated.

At least *GuardianWitness* makes it clear to contributors that it does not pay for contributions, though it does run advertising on the site near contributed stories. As the site coyly notes: “In the normal course of our business, advertising will appear across the GuardianWitness site, the Guardian network of websites, and other Guardian products. We don’t pay for ... submissions, although very occasionally we might contact someone who has sent a contribution via GuardianWitness and ask them to write us a blogpost or similar. At the point we commission someone, we will discuss payment.”

Hockenson’s third piece of advice involved getting support from “high places”. To quote from her blog post: “The wonderful world of journalism lends us to forging plenty of connections, and those are key in building a base of potential funders. Having smart, talented and influential friends who are eager to help in your cause is a trump card: You cannot only

use their skills for rewards (for example, a popular illustrator designing a custom graphic for a high-rolling funder), but also to draw their fans to your project. The best thing you can do, especially once your project is out there, is to connect with those people who can drive funders to your page. It could mean the difference between a funded project and an almost-there failure.”

Hockenson is talking about using social networking tools like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to gather support for one’s journalism projects. The Chinese equivalents of Sina Weibo, Ren Ren and Tudou are equally powerful in that country.

We end this chapter with an anecdote from India. On 15 July 2013 the telegram in that country was finally rendered redundant by the mobile phone. That was the last day on which people could send telegrams via the post office. The telegram arrived in India in 1850, six years after Samuel Morse sent his first message in the United States. The telegram became an important tool for commerce. The British East India Company found it vital for running their businesses. Even after independence in 1947, people continued to send telegrams because of the lack of telephones. It used to take a decade to have a landline installed, such was the slow nature of the state-run telephone monopoly. But India’s 1.3 billion people now have about 900 million mobile phones. They no longer send telegrams, preferring text messages instead. An era has passed. The mobile phone is now the main form of telephony, and is likely to dominate into the near future.

Around the world, the combination of social networking tools and mobile phones, allied to people’s desire to contribute, offers a compelling new way to conduct the business of journalism. In the next chapter we look at some of Asia’s crowdsourcing pioneers. The aim is to share the lessons these pioneers learned about crowdsourcing with media companies that are considering crowdsourcing as a part of their journalistic portfolio.

CHAPTER 2

Early pioneers of crowdsourcing in Asia

The term “pro-am” – a contraction of the phrase “professional-amateur” – is sometimes used to suggest collaboration between professionals and amateurs in a specific discipline. That pro-am approach also occurs in journalism, for a range of reasons.

With this pro-am model, media companies use their well-established brand to distribute content from the amateurs. The theory goes that the professionals understand concepts like news values, the importance of ethics, and how to edit content to ensure quality. They generally produce better journalism than amateurs working alone, and the well-established brand ensures more reach for the amateur content.

Media companies claim the pro-am partnership offers a classic win-win situation: both parties benefit from the collaboration. As a business model it is popular with editorial managers because the amateurs often contribute content for free. The sustainability of this business model is doubtful because people will not contribute their time and energy forever without some sort of recognition or reward.

This chapter begins with a look at some of the long-running pro-am partnerships in Asia: OhmyNews in South Korea, STOMP and RazorTV in Singapore, and Malaysiakini in Malaysia. They were chosen because of their longevity, and because they offer insights into the potential future of the pro-am model. OhmyNews launched on a shoestring budget of about \$US 100,000 in February 2000. It broke even in 2003 and remained profitable for several years until the global financial crisis that started in 2008. The company was slightly in deficit that year, but returned a slight profit the next year and has remained in the black since. Before that crisis, OhmyNews made about 60 per cent of its revenue from advertising. The rest came from news content sales and other sources like education. The company diversified into other types of income to provide more financial

stability, because advertising as a business model tends to falter during tough economic periods.

Jean Min, interviewed in Seoul, said OhmyNews had a different kind of economic model compared with traditional media – “more like wiki-nomics”. “Everyone is a stakeholder. You cannot just treat audiences as a bunch of eyeballs.” OhmyNews’ culture had been very mindful of this. “Without the participation of our audiences we cannot survive.” In December 2004, *The Guardian* named OhmyNews one of its top five news sites for its role as a “hybrid between blog and pro news site”. On a typical day citizen reporters submitted about 200 stories for the Korean-language site. The highest number of reporters was believed to be about 65,000. “When we have big events we get hundreds of stories in a day,” Min said. Many included photographs. “We get a lot of soft news. Somebody wants to talk about food every day. Gastronomic enthusiasm is very high in South Korea. These kinds of soft stories normally come with photographs and often videos.”

About a third of the 200 stories that arrive for the Korean-language site each day are rejected for various reasons such as poor sentence construction, factual errors or lack of news. Editors in Seoul fact check and polish each accepted piece, and decide where it will appear on the site. Sensitive stories that are potentially defamatory receive more thorough checking of facts. Sometimes this involves on-site visits. OhmyNews can also revoke the membership of any citizen reporter who violates the agreement and code of ethics they are obliged to sign when they join.

Before OhmyNews achieved its success, Korean newspapers used to shovel content onto their web sites from the print edition. They reasoned they had a big reservoir of exclusive content. But OhmyNews showed this was an old model. The web is interactive, and people want to interact with content. Moving news from the newspaper to the web does not exploit the web’s potential because that print-based news must be out of date, having been created the night before. Traditional newspapers faced a quandary: Most of their revenue came in the form of advertising and subscriptions from the newspaper platform. They needed to find ways to produce both print and web versions of stories. This required a major investment in time and money. The OhmyNews model of publishing exclusively online succeeded because it saved audiences time and money.

Origins of OhmyNews

Dr Oh Yeon-ho was the founder and CEO of OhmyNews. His first job as a reporter was with a small liberal magazine called *Mahl* in 1988 (his surname and the name of the web site are not connected). Dr Oh encountered numerous frustrations while trying to access major news sources. As a taxpayer, he believed he had a right to the vast reservoirs of public information in government agencies. The idea that “every citizen is a reporter” came to him about that time and stayed for several years until he began post-graduate journalism study at Regent University in Virginia in the United States almost a decade later. A professor asked the class to draft a plan for an imaginary new media start-up. Oh’s business model was based on his long-cherished idea that “every citizen is a reporter”.

After returning to Korea in 1998, Dr Oh persuaded five businessmen to help him. They were part of what was known as the “386” generation. That was the name for people born in the 1960s who went to university in the 1980s, and who were aged in their 30s at the time of the democracy movement. The name is a play on words – this was the first generation of Koreans who had access to digital technologies – thus the 386 nickname, borrowed from Intel. With investors’ money and some of his own, Dr Oh launched a beta or test version in December 1999. At the time, OhmyNews had a staff of four and had received 20 articles from citizen reporters. By the official launch date, chosen as an auspicious 2:22 pm on 22 February 2002 when the incorporation papers were signed, OhmyNews had 727 citizen reporters. In his autobiography *OhmyNews Story*, published in Korean in August 2004, Dr Oh wrote that he wanted to start a journalism tradition free of newspaper company elitism. “So I decided to make the plunge into the sea of the Internet, even though I feared things that I was not accustomed to.” OhmyNews was the first citizen journalism site to challenge Korea’s mainstream media’s ability to set the national agenda. Soon, the OhmyNews site was attracting more than 1 million repeat visitors a day. The form of journalism that OhmyNews pioneered gained mainstream recognition during the country’s 2002 presidential election. During that election, OhmyNews received 20 million page views a day, which is remarkable given the country’s adult population was only about 40 million at the time. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and Korea’s mainstream media soon adopted some of the features of citizen participation. For example, Chosun Ilbo, one of the leading conservative

dailies, started allowing its readers to leave comments at the end of articles. Daum, the second-largest portal in Korea, began encouraging “blogger reporters” to submit news to a dedicated site named “Media Daum.” And the Seoul Broadcasting System, a leading television broadcaster, started to accept video news from citizen reporters. When Dr Oh Yeon-ho was developing his business plan for OhmyNews, he imagined that when a citizen reporter submitted a raw story, and it was accepted and edited, it was like a stick of wood that had just caught fire. The site’s editors monitor each story to see if that fresh fire will develop into a full blaze and advance to become the site’s top story. “Ingul” is a Korean word meaning “fresh fire” and editors sometimes refer to citizens’ contributions as “ingul”.

In November 2005, *TIME* described Dr Oh as “very much of his generation: the anti-government student protestors of the mid-1980s who managed to rid South Korea of its dictatorships”. Dr Oh spent a year in prison in 1988-89 after being charged with violating the country’s infamous National Security Law. Some years later he realised the establishment could not control the Internet. “OhmyNews wasn’t created just for money,” he said in his autobiography, “it was created to change society.” Dr Oh realised the Internet encouraged interaction, and he wanted to make the most out of this new medium. “Every citizen can be a reporter. Journalists aren’t some exotic species, they’re everyone who seeks to take new developments, put them into writing, and share them with others.”

OhmyNews has always paid its contributors. Jean Min admitted the payments offered were “not a lot of money” for Westerners. But the payment recognises the citizen’s contribution, and the site does not try to take advantage of people by accepting free content. “For someone in parts of the world like Africa it’s good money,” Min said during an interview in Seoul with the author in 2007. “We have Cameroon citizen reporters who are excellent writers. Some earn \$US 1,300 in half a year, more than their annual salary [at home].” After stories are published, they often draw scores of reader comments. Controversial stories attract thousands of comments. Reporters are free to write about any subject. Min said the only exceptions were explicit sexual descriptions, pornography, profanity and swearing. “Other than that we are pretty liberal.” OhmyNews initially published a weekly broadsheet newspaper with a circulation of about 150,000. The idea was that the best of the web stories should be available

in print. That publication was discontinued in 2009, because the company decided to focus on digital rather than print publishing.

OhmyNews maintains its editorial integrity through an ombudsman committee comprised of citizen reporters and outside observers. They monitor the site each day and submit a monthly report that is published on OhmyNews. Min said the “millions of watchful eyes” of the readers and citizen reporters was the most effective way to preserve the site’s editorial integrity. “Independence from everything, including even OhmyNews, is the underlying guideline when it comes to editorial independence. Political power is not exerting as big an influence on the Korean media as it used to.” An increasingly serious concern among Korean journalists is the pressure from advertisers,” Min wrote in an article published on the web site of the Center for Citizen Media at Harvard University in 2006. “OhmyNews strives to listen to the voices of no one but our readers and citizen reporters. OhmyNews, by design, cannot bend its editorial integrity because of pressure from anybody. Our citizen reporters will submit whatever story they deem newsworthy and worth attention, and OhmyNews cannot reject them without first offering them justifiable reasons publicly. Should anyone find that we are rejecting some critical stories out of external pressure, OhmyNews will instantly come under great public scrutiny by our own citizen reporters.” OhmyNews is proud of its record of accuracy and credibility. Of the thousands of stories that have appeared since February 2000, only a handful by citizen reporters had been involved in legal disputes. OhmyNews editors verify reporters’ identities through a government-sponsored authentication process before they grant membership. Citizen reporters also sign a code of ethics. Min said OhmyNews was trying to combine traditional journalism with citizen journalism. “Our model of community journalism and web sites is unique.” By late 2012, the number of in-house editorial staff in 2012 totalled about 60 in the Seoul headquarters, plus another five software developers and engineers. The total number of citizen reporters by mid 2013 was about 60,000.

Min explained that OhmyNews aimed to combine traditional journalism with citizen journalism. This required good communication skills to maintain a community of citizen reporters. “Our model of community journalism and web sites is a unique model that no-one has done before.” OhmyNews

emphasised the importance of communication, and insisted that most editors had been a citizen journalist before taking on their new role so they knew what was involved. The gender balance in the newsroom is split almost evenly between men and women, unusual in South Korea where the bulk of journalists are men.

Excellent broadband links are part of the reason for OhmyNews's success. As of early 2013, South Korea had the highest broadband penetration in the world. South Korea is also a world leader in fourth generation (4G) mobile phone technology. Because of the wide range of telephone and digital technology, South Korea has become a hothouse for infrastructure developments. It is at the "bleeding edge" of the digital revolution, acting as a trailblazer for high-speed and wireless Internet services. The country has also pioneered the distribution of television via mobile devices.

Jean Min said it was vital to remember that the audience "is the content". The nature of the content would be decided by the nature of the audience. "It is really up to the audience as to what kind of content you will have, what kind of brand you will have, what kind of structure." When it considered partners in other countries OhmyNews always looked for a local group with a good understanding of their own market and audiences. Min also acknowledged that user-generated content was the new industry buzzword, noting that many media organisations saw the commercial possibilities of user-generated content because they expected to receive free content." All the conversations focus on business applications and exploiting audiences. But nobody talks about empowering audiences. That is the key." Min said all citizens were stakeholders in OhmyNews. Users or participants needed a chance to be empowered. "We are thinking about how to empower citizen journalists." All three stakeholders – audiences, citizen journalists and media companies – need to be involved. "The web is a community space. Without contributions from the community, web-based media organisations cannot do anything." Nobody should be allowed to dominate the media environment, Min said. But contributors should be rewarded for their work. "Nobody has the right to exploit people without giving something back. That is [our] basic philosophy."

Crowdsourcing success in Singapore

Singapore's STOMP and Razor TV represent examples of other successful pro-am site in Asia. STOMP stands for Straits Times Online Mobile and

Print. It is the country's most popular social networking and citizen media website and is owned by media conglomerate Singapore Press Holdings (SPH). About three-quarters of the site's content comes from citizens. They send it via SMS, MMS, email or through an app from their mobile phone. This user-generated content also finds its way into SPH dailies such as *The Straits Times* and Chinese-language newspapers *Shin Min Daily News* and *Lianhe Wanbao*.

Video content, both entertainment and news, is produced by STOMP's multimedia producers and videographers as well as by people in the street. The camera on people's mobile phones has become very common. STOMP gets about 1,000 photographs a day, compared with one a day when it launched in June 2006. Almost all are published on the website at <http://www.stomp.com.sg>. Only poor-quality or offensive images are rejected. Newsworthy photographs are shared with SPH's newspapers. Many make it into the pages of *The Straits Times*, including a handful on page 1.

On 22 February 2009 Dr Tony Tan, chairman of SPH, opened the Multimedia Center in the company's news centre in Singapore, describing it as the company's "base of operations" to tackle the digital challenges ahead. The centre housed STOMP and a new project, *The Straits Times Razor TV*. The latter is an online television service that broadcasts from SPH's web studio. It offers video-on-demand for people who want to control what they want to watch and when. It includes real-time interactivity between the web studio and the audience, and among members of the audience. The site exploits Web 2.0 technologies. Think of it as an interactive YouTube combined with Facebook. Dr Tan said delivery of videos over the Internet had been one of the most significant features of the Web 2.0 evolution. "The explosion of video sites such as YouTube has led to a rapidly growing demand for video content. Large-scale social networking platforms like Facebook also offer a high level of interactivity and open interfaces for third-party applications. Not surprisingly, these sites have enjoyed an explosion in the number of active users." Traditional media companies worldwide had yet to adopt and embrace new-media paradigms, Dr Tan said. Many news portals had adopted technologies like podcasts and RSS syndication. But they had not leveraged on highly engaging real-time interactivity to engage their audience. SPH intended to be among the first media companies to do so, Dr Tan said. In late 2009 an Innovation

Laboratory was added to the Multimedia Centre so that the latest, cutting-edge ideas could be nurtured and developed.

Felix Soh, digital media editor for English and Malay newspapers at SPH, oversees STOMP and Razor TV. STOMP caters for a different market compared with *The Straits Times*, whose online site, ST Interactive, effectively mirrors the print edition and contains mostly serious journalism. STOMP is alternative journalism. "It is not serious journalism in the form that *The Straits Times* offers," Soh said, "though STOMP does deal with journalism that affects people's lives."

Razor TV delivers content that is young and hip, with an informal tone. "News and views are raw and edgy," Soh said. Unlike traditional television broadcasts, which had yet to adapt to the Web 2.0 paradigm, Razor engaged in real-time social interactivity to "capture new eyeballs and better engage audiences". It aims to attract viewers between the ages of 18 and 40, Dr Tan said. Razor TV promotes *The Straits Times* brand and develops an online presence for the company. Users created content and shared that personalised content with the Razor TV community. The site emphasised hyper-local content, aimed at specific local audiences, Soh said.

STOMP has achieved recognition internationally. Soh and his staff have been invited to speak at numerous international media conferences. The site is actively involved in national campaigns, partnering various government agencies such as the Promote Mandarin Council and the Speak Good English Movement. The site's "English as it is broken" feature, created in conjunction with the Speak Good English Movement, was so successful its content was published in a book by the same name that featured on Singapore's best-selling list for more than six months.

People email or SMS STOMP about an issue or story. STOMP producers interview the senders and re-write the story for them. Mobile phone and broadband Internet penetration in Singapore are very high by world standards. Almost every household has a broadband Internet connection. The Infocomm Development Authority (IDA), the body that oversees and regulates telecommunications in Singapore, provides broadband speeds of at least 100 Mbps via an all-fibre network. Mobile phone networks are among the best in the world.

Razor TV launched on an auspicious day: 8 August 2008, or 8-8-08. It has won several awards for innovation in its relatively short history. Soh described Razor TV as the ideal convergence of the Internet and video.

“It’s video on demand. It’s edgy and sharp coverage of four things: news, current affairs, entertainment and lifestyle. Everybody’s life revolves around those four things. Sport comes under news. The style is young and hip, with raw treatment of news, and hyper-local programming that focuses on news that impacts the person in the street,” Soh told me during an interview in his Singapore office.

We want to discuss in depth what is happening on the ground in Singapore,” Soh said. “The newspapers and television tell people what is happening here and overseas. We give people local news.” Razor TV offers video on demand for people who want to control what they want to watch, and when. “Our presenters cut to the heart of the matter to provide a wide variety of content. What you get is an edgy and sharp coverage of current affairs and lifestyle trends. We call it as we see it.”

Roberto Coloma, writing for news agency Agence France Press when Razor TV launched, said SPH aimed at creating a young new audience via the new website, amid flat newspaper circulation growth. SPH was “constantly experimenting” with new platforms and technology, Coloma said. Patrick Daniel, editor-in-chief of SPH’s English and Malay newspapers, said SPH faced four major challenges. The first was to be able to engage people aged under 30. The others were maintaining quality journalism when budgets are being cut; finding the right business model for new media platforms; and building brands and creating brand value. Products like STOMP and Razor TV were designed to attract and retain that young audience, and create and build a youth brand.

Razor TV has a range of revenue streams. Like most web sites around the world, it has banner advertisements and in-video commercials. The latter appear at the start of a piece of video and cannot be ignored. Razor TV also operates as a production house that provides national advertising campaigns for companies, and it streams live video of events for a fee. The video advertising market was worth about \$US 8 billion in 2012, and Razor TV has positioned itself intelligently to get a slice of that pie.

For SPH’s Soh, the Internet has moved from being text-focused to a medium for delivery of video and multi-media content. The future focus should be multi-media. “It is not new media,” Soh said. “It is now media.”

Crowdsourcing in Malaysia: Malaysiakini

Malaysia's first and best-known online newspaper, Malaysiakini.com, went online in November 1999. It has about 40 editorial staff who publish in Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English, but much of its content comes from the audience. About 90 per cent of its funding comes from subscriptions and advertisements. Its office is in the suburb of Bangsar in the capital, Kuala Lumpur.

Media coverage in Malaysia tends to be monopolised by news organisations either owned by political parties or funded by corporations that are pro government. This has created a sense of distrust among readers led to a demand for impartial and objective news. This is one of the reasons for Malaysiakini's success.

CEO Premesh Chandran said Malaysiakini aimed to be an independent news organisation that provided a differing perspective on the news compared with traditional media. Chandran said people turned to Malaysiakini and other online newspapers, because "by and large nearly all mainstream media is owned by individuals or companies which are related to the ruling coalition". Chandran said it was almost impossible for any mainstream media company to be seen as independent.

Because of an annual licensing regime in Malaysia, newspapers can easily lose their licence. Chandran says newspapers have been suspended, and closed down by authorities. But Malaysiakini and other online publications have greater freedom because of the law that says the Internet cannot be censored. Chandran said this allows online publications like Malaysiakini to do stories about corruption, neglected by government, human rights abuses, or people dying in custody. Newspapers, he said, tended to shy away from stories "whenever there's a political cost. Even economic costs when the price of petrol goes up, they don't want to cover that."

The only sensitive point for the online publication is coverage of religion. Chandran distinguished between religious discussion – apostasy, conversion, custody issues – and religious conflict. He said Malaysiakini encouraged discussion of issues, but was careful when dealing with conflict. "If there is a religious clash, we make sure we get the facts right," Chandran explained. "When churches get burned or a pig's head gets thrown in a mosque these are acts of violence, these are acts of agitation. They are meant to agitate. So do you play up and provoke? No you don't." He said the role of the media was not to pit religious groups against each

other because “it is an isolated act. We should just find the criminals and prosecute them.”

Chandran launched a range of citizen journalism training initiatives in 2008, with funding from the International Center for Journalists in the United States. The first training started in November that year. The aim was to equip participants, regardless of their background, with journalistic skills so that ordinary people could report on issues that concerned them and their community.

In the years since, the programme has trained more than 400 citizen journalists. About half are active reporters. Chandran said more than 80 training workshops had been conducted throughout Malaysia in places like Penang, Kelantan, Perak, Johor, Sabah, Sarawak, and the capital Kuala Lumpur. Courses emphasised video journalism, because visuals tell stories more graphically and also involve emotions, Chandran said. “Some of the videos produced by our citizen journalists are picked up by other online news portals and disseminated across cyberspace.”

Malaysiakini established www.cj.my as a platform for citizen journalists to host their work. Videos can be seen at <http://cj.my>. “Citizen journalists are starting to shape the way news is being reported and are challenging the red-tape surrounding sensitive issues.” At least three regional offices for Citizen Journalists Malaysia have been opened in the country: in Penang, Johor Bahru and Kota Kinabalu, as well as in the capital Kuala Lumpur.

Chandran said the objective was to create responsible and ethical citizen journalists who reported news from their communities. “Their articles or videos are often picked up by Malaysiakini.” After people have attended the journalism training they work as interns with Malaysiakini’s editorial team before you can start contributing news.

Malaysiakini has its own video production unit at <http://www.malaysiakini.tv/>. Editors push stories to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Malaysiakini has also developed applications for iPhone and iPad users.

Despite the law that says the Internet cannot be censored, over the past 11 years Chandran has experienced police raids where office computers were seized; and he and others at the online paper have spent time in jail. Chandran said it was important that people should not see news just as news. “It’s fighting for justice. It’s part of the political process. If you’re part of the process it’s [journalism], is not a financial bottom line,” Chandran said. “Democracy really cannot function without journalism. People should

see it as a public good like how we have health services, how we have education services.”

Rewards needed

Implicit in all these examples of pioneers in the area of citizen journalism is the notion of reward. Enthusiasm only lasts for a short while and soon wears off unless it is acknowledged. Members of the public are willing to contribute, but they need to be rewarded in some way. OhmyNews believes in paying contributors. STOMP and Razor TV in Singapore, along with Malaysiakini in Malaysia, reward people via a sense of involvement – people think they are taking part in the development of their society. It has to be a two-way street. People will only continue to contribute if they get something from the transaction.

The next chapter explores one of the most exciting new crowdsourcing developments in the Philippines, at Rappler.com, while the chapter after that describes some more recent examples of crowdsourcing in a range of Asian nations.

CHAPTER 3

Rappler.com: Innovation in the Philippines

Rappler.com is a social networking and news site in the Philippines whose stories inspire community engagement for social change. Rappler comes from merging the words “rap” (to discuss) and “ripple” (to make waves). Its founders describe it as journalism in “a new world of limitless collaboration enabled by digital technology and connected by social media”.

Rappler represents an example of a phenomenon identified much later in the United States as “activist journalism”. Jan Schafer, executive director of the J-Lab in Washington DC, wrote about the phenomenon in June 2013 for the Nieman Foundation’s web site. Details of the article can be found in the readings in the last chapter. The aim was to move news from being a commodity to a catalyst for empowering citizens.

Journalists in the Philippines got the idea much sooner than their counterparts in the United States. Rappler launched its beta or introductory version to the public on 1 January 2012, after its founders spent several months thinking about journalism’s role in Filipino society. Rappler focuses on “uncompromised journalism” that was intended to inspire smart conversations and ignite a thirst for change in the Philippines, founder and CEO Maria Ressa said. The core staff – all veteran broadcast, print and web journalists – work with idealistic digital natives eager to report and find solutions to problems. It is the only media company in the Philippines owned solely by journalists. Think of it as crowdsourced journalism with a social purpose. “We are web artists, designers, publishers and professionals combining the best of broadcasting and information technology processes,” Ressa said.

Information is the raw material of journalism. Sites like Rappler and the concept of crowdsourcing allow for the sharing and spread of information via the Internet, mobile phones and social media. This sharing of information gives people tools to understand and learn from the reality they live with.

In this sense, journalism and crowdsourcing are democratising agents. It is also why one of the main indicators of democracy in any nation is the independence of the media. Historically, the Philippines has had a tradition of democracy and free media. As Ressa noted during an interview with the author, "Each of us finds our meaning and creates our interpretations, personal myths and world views from the information we consume – all to try to make sense of our daily lives." In other words, the quality of the information we receive via the media is very important for many aspects of our lives, and for a functioning democracy.

At the time of Rappler's launch at the start of 2012, Ressa gave an interview to TheNewMedia.com blog. She said she believed the business models of journalism – both in practice and in terms of business methods – were outdated because of digital technologies. "It's like we're living through a time of cataclysmic change, but the 'professionals' were too busy sticking to what we knew to actually feel the ground shifting beneath our feet. What would happen if we imagined news for the Internet and mobile, incorporating a bed of social media? How would journalism change – in processes and philosophy? Then add another idea: crowdsourcing. For the first time in our history, journalists can actually do more than just tell stories. We can act by giving direction to hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of small actions for change." Rappler represents the intersection of three worlds: professional journalism, the wisdom of the crowd and digital media technologies, especially the mobile phone.

Ressa clearly has applied lessons she learned in her earlier careers to this new project. Her work with the public is described in the second volume of *Asia's Media Innovators* published in 2010. During an interview with the author in Manila in June 2010 for the previous volume, Ressa cited the book *The Wisdom of Crowds* by James Surowiecki as one of her inspirations. "Large groups of people are smarter than an elite few, no matter how brilliant [the latter] – better at solving problems, fostering innovation, coming to wise decisions." Four criteria were required for this process: The first was diversity of opinion – each person should have private and personal information; the second was independence – people's opinions should not be determined by the opinion of those around them; the third was decentralisation – where people were able to specialise and draw on local knowledge; and the fourth was aggregation – where various mechanisms existed for turning private judgments into a collective

decision. One could argue that the democratic nature of Philippines society satisfies the first three of these criteria, and Rappler provides the aggregation. Ressa's experiences working with the crowd in her earlier career are described later in this chapter.

Several things made Rappler unique, Ressa said. One was the site's Mood Meter, which tracks the emotions that news stories elicit from the audience. Readers can click on the emotion that any given Rappler story makes them feel. The options are happy, sad, angry, don't care, inspired, afraid, amused, or annoyed. Rappler developed the mood categories with the help of a group of psychologists, Ressa told the Nieman Foundation. "The idea behind the Mood Meter is actually getting people to crowdsource the mood for the day," Ressa said. "If you actually go through the exercise of identifying how you feel, you're more prone to be rational. ... That's really the rationale, aside from the fact that it's cool."

Ressa has been thinking about the overlap between emotions and social connections for a long time. She realised how fast emotions spread in the virtual world, noting examples from 2011 such as the Arab spring, the riots in London and the Occupy Wall Street movement. This is the subject of a book she wrote called *10 Days, 10 Years: From Bin Laden to Facebook*, which was published in the Philippines on 12 October 2012 – the tenth anniversary of the Bali bombings. The book was later published internationally in March 2013, and is available in hardcover and e-book on Amazon.

Ressa's book tells the story of the 10 days one of her reporting teams at TV network ABS-CBN spent in captivity at the hands of the Abu Sayyaf group in the jungles of Sulu in June 2008. The team consisted of reporter Ces Drilon, her cameraman Jimmy Encarnacion and his assistant Angelo Valderrama. Ressa creates the narrative of the kidnapping against the backdrop of the global spread of terrorism and its shift to a new battleground: the Internet and social media. Ressa said that in the book, readers would see the next phase of terrorism after authorities worldwide successfully broke down old terror groups. The battle now shifts to cyberspace, she said. "The people they recruited are still there and they continue to grow in much more sporadic ways. Some people call them lone sharks, lone wolves. They're not lone wolves if you follow social network theory." She cited the case of the son of a Jemaah Islamiyah leader who put up a website and a Facebook page with more than 54,000 followers. "When

you have 54,000 followers, ComScore says your reach is up to 86 per cent more than the number of Facebook likes you have so that reach goes to millions. And now, that JI leader's son who has the same radical ideology can sit in his room and reach millions of people. That is the danger ahead."

This book follows Ressa's first book, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, published in December 2003. In the second book Ressa wrote: "September 11, 2011, marked the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Four months earlier, U.S. President Barack Obama sent navy seals in a covert operation and killed Osama bin Laden. I couldn't help but juxtapose our ten days of hell with bin Laden's ten-year reign of terror. October 12, 2012, marks ten years since the Bali bombings, Southeast Asia's 9/11. 10 days, 10 years. That was how this book's title began, because I wanted to take counterterrorism ideas and frame them in a narrative that would show their real world implications. This is how bin Laden affected my world.

Ressa noted that research had shown that 80 per cent of the way people make decisions was determined by what they felt. "At the same time, neuroscientists say that the simple act of labelling our emotions increases our ability to reason. That's why I believe the Mood Meter can mitigate the spread of emotions through social networks online and offline. It's a hearts and minds approach to news!" Ressa said brain scans showed that the Internet and social media were stimulating people's emotions and rewiring their brains. "Globally, emotions are spreading quickly through large swathes of societies with both positive and negative effects. Social media helped spread courage and hope to challenge dictators during the Arab Spring, but it was also used to plan riots in London." Ressa said she hoped Rappler's "hearts and minds approach" would encourage greater self-awareness among Filipinos and lead to greater transparency and responsibility. "Only then can we avoid some of the pitfalls of our brave, new world as we build the future together. Tomorrow begins today."

Rappler is the only news service in the Philippines owned and operated by journalists. They have an established track record with crowdsourcing and social media. "Among our team are the creators of the citizen journalism programmes of the top two television networks in the country."

Ressa expects Rappler to make money through digital advertising because of trends in technology uptake in her country. Internet penetration was still low compared with Europe, but mobile phones were very popular.

More than half of all new Internet connections were via the mobile phone as of mid 2013. "So the Philippines will move beyond computer access to mobile phone access when people go online. Filipinos have always been early adaptors of new technologies. In the past the Philippines has been labelled the "texting capital of the world" because of the volume of SMS. Typically 2 million SMS were sent each day in 2013.

The same thing is happening with social networking. As of mid 2013, the Philippines represented the largest Facebook market in the world, according to ComScore. About 30 million Filipinos were on Facebook compared with about 15 million television households. At the same time it was ranked in the top 10 in the world on Twitter. "There's no doubt in my mind that the Philippines will follow the trend in the West – meaning more people (and advertising) will move away from television and go online. Today, online spending is much less than print and broadcast media, but studies have already shown they prompt engagement and action." More than 80 per cent of Filipinos used the Internet daily – this included places like Internet cafes – for an average of 6.8 hours a day compared with 60 per cent of the population who watched television, for about 3.7 hours a day, Ressa said. She suggested these numbers offered opportunities for web sites that could offer solutions to social problems, at the same time as building a sustainable commercial venture.

Rappler grew quickly after its launch. In its first six months it received almost 3 million page views a month. To put those numbers into perspective, it took the websites of the main daily newspapers in the Philippines several years to reach this level of traffic. Almost eighteen months after its launch, Rappler's audience was soaring. "We had an excellent May 2013, hitting more than 19 million page views, mainly because of the Philippines elections," Ressa said. "We've also more than doubled our first year revenue this May." Most traffic came through social networking channels.

Ressa believes technology lets Rappler work in new ways to create connected communities and to tap "the wisdom of crowds". Ethics was an important point of discussion. At the time of the launch her staff ran workshops with people around the country. "In the age when everyone is a reporter, it's good to discuss standards, responsibilities and ethics. Our journalists are running workshops and engaging the public in ways we have rarely done before." In fact, Ressa used her previous experience working with audiences and applied those lessons at Rappler.

Earlier experiences with crowdsourcing

Ressa was senior vice president for news and current affairs at ABS-CBN, the largest network in the Philippines. "This network reaches every Filipino around the world ... that is our boast," she chuckled during an interview in her office in Quezon City. The formal interview took place on 10 June 2010 in Manila, after initial research two days earlier. Ressa took up her position at the start of 2005, after 18 years with CNN, mostly recently as bureau chief in Jakarta.

In 2007 ABS-CBN ventured into this area. It involved audiences with their mobile phones in what Ressa calls the merging of the mass base of traditional media with the grassroots and participatory nature of new media. She conceived and launched the program *Boto Mo, Ipatrol Mo* (BMPM), which translates as "patrol your vote". "Patrollers", as they came to be known, contributed story tips and information in a range of ways. ABS-CBN merged the traditional power of broadcast media and cable television with the Internet and especially mobile phones, to create the world's first example of a media company's campaign to get citizens to work together to "patrol" their votes and push for clean elections.

The message was simple, Ressa said: "Get the people to care and take action. If you see something wrong or good, tell us. If you see someone trying to buy votes, snap a picture on your cell phone and send it to us. If you see a town mayor using public vehicles for his campaign, shoot a video with your cell phone and send it to us. If you see violence, tell us about it, and after a verification process, we will put it to air." Ressa said that campaign was about empowerment: "We wanted to send the message that vigilance was important, that should not become part of the problem but provide the solution – and that if you want a better future, you are not alone."

To build the audience for BMPM, Ressa and her team ran a series of all-day, on-air and multi-platform workshops and registration drives. These included youth activities, summits, concerts, gatherings and workshops. The team also gave more than 50 lectures and talks nationwide. Before each BMPM workshop, the network publicised the events and ran stories about them in news bulletins. "People registered to vote in their area and registered to be a Boto Patroller. We had a minimum of 1,000 people [attend the workshops] every month. It was exhilarating. We saw a thirst for hope. They were looking for something to do." At these events Ressa and three

of her senior news managers talked about journalism. “We talked about what we do and why we do what we do.” They also discussed ABS-CBN’s standards and ethics manual.

“Those workshops were great for getting a sense of where people were and what they wanted.” Three quarters of the population is aged between 5-40. “It is an extremely young population.” Ressa said journalists were not educators, but given that at the time 90 per cent of the population of the Philippines got their information from television news, it was inevitable that news would have an “advocacy” role. Western journalists did not get involved, she said. But it was different in the Philippines. “Journalists are always first responders in any disaster. So what do we do?” ABS-CBN set up a public service arm for when disasters strike. “We deploy our public service team and we deploy our journalists at the same time. They go together. I want our team to report, but they cannot report if no one is helping in a disaster. We are an activist news organisation and I have embraced it [that concept].”

In 2008, the International Association of Business Communications (IABC) gave ABS-CBN its Gold Quill award for the Boto Mo, Ipatrol Mo campaign. The IABC called BMPM an effective campaign that was well executed despite having only a “modest budget”. It made “thoughtful use” of strategic partners – “all based on a bold, honourable mission”. The 2007 campaign was also successful in terms of revenue: profits from that year’s election were almost four times higher than in the 2004 presidential election. In terms of brand awareness, the campaign was “priceless,” Ressa said.

The “patroller” campaign also deliberately set out to educate viewers and audiences about freedom of expression and freedom of information. “Public education about journalism is not great [in the Philippines]. We realised we have to talk about these kinds of things and explain them to our viewers.” Ressa admitted it was difficult to measure the impact of the workshops. Audiences would always come to television news because of the quality of the storytelling. Ressa said it took time to get audiences to contribute video, because culturally it was not something that Filipinos did, and data charges were expensive. Patrollers sent videos to the station’s web site, and posted it on YouTube. ABS-CBN established a YouTube site. “We embraced the stuff [technologies] already available to citizens: Gmail, YouTube and Facebook. We used other people’s servers,” she chuckled.

In May 2013, analyst Terrence Lee noted on his SGE Insights blog in Singapore the success of Rappler: “Asia is not exactly the first place that comes to mind when you think about cutting edge journalism, especially when it comes to the convergence of technology, open data and media. For that, we typically look to the United States, where the *New York Times* unveiled Snow Fall (a groundbreaking multimedia journalism feature) or where Forbes did the unprecedented by opening up its platform to outside contributors, and where media startups like Circa, Medium and Storify are trying to reinvent how content is created, distributed and published. But if we look closely enough, media innovation is indeed happening right under our noses in Asia.” He was writing about Rappler.com

Crowdsourced investigative journalism in the Philippines

Crowdsourced journalism has had a long and progressive history in the Philippines. In 2009, Knight International journalism fellow Alex Tizon worked with the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism to start Suriin Ang Kahirapan, which translates as an “audit of poverty”. It was a crowdsourced project that allowed a team of investigative journalists to work with citizens in the country’s poorest regions in the lead-up to the country’s 2010 national elections. The project monitored the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes and provided reports to be published by the centre and national media, Tizon wrote on the web site of the International Centre for Journalism in Washington.

Tizon was a former national correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times* and a Filipino-American. He began his 12-month Knight International Journalism Fellowship in May of 2009. He wrote: “The project aims to engage the most disenfranchised Filipinos in the provinces and encourage them to become more involved in their own governance. Suriin also is designed to get a more accurate picture of the causes of rural poverty so that lawmakers in Manila will know how to address the problem. The poverty rate in these five provinces ranges from 52 per cent to 65 per cent. For these people – many living on less than \$2 a day – survival is a daily struggle.

“One of the Suriin project’s innovations is to use ‘crowdsourcing’ as the primary way to find out how poverty is affecting Filipinos in the provinces. In traditional journalism, reporters come up with story ideas and then gather information from various sources. Crowdsourcing refers

to the practice of encouraging stories to originate from average people,” Tizon wrote.

Staff from the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism went to five provinces to train volunteers to become citizen journalists. The volunteers’ tasks included monitoring government poverty programmes, gathering and organising information and recording events in their communities, and then supplying reports to the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism. “Rural Filipinos have long felt disconnected from and ignored by powerbrokers in Manila,” wrote Tizon. “When Suriin citizen journalists tell their stories, they’ll have the ... opportunity, maybe for the first time in their lives, to wield enormous power.” The Suriin project was made possible by a grant from the Philippines Australian Community Assistance Program.

The next chapter considers other examples of crowdsourcing in the Asian region, in China, Japan, India, the Philippines and Australia.

CHAPTER 4

Other Asian examples of crowdsourcing

More people in China access the Internet via their smartphone than from a desktop or laptop computer. Chinese Netizens spend almost 6.5 hours a day on the Internet. The so-called “millennials” represent the largest group of smartphone users. These “millennials” are people born between the mid 1980s and the late 1990s. About 92 per cent of Chinese aged 18 to 30 in 2013 owned smartphones in mid 2013, well above the global average of 67 per cent. Data from China’s National Bureau of Statistics showed China had about 270 million people aged 18-30.

A survey conducted by the *Financial Times* newspaper and the Spanish-based telecoms company Telefonica, published in June 2013, described the “millennials” as the “smartphone generation”. The survey said 95 per cent of all mobile phones sold in China by 2017 would be smartphones. It predicted this generation would ensure China became one of the world’s biggest smartphone markets. China was also the world’s largest manufacturer of inexpensive smartphones. The Yulong Computer Telecommunication Scientific Company, based in Shenzhen and China’s biggest domestic producer, was selling smartphones for about 1,000 RMB (about US\$ 163) in mid 2013.

Smartphone shipments in China were forecast to reach 460 million units by 2017, industry analyst IDC said in June 2013. The analysts predicted that operator subsidies and strong consumer demand for new phones would drive smartphone growth to create a market worth RMB 740.5 billion, or \$US 117.8 billion, by 2017. IDC’s report, the “2013 Q1 China Mobile Phone Quarterly Tracker”, found that 78 million smartphones were shipped in the first quarter of 2013, a huge 117 per cent growth compared with a year earlier. Total mobile phone shipments for the period were 97 million, a 15 per cent year-on-year increase. This meant that smartphones took a 79 per cent share of the Chinese mobile phone market during the first quarter of 2013.

Samsung remained the leading seller with a 19 per cent market share. Its decision to focus its marketing on the sub-\$200 category saw shipments of these devices increase by 47 per cent. Huawei, another large domestic mobile phone vendor, reported a significant increase in shipments during the first quarter of 2013. James Yan, senior analyst of IDC China, said 4G-enabled mobile phones would outnumber 3G by the end of 2017.

This means an increasing number of people will access the Internet via their smartphones, boosting the likelihood of participation in crowdsourcing because of the convenience of the handheld device. The 9 May 2013 cover story of *TIME* magazine noted the significant involvement of “millennials” in social media, noting that “...because of social media, millennials worldwide are more similar to one another than to older generations within their nations”.

An early example of social involvement in China is the way a group of volunteers translates every word of *The Economist* as soon as the news magazine appears each week. This has been happening since early 2008. The translations appear on a blog at <http://www.ecocn.org/>. A separate team publishes a collection of translations in a bi-weekly portable document format (pdf) known as Eco Weekly for members. These volunteers are taking some risks because at times Chinese authorities have objected to the content of the news magazine, and have been known to rip controversial articles about China out of some issues of *The Economist* before the magazine has hit the stands in that country. An entire issue was banned in 2002.

The Economist, based in London, has granted the Eco Team permission to translate because it is a non-profit organisation. The Eco Weekly is intended for members only, though other groups have pirated the content and syndicated it for commercial use on sites in China. The project is similar to the “scanslation” movement common in parts of Asia. Wikipedia says “scanslation” or “scanlation” involves unauthorised scanning, translation, editing and distribution of comics from a foreign language into the language of the distributors. The term is most often used for comics from Japan (manga), Korea (manhwa) and China (manhua). Scanlations are usually distributed free on the Internet.

This crowdsourcing of *The Economist* is believed to be the first example of a newspaper or magazine being scanslated. A Chinese fan translation of *TIME* magazine is also available in China. The Eco team consists of

about 200 Economist fans led by Shi Yi, an insurance broker. Up to 40 of the group work on each weekly issue, group member Andrew Baio said in Beijing. Volunteers choose which stories they will translate and a moderator keeps track of assignments. Each story is posted on the web after it is translated. Other volunteers suggest corrections in the comments section. A lead editor incorporates comments into the final version.

The Eco Team was originally founded in May 2006, under the name Eco China Forum. Shi Yi said this forum was funded entirely by donations from an annual funding drive. Members are encouraged to buy a subscription: "Like the forum name says, producing a Chinese version of *The Economist* is our goal. Because we are young, we have the fervour, the enthusiasm, the passion. Because we are amateurs, we'll double our efforts to do our best," Shi Yi wrote on the web site.

Here is a Google translation of part of the site's "about us" section, originally in Chinese: "*The Economist* Chinese network is a high quality translation community ... because it is a volunteer translator, translators receive no payments" The group has expanded into a range of other crowdsourced translation services, based on the areas of expertise of its members such as finance, law, literature and business. The Eco team has also translated and published a range of business books including the autobiography of Warren Buffett and a biography of Karl Rove, the political advisor to former president George W Bush.

The "human cloud"

Work conducted by groups like Eco Team in China is often described using the term "human cloud". Much of the material for this section of the chapter is based on research by academics Erran Carmel from American University and Tim Olsen of Arizona State University, in collaboration with Chaoqing Hou of Ernst & Young. All are based in the United States. The academics coined the term "human cloud" (abbreviated as HC) rather than the more common phrase crowdsourcing because they believe it is more descriptive. They consider the term crowdsourcing "problematic, limiting and misleading". The trio focused on the subset of HC that involves payment rather than the voluntary form found on web sites like Wikipedia where people are not paid. Their paper, entitled "The Human Cloud in China: An early inquiry and analysis", appeared in December 2012. A link to the paper is provided in the final chapter on resources about crowdsourcing.

That paper by Carmel, Olsen and Chaoqing is discussed in detail in the introduction of this book. In summary, the authors outline three main crowdsourcing or HC models:

- * Tender: Buyer picks seller before project begins, after range of sellers tender for the project. Buyer pays seller on completion of the project.
- * Competition: Sellers prepare some/all the work announced on the web and compete with other sellers. Buyer chooses the best work. Buyer pays the winner and might pay other sellers as well.
- * Engagement: Buyer hires multiple sellers (individuals), often by the hour, to perform work. The crowdsourcing platform manages the project, such as organising contracts and arranging human resources issues.

China is different from the rest of the world in the way it conducts crowdsourcing or HC. Typically, the process involves people from around the world. But in China almost all participants come from within that country because of language barriers. And Chinese platforms mainly use the competition model compared with a focus on the tender model in America, Europe and parts of Asia. "American platforms have a much broader range of tasks. The Chinese websites usually contain projects that are more related to daily life," the academics wrote. In China all information is public whereas in America only the buyer knows the sellers' information.

China's two major HC platforms are Zhubajie and epweike. Each has millions of workers. Indeed, as of mid 2013, Zhubajie claimed 8 million sellers, making it the largest Internet-based company in the world. At Zhubajie, the academics wrote, the core business model is competition. Before submitting tasks, buyers decide how many sellers will be paid. "Then the sellers are required to complete the entire task. After the bid is selected and the deal is complete, the website takes 20 per cent commission from the sellers." Venture capitalists have invested in Zhubajie, and as of 2012 it had an English language website, Witmart.com, based in Houston, Texas. This site allows users in English-speaking countries to post work that can

be performed by qualified workers in China. As of mid 2013, Witmart had 7 million freelancers.

The second largest Chinese crowdsourcing or HC platform is called epweike. To compete against Zhubajie, it removed commissions and chose to charge a membership fee to sellers. Annual fees range from 2,000 RMB to 20,000 RMB. It uses the tender model instead of competition plus it has a "direct hire" option that lets buyers hire a seller without going through the competition process. This makes sense because sellers are reluctant to put the energy and effort into competing for large tasks because of the possibility of not getting paid. With the "direct hire" option, the academics wrote, "buyers are able to find a single seller to commit to the project".

Also in China, entrepreneur He Feng has set up a crowdfunding site called DemoHour that helps people raise money for creative projects in increments of 100 RMB. DemoHour.com is based in Beijing and launched in 2011. Some people describe it as China's version of Kickstarter in the United States, founded in 2009 and recognised as the world's largest crowdfunding platform. Each creator sets the project's funding objective, which must be at least 1,000 RMB (or about \$US 160), and establishes a deadline of between 15 and 60 days. If the project reaches its goal DemoHour charges 10 per cent of the collected moneys as commission and sends the rest to the creator. If the goal is not achieved, DemoHour waives any fees and returns all moneys to the supporters.

In August 2012, a total of 476 people contributed more than 10,000 RMB – or about \$US 1,630 – to create a gold medal for Chen Yibing. Chen was the Chinese Olympic gymnast who received the silver medal at the London Olympics after a controversial scoring decision that Chinese media said was unfair.

He Feng told *China Daily* that not enough creativity was coming out of China, and DemoHour was his attempt to improve that situation. "It takes a long time to win investment from venture capitalists," He Feng said. "And often it involves compromises to cater for the investors' demands. But people do not regard it as risk to invest an average of 100 RMB in an interesting idea. At the same time the creator is guaranteed 100 per cent of the project's intellectual property along with his first batch of customers."

Another example of crowdfunding was a project by Jia Yuhao in Tibet to collect second-hand items to decorate the public living room of his youth hostel in the capital, Lhasa. Jia set a goal of 1,000 RMB on DemoHour, but

received 146,400 RMB from 2,595 contributors. More than 400 of those supporters have visited the hostel in Lhasa.

Huffington Post launches in Japan

The Huffington Post has been a phenomenal success in the United States, with a unique formula for crowdsourcing content. The site gets more than one million comments each month. Within a couple of years after its launch in May 2009, the Huffington Post had as much traffic as the website of the *New York Times*. But while *The Times* had more than 1,000 editorial staff, the Huffington Post had perhaps 50. The bulk of the content comes from the audience. The business model is compelling: It is obvious that the salary bill for the Huffington Post is much lower than that for the *New York Times* because Huffington Post contributors are not paid, whereas the annual budget for editorial content at the newspaper is estimated to be at least \$US 250 million a year.

The Huffington Post – often abbreviated as HuffPost or HuffPo – is an online news aggregator and blog founded by Arianna Huffington, Andrew Breitbart, Kenneth Lerer and Jonah Peretti. The site mainly covers issues related to politics, business, entertainment, environment, technology, media, lifestyle, culture, comedy, health and women’s interests. Such was its success that in February 2011, less than two years after its launch, AOL bought the site for \$US 315 million. A year later The Huffington Post became the first commercially run digital media company in the United States to win a Pulitzer Prize. By July 2012, HuffPost was ranked number one in a list of the 15 most popular political sites in the United States.

In 2011, a group of about 9,000 contributors filed a court case claiming a third of the \$US 315 million AOL paid for the site, asserting that they should be compensated for their services. Judge John Koeltl in the United States District Court in New York dismissed the case, arguing that the contributors had volunteered their services, and their compensation was being published and seeing their name in print. Judge Koeltl said no one had “forced” the bloggers to provide their work. “The principles of equity and good conscience do not justify giving the plaintiffs a piece of the purchase price when they never expected to be paid, repeatedly agreed to the same bargain, and went into the arrangement with eyes wide open,” the judge wrote.

In recent years HuffPost has expanded, launching editions in the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Spain and Italy. A German edition was scheduled for late 2013. HuffPost launched in Japan on 6 May 2013, in partnership with the Japanese newspaper company Asahi Shimbun. This was HuffPost's first site outside Europe and North America. At the time, editor-in-chief Arianna Huffington wrote "when it comes to media, Japan presents unique challenges and opportunities". Mobile phones were the major factor because the Japanese were "voracious users of social media and social-networking sites — not only Facebook and Twitter, but [on] smartphone [social messaging] services like Line, Comm and Gree".

In a blog post Arianna Huffington wrote that launching in Japan was "living proof of the way twenty-first century media have transcended once-formidable barriers of geography, language, and culture". Japan presented unique opportunities, Huffington wrote. She quoted CEO Jimmy Maymann: "In most markets, around 20-25 per cent of our audience is coming from mobile, but in Japan that will be so different. Mobile Internet in Japan is 'Internet'."

HuffPost Japan's editor-in-chief is Shigeki Matsuura. He worked for several IT and media companies, including Conde Nast Publications Japan, where he helped launch the Japanese edition of *Wired*. He also managed Gree News, part of the mobile and gaming company Gree, growing the site financially and in terms of traffic. In his launch-day blog post he wrote: "The Huffington Post Japan hopes to be the place where we have an honest conversation about the future of Japan, and our editors will work to bring your voices and ideas onto our pages to achieve this."

Crowdsourced hybrid media in India

In India, Citizen Journalist (Digital) is a user-generated content portal that is part of the Network18 media group in India. Citizen Journalist (Digital) is the group's first crowdsourced news portal, and as of mid 2013 it was the only initiative of its kind by a major Indian newsroom. The site pairs with a television programme, Citizen Journalist, that airs on CNN-IBN.

Anika Gupta is product manager for Citizen Journalist (Digital). She said the audience contributed content either online through the ibncj.com website or through the company's mobile phone apps. "Both allow users to submit video, photographs and text. Contributors also tweet and post updates on the company's Facebook page."

In terms of the kind of content that people provided, Gupta said the biggest stream consisted of activist content: "People looking for assistance with a cause, snapping a picture of an injustice, or snapping pix of local government inefficiency such as police misbehaviour, downed electrical wires, [or] garbage dumped on streets." Other forms of regular user-generated content – a "stream we're trying to grow" – consisted of photographs of pets, vacations, family recipes, great moments. "Anything that people want to share."

The site gets between five and ten submissions a day directly via the portal, plus several more via various other channels such as Facebook. People have been contributing to the site since it launched in 2007. They are not paid. "We never pay, although we've considered doing non-cash prizes," Gupta said. "Contests are something we're very much looking to explore, as people respond well to them. Also, we feature some of the best web content on our CJ TV show every week. For a lot of people, getting on TV is also a big motivation."

Gupta said because the web site was linked to a television show, it was all intended to be part of a larger property built around citizen journalism. "We're lucky because we're backed by one of India's biggest media conglomerates, the Network18 group. We don't usually declare separate results for individual web properties." The web site has two employees, but also receives content and support from the five people on the CJ TV reporting team.

The ethos of the web site was to create a place where users and viewers could share stories that mattered to them, and also "inform and improve our editorial process", Gupta said. "User generated content is the future of journalism, in India as elsewhere. Consider a breaking news situation: it is simply impossible to send a reporter and camera crew to a location faster than a citizen at that site will be able to snap a picture and upload it to Twitter. So finding a way to bring our users into the stories is essential if we want to keep serving accurate, timely content to people nationwide."

Gupta said free or low-cost content was not the primary advantage of using stories or images from the audience, although many of the site's users submitted excellent content. "We still produce our content ourselves, for the most part, and will continue to do so. Even when we take stories forward from our site onto our TV show, for example, we always send a reporter to produce a professional package. That process is unlikely to

change, for a lot of reasons. But what it does do is allow users to relate to the news, to inform it, and to gather somewhere. Whenever our users are engaged with one of our online properties, that's the advantage."

Gupta noted that for a news organisation using contributed content, the biggest struggle was fact-checking and verification, and trying to figure out how much bias could reasonably be allowed. "Our users can be very opinionated, but we as a news organisation also have to be objective. So that's the main challenge."

The company has offered some training to contributors. "We have done some basic stuff in the past, but we're planning to step this up with a series of trainings in the future. We're looking at training in photography."

Also in India, Paroma Mukherjee was given the role of curating Instagram photographs for a newspaper called the *Mumbai Mirror* that started from mid June 2013. "We are aiming at this to be a fortnightly column. It will be India's first print space for Instagram so I am quite excited about it," she said via email. Instagram is a social-media focused photograph sharing service that lets users take pictures, apply digital filters and share the images on a variety of social networking services such as Twitter and Facebook. Instagram launched in October 2010 and had more than 100 million active users by April 2013. That month Facebook purchased Instagram for about US\$ 1,000 million, though it said Instagram would continue to be independently managed.

Sun.Star Network in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the Sun.Star Network Exchange in Cebu City, abbreviated as Sunnex, is breaking new ground in the area of crowdsourced journalism. The audience contributes content primarily via email and social media like Facebook and Twitter, because these are the most convenient delivery mechanisms.

Laureen Jean Mondonedo is the site's content editor. "We receive contributions through our Twitter account @sunstaronline using the hashtag #tellittosunstar, and through the Sun.Star Philippine News Facebook page," she noted.

The Sun.Star website empowers Philippine communities by providing news and information from the provinces to a national and global audience. The Sun.Star brand of journalism on the Internet means the website is a reliable source of local news in a world of excess information online, said

Nini Cabaero, editor-in-chief of the Sun.Star website at www.sunstar.com.ph.

Armie Garde, assistant content editor, said: "The Sun.Star website at www.sunstar.com.ph has a section called Tell it to Sun.Star at <http://specials.sunstar.com.ph/tellitotosunstar/>, where we publish contributions from concerned citizens. Most of the materials submitted are photographs and videos of problems in their [people's] communities like flooding, drainage and uncollected garbage, among others. We verify the materials by contacting the contributor, and we also call the attention of the local government units or offices involved."

Examples of photos or videos related to complaints or problems in the community can be found at <http://specials.sunstar.com.ph/tellitotosunstar/>.

The news organisation has a Facebook group called Sun.Star Summer Vacation at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sunstar.vacation11/?ref=ts&fref=ts>, where members share photographs or videos of their summer holidays. This social media campaign started in 2010. At the end of each summer, staff at Sun.Star choose the winning photographs from among the entries submitted and these are published in the Flip section of the web site at <http://specials.sunstar.com.ph/flip> and in the Sun.Star Weekend of the newspaper. Contributors get a chance to win Sun.Star commemorative items. Most contributed photographs and videos are sent via social media – mainly via Facebook and Twitter, Mondonado said. "But there are still others who contribute through email. The majority of recent submissions came through social media."

Contributions to Summer Vacation and Tell it to Sun.Star have been increasing every year since 2010, when both online campaigns started. "We don't pay contributors to Tell it to Sun.Star, but for Summer Vacation we give commemorative Sun.Star items to those who submitted the winning photographs or entries," Garde said. She handles the social media campaign. Contributors to the Summer Vacation campaign reached 1,003 by the end of May 2013. Offerings consisted mostly of lifestyle and travel photographs. Examples can be found at <https://picasaweb.google.com/101746679067551166668/SunStarSummerVacation2013YourCoolSummerExperienceYear3>.

Stories and images published on the website are sometimes forwarded to the Sun.Star's network of community newspapers such as Sun.Star Cebu, Sun.Star Davao, and Sun.Star Bacolod. "Contributed articles that

interest Davao, for example, are carried by the Sun.Star Davao newspaper," Cabaero said.

The Sun.Star Cebu website (www.sunstar.com.ph) launched in October 1996, making it the first Philippine community newspaper to go online. On 10 May 2000, the website at the same URL was converted into the Sun.Star network, and it became the Internet home to the only network of community newspapers in the Philippines. It pools news and information from Sun.Star newspapers and networks in 12 major cities around the country.

The business model started primarily with advertising on the web. "We have expanded to subscriptions [e-paper] and third-party advertising and content discovery networks (Google AdSense, Outbrain). We are also into sponsored content or services like our live streaming of festivals," Cabaero said. Asked why the news organisation had chosen to embrace the audience, Cabaero answered simply: "We have to be where the audience is in order to remain relevant."

She believes contributed content can be a good measure of the audience's thoughts and sentiments because the information comes from the grassroots and is provided without filters. The main disadvantages were the need to verify the information provided by contributors or citizen journalists as much as possible, and the fact contributions were not regular, but tended to depend on issues or events because people reacted to events that had an impact on their lives. "We have no control over the work and time of contributors so that suggestions on how to move the story may not be followed."

Crowdfunded journalism set to launch

A platform for independent media to be known as IndieVoices was scheduled to launch in July 2013, but did not exist much beyond a web site and a blog (<http://www.indievoic.es>) as this book was going to press. The crowdfunded platform announced it would initiate dramatic innovation in the way independent media was funded and would enable the creation of new media ownership models. The web site proclaimed: "We believe that IndieVoices will initiate dramatic innovation in the way independent media is funded and will make possible the creation of new media ownership models. By inviting you to become a member of the IndieVoices community, we are not selling you anything except the prospect of a richly

informed citizenry. We invite you to join our ranks and help us initiate and launch new methods of funding, creating, and owning media.” Two forms of investment were scheduled to be available at the time of the July launch: Contributions and no-interest loans. The site said IndieVoices planned to “expand investment options” before the end of the 2013 calendar year to include low-interest loans and equity investments.

Crowdsourced radio in Australia

Ginger Gorman is the presenter of a crowdsourced radio programme called The Emporium on ABC Local Radio in Australia’s capital, Canberra. The Emporium runs for two hours every Sunday morning on local radio. The best half hour of the programme is later re-versioned for a programme on national digital radio, broadcast on Saturday nights. Each week Gorman and her colleagues chose a topic – perhaps one word such as “fire” or “time” or maybe a concept such as “lost and found” or “the senses”. They then challenged themselves with the question: Where is the most unlikely place we can take our listeners?

Crowdsourcing was one of The Emporium’s lynchpins from the outset. Gorman said the main reasons were lack of resources and a desire for more creative approaches to making programmes: “The first [reason] was to share in the collective imagination and brain. We found our audiences to be extremely generous. They freely shared ideas and contacts with us and loved the chance to help create the show. At times this was thrilling; a brilliant idea from a Facebook friend or Twitter follower could set us on a new and unexplored path. The rich and diverse show we were able to create was a product of true community collaboration.

“With only eight paid production hours dedicated to the show each week, we were extremely stretched for resources and time. That’s a difficult quandary to have when you are trying to make a show that is high quality, thoughtful and unique. Crowdsourcing solved a big problem for us. It was a fast and exciting way to find fresh stories and talent. It led us away from oft-quoted commentators on any given topic, and instead provided personal and powerful stories.

“For example, when we did several shows on “the senses”, I hit social media to ask if anyone had stories to share. Via Facebook, I found two incredible women with different kinds of synesthesia (a neurological

condition in which the senses are involuntarily joined). The description of how Kelly hears the name “Peter” and always tastes “pumpkin” in her mouth is one I’ll never forget. When numerous spoken words trigger tastes, you can only start imagine the shape of Kelly’s world. Crowdsourcing also led us to another man who didn’t have a sense of smell at all. This had put his life at risk several times. At one stage he’d eaten rotten meat and another time he’d remained in his apartment when there was a terrible gas leak.”

Gorman said journalists too often hunted as a pack: “One reporter writes a story on a specific topic, others follow. Media attention on a topic begets more media attention on that topic. Crowdsourcing allowed us to completely avoid this feedback loop. We didn’t start each week by looking in the paper or watching the TV. We went straight to social media. Right from the outset, my producer and I designed the show to be a deeply creative and experimental space. Although resources were tight, we aimed high. We hoped to make a programme that didn’t exist anywhere else on the ABC. The show was well received by its audience and within the organisation.”

Gorman said sometimes critics portrayed social media as a sea of inconsequence, but she believed this represented a profound misunderstanding of the platform. “Just like any physical community, there is plenty of inane chatter on Twitter and Facebook. But if you want to be part of it, there’s also a deeper conversation occurring. If you treat social media as a true community and genuinely take part in the conversation, it can yield great rewards.”

How did Gorman and her colleagues use social media? “The main way we employed social media to crowdsource for The Emporium was to frequently ask open-ended questions on Twitter and Facebook. The responses were constantly astounding. For example, I tweeted: What interesting stories have you got to share about “earth”? Be as creative as you like! #help #earth #radio. @freshchilli replied: I’d love to hear from someone who was struck by lightning (it’s all about being earthed). #earth #radio

Gorman said that this was an unusual idea her staff might never have thought about. “My producer tracked down a man who was nearly killed after being struck by lightning. The experience changed his life and the story made for a riveting on-air interview.”

She concluded: “The work we did on The Emporium is part of a significant shift from the traditional style of journalism to a new style. In the traditional style, reporters broadcast or publish what they think you should know about. In the new style, it’s all about collaboration. You are part of the editorial process. You get to decide what the ‘story’ actually is and who should be telling you that story. While the method of content collection we employed on The Emporium was exciting, I believe it’s just the beginning. There’s huge, unexplored potential in crowdsourcing for radio and other media. Arguably, crowdsourcing via social media is a natural fit for ABC Local Radio because it’s simply an Internet version of traditional talkback, which is already a mainstay of local radio’s format.”

Let us hope that crowdsourcing and innovation become part of the media landscape of the future. The next chapter considers key issues that all media companies must face, such as verification and accuracy, if they plan to use content from the audience.

CHAPTER 5

Key issues related to crowdsourcing

In her 2012 book *Journalism at the Crossroads*, Australian academic Dr Margaret Simons suggested that a partnership between journalists and the audience offered hope for the future of journalism. But she emphasised that user-generated content or crowdsourcing was not enough. “Let me make it clear that I am not saying that citizen journalism is enough, or that it can or should eliminate professional journalism.”

Members of the audience would contribute commentaries for free for the pleasure of expressing themselves, and people would also report about things in which they had a direct interest. But that was not enough, because journalism was more than that. She said that a great deal of journalism “is simply hard and dirty work, not glamorous or exciting to perform”. Journalism was about checking and re-checking and confirming. Much of what journalists did was “hard and time-consuming work” that needed to be performed by professional journalists “because nobody would do it if they were not paid”.

In their book *The Elements of Journalism*, published in 2001, Tom Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach listed 10 fundamental elements that they considered the principles or essence of journalism. The fourth described journalism as a “discipline of verification”. Their latest book - *Blur: How to know what's true in the age of information overload* - outlines the skills that modern media consumers must have, to be able to make sense of the fire hose of information available in the current media universe. “The real gap in the twenty-first century is not between those who have access to the Internet and those who don't; it's between those who have skills to navigate the information, and those who are overwhelmed by it.” The authors suggest that traditional values – what they label the journalism of verification – needs to be learned by media consumers, as well as practised by journalists. This is the reason that in October 2010, Wikileaks sent

almost 400,000 documents to *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*, rather than simply publishing the documents on the web. These major newspapers had the journalistic resources to check and verify the documents – something that was not possible online.

These examples introduce us to the issue of verification, and the importance of checking the accuracy of the content that comes from the audience.

Verification of what the audience delivers

On 27 May 2013, the BBC published a photograph on the front page of its main online site under the headline “Syria massacre in Houla condemned as outrage grows”. The image showed a young Iraqi child jumping over dozens of white body bags containing skeletons found in the desert south of Baghdad. The caption said the photograph was provided by an activist group and could not be independently verified, but noted it was “believed to show the bodies of children in Houla awaiting burial”. But the photograph was actually taken a decade earlier.

The BBC removed the image from its online site about 90 minutes after the error was discovered. But the damage to its credibility had been done. Numerous media outlets condemned the BBC. *The Daily Telegraph* interviewed the person who took the photograph, Marco di Lauro, who later said he was “astonished at the failure of the corporation to check their sources”.

This incident represents an example of one of the biggest issues related to contributions from the audience. When using contributed content, how do we know the information or image is accurate or true? What structures can a news organisation establish to verify the accuracy of that information or those images or video? Even when those structures are put in place, it is sometimes difficult or even impossible to thwart individuals or groups determined to hoax media companies.

At the time of the alleged Syria massacre, a BBC spokesman said the site used the photograph with a clear disclaimer saying it could not be independently verified. “Efforts were made overnight to track down the original source of the image and when it was established the picture was inaccurate we removed it immediately.” Responsible news organisations will act quickly to remove articles and images when they know the content they publish is wrong. But more important is the establishment of

structures to deal with the vast flow of information generated by content from the audience.

The BBC established a user-generated content “hub” in 2005. Their job initially was to sift through unsolicited contributions, especially in the wake of the 7 July 2005 bombings in London, when thousands of citizens emailed photographs and videos of the carnage. Since to the arrival of social networking sites, many individuals tend to distribute content themselves through Twitter, YouTube and Facebook – or the equivalents of these sites in countries where Facebook and the like are blocked, such as Weibo in China. The BBC noticed that by 2012, the number of contributions declined to about 3,000 a day from about double that number a few years earlier.

The user-generated content hub continues to monitor the stream of images and stories the BBC receives. How do members of the hub confirm the accuracy of contributed material? The golden rule, wrote David Turner in an article in the Summer 2012 edition of Nieman Reports, was to telephone the people who supplied suspect material. “Even the process of setting up the conversation can speak volumes about the source’s credibility: unless sources are activists living in a dictatorship who must remain anonymous to protect their lives, people who are genuine witnesses to events are usually eager to talk. Anyone who has taken photos or video needs to be contacted in any case to request their permission, as the copyright holder, to use it.”

Here are the principles Turner outlined in one of his Nieman Reports (details of the full article are in the final chapter):

“Try to talk to the original source of the material. You will quickly form an instinctive feeling about whether the person is telling the truth. One caveat: It may not be possible or even desirable to talk to an activist whose life will be in danger if they are identified.

“If material seems too good to be true, be skeptical – but keep an open mind. The famous shot of a woman jumping out of a burning building during last summer’s London riots [in August 2011], neatly silhouetted against a raging inferno, initially aroused suspicions. However, the Hub verified it.”

“Try to determine where the material first appeared online. It could give clues about the identity and motives of the person who posted it.”

“Consult specialists. The BBC Monitoring Service can advise on accents. Use expert local knowledge of towns to advise whether images and videos depict the purported place.”

“See what other verification experts are saying about an item on Twitter. They may have useful information or ideas.”

One useful tool for verification is the TweetDeck software used to monitor and send Twitter messages. The software is free and can be downloaded from the web for any operating system for desktops, laptops or smartphones. The desktop-laptop version allows one to hover one’s mouse over the image of the person who has sent the tweet, and then read their profile and perform a range of other checks, like seeing how many followers they have and how many tweets they have sent. The profile includes links to a home page and-or blogs, which are useful for checking the credibility of the source.

Even a news organisation as professional as the BBC has been duped on more than one occasion. Some of the groups that seek to fool journalists are very slick indeed. One of the most notorious groups is the Yes Men, who appear to be based in Paris. On 3 December 2004, the twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal disaster in India, one of the Yes Men (Andy Bichlbaum) appeared on BBC World Television from their Paris “studio” posing as “Jude Finisterra,” a Dow Chemical spokesman. In 1984 an accident at the Bhopal chemical plant, owned by Union Carbide, killed about 18,000 people and left more than 120,000 others requiring lifelong care. Dow Chemical owns Union Carbide. Yes Man Bichlbaum, posing as a Dow executive, said that Dow planned to liquidate Union Carbide and use the resulting US\$ 1,200 million to pay for medical care in Bhopal, clean up the site, and fund research into the hazards of other Dow products.

A BBC producer had arranged the interview with the fake Dow spokesman after reading the fake Dow Chemical web site the Yes Men had established. A video of the resulting BBC World news item with the fake Dow executive, which runs 5.5 minutes, is still available on YouTube. Other media picked up the story, which caused great embarrassment for BBC. The story still haunts the BBC. You can find it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiWlvBro9eI>

After two hours of widespread coverage, Dow issued a press release denying the fake statement. This produced even more coverage of the incident. In 23 minutes Dow’s share price fell 4.24 per cent on the Frankfurt exchange, wiping US\$ 2,000 million off its market value. Shares recovered in Frankfurt after the BBC issued its on-air correction and apology. Ironically, in 2012 the Yes Men used the Kickstarter crowdfunding site to raise money for a movie about their exploits.

Regret the Error blog

Craig Silverman writes a blog for the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in the United States about errors and misinformation he finds in the media, and what media companies need to do to avoid being hoaxed. The site can be found at: <http://www.poynter.org/category/latest-news/regret-the-error/>

On 2 December 2011 Silverman wrote in the online edition of the *Columbia Journalism Review* that the “truth about public untruths was the huge amount of money and effort behind these lies. In the battle of public untruths versus fact checking, the forces of untruth have more money, more people, and, I would argue, much better expertise. They know how to birth and spread a lie better than we [professional journalists] know how to debunk one. They are more creative about it, and, by the very nature of what they’re doing they aren’t constrained by ethics or professional standards.”

Silverman noted coordinated email campaigns to spread lies. “I see political pros investing money and expertise in creating falsehoods and injecting them into the public sphere via the Internet, television, radio, and other mediums,” he wrote in that December 2 blog post. One block to the effectiveness of journalistic checking was reporters’ refusal to “engage with the level of passion and determination of those who create and propagate public untruths,” Silverman wrote. “True progress will require a tougher attitude, a willingness to aggressively call bullshit. We also need to study the dark arts of public untruths and reverse engineer them with the same level of calculation and ferocity”. He doubted whether most American journalists were up to the task. “Are we [journalists] up for that? I have my doubts.”

Another American blogger, Jeff Jarvis, pointed out that fact checking was expensive. “I believe that more transparency and more collaboration will help make for more efficient and sustainable journalism. We need to create and take advantage of existing platforms and then add journalistic value to them. We need to harness the care and energy communities already expend to share their own information. We need to help them do that.”

As Anika Gupta, Armie Garde and Nini Cabaero noted in the previous chapter, the biggest struggle for a small news organisation using contributed content was the need for fact checking and verification. Some companies rely on technology as their helper.

Technical options

Many of the companies that allow the public to take photographs with their mobile phones are building options into their apps to ensure the credibility of the images supplied to media companies. For example, Scoopshot – discussed in detail in the next chapter – has focused a lot of attention on the issue of authenticity. “Quality journalism is very important to an informed society. We want to make our contribution to that by providing rich, unique and authenticated user-generated still and video images to supplement the excellent editorial content of our media partners,” the company wrote on its blog.

“Therefore we have developed a patent-pending technology that automatically analyses the authenticity of user-generated content (UGC). From the time a photo or video is captured with the app, we know the ‘who, when, where’ of its existence. This helps media companies focus upon content itself, not spend effort in authentication,” the company wrote on its web site, Scoopshot.com. “This minimises potentially costly risks associated with publishing altered or stolen photos. The cutting-edge authentication process also enhances content creation efforts as opposed to costly, redundant image inspection.”

In 2012, Dan Schultz, a master’s student at MIT’s Media Lab’s Information Ecology Group in the United States, released software called Truth Goggles that flags suspicious claims in news articles. The web software runs on most browsers like a bookmark. It scans Internet content and highlights fact-based sentences, sourced from Politifact (<http://www.politifact.com/>), a fact-checking database that evaluates public statements by members of the US Congress, the White House, lobbyists and political interest groups. Madhumita Venkataramanan wrote about Schultz in the November 2012 edition of *Wired* magazine. The software really only works in a small part of the United States. At the time of the article, the Politifact database only held about 5,500 statements fact-checked by journalists at *The Tampa Bay Times*, so “Truth Goggles isn’t any good at spotting dubious sentences beyond that,” Venkataramanan wrote. “To scale it up, it will need to be synced with other fact-checking databases such as factcheck.org, the Washington Post fact column and snopes.com.” So it appears that technology could help, but we are probably still a long way from a global solution.

One of the pioneer software platforms for crowdsourcing is Ushahidi. It was initially developed to map reports of violence in Kenya after the elections there in early 2008. "Ushahidi" means "testimony" in Swahili. It focused on using Kenyan citizen journalists during a time of crisis. The original website mapped incidents of violence and peace efforts throughout the country based on reports that citizens submitted via the web and mobile phones. It became well known after the Al-Jazeera television network started using it for election coverage and for stories about occupied areas of the Middle East.

Ushahidi has built a team of volunteer developers primarily in Africa, but also in Europe, South America and the United States. SwiftRiver was one of the products of this development. Jon Gosier was a co-founder of SwiftRiver. He said the motivation behind the software was to solve two problems with Ushahidi – how to verify crowdsourced information and how to filter huge streams of real-time data when those data became overwhelming. As its web site notes: "SwiftRiver enables the filtering and verification of real-time data from channels like Twitter, SMS, email and RSS feeds." The main elements used to help in the verification process of data included location (is the report coming from where the sender claims it to be from?); reputation (is the source trusted by me or by people who themselves are trustworthy?) and timing (is the report coming at what seems like an appropriate time?)

The goal was not completely automated verification, Gosier told Craig Silverman in an article the latter published in the Columbia Journalism Review in August 2010. The best option was a combination of human intelligence and technology, or what he called "hybrids" – using algorithms to optimise human abilities. "We don't feel humans can be removed from the process," Gosier told Silverman, noting that "a few" newsrooms were testing the software. "In the case of the newsroom, a group of reports can aggregate as much real-time info as they want and trust that the sources the group finds to be most accurate will be the sources that are prioritised. If a newsroom were to run a campaign where they crowdsource, like CNN does with iReport, they can then find those citizen journalists in the crowd who actually add value."

Journalist Mark Little founded Storyful (<http://storyful.com/>) in 2010, describing it as a news agency built for the social media age. He wrote in Nieman Reports that a combination of automation and human skills

offered the broadest solution when verifying content from the audience. His editorial team had perfected techniques for validating videos and images. At its core, he wrote, this process was built around a checklist:

“Can we geo-locate this footage? Are there any landmarks that allow us to verify the location via Google Maps or Wikimapia?”

“Are streetscapes similar to geo-located photos on Panoramio or Google Street View?”

“Do weather conditions correspond with reports on that day?”

“Are shadows consistent with the reported time of day?”

“Do vehicle registration plates or traffic signs indicate the country or state?”

“Do accents or dialects heard in a video tell us the location?”

“Does it jibe with other imagery people are uploading from this location?”

“Does the video reflect events as reported on Storyful’s curated Twitter lists or by local news sources?”

These are all sensible approaches and Little should be commended for offering this approach to news organisations. More details can be found in his article “Finding the Wisdom in the Crowd,” described in the readings in the final chapter.

Motivation

Another issue that needs to be discussed in relation to crowdsourcing is the motivation of the people who contribute material. Many scholars of crowdsourcing suggest both internal and external factors cause people to contribute to crowdsourced tasks. Internal factors can be broken down into two categories: enjoyment-based and community-based motivations. The former relates to motivations connected with the fun, pleasure or enjoyment that the contributor experiences through participation. Community-based motivations include the chance to identify with one’s community and gain useful social contacts.

External factors fall into three categories: immediate payoffs, delayed payoffs, and social motivations. Immediate payoffs include being paid, though we have seen this is very rare in the world of journalism. Delayed

payoffs are benefits that can be used to generate future advantages such as learning new skills and the possibility of being noticed by potential employers. Social motivations include the rewards of behaving in a way where one works for the betterment of society, and involves altruistic motivations. An example might be when people help translate books, and then all translators receive acknowledgments in the book for their contribution. And because crowdworkers who perform poor-quality tasks can also be identified as being inadequate, this provides another reverse form of motivation to produce high-quality work.

Research studies of low-paying online tasks appear to have higher rates of attrition, with participants not completing the study once started. And crowdsourcing does not always produce quality results. What are the ethics of news organisations not paying citizens for their contributions, but relying on other rewards as outlined in the previous paragraphs? Various critics have claimed that crowdsourcing exploits individuals in the crowd, and there has been a call for crowds to organise into unions. These matters are outside the scope of this book but definitely require further research.

Legal and ethical issues

Australian journalist Kate McClymont has raised concerns about the potential impact that reporters using social media platforms such as Twitter could have on the conduct of court cases. McClymont works as an investigative reporter for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and has been a winner of a Gold Walkley, Australia's highest award for journalism. In June 2013 she tweeted from the hearings of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in Sydney. The hearings covered the activities of the Obeid family. McClymont said she was concerned about the wider impact that social network reporting could have on the administration of justice. "I've only tweeted from ICAC because there is no jury involved," McClymont told Nic Christensen, a reporter with *Encore* magazine.

McClymont was especially concerned with the potential for social media such as tweets to influence witness testimony. "There are witnesses who are sitting outside [the court] who aren't meant to know what evidence is being given. Is this going to have an impact on the course of justice by tweeting the minutiae of what is happening in within the courtroom? It's an interesting consideration."

The issue has more relevance for citizen journalists. What about the

tweets of citizens at court cases or other legal proceedings? Could these tweets also influence witnesses yet to appear in court? Could they influence members of the jury? These issues need to be discussed.

Professor Patrick Keyzer of Bond University in Australia believes citizen journalists need clearer instruction on the use of social media in relation to court cases. "Traditionally journalists with the mainstream media were people who were trained to be conscious of the legal principles. But these days, with the rise of the citizen journalist, you have the prospect of more and more reporters, some ... of whom won't have had the training and therefore the knowledge that is important to the maintenance of justice," he said. One could argue that as well as laws, professional journalists also have codes of ethics, which restrain them from certain actions. This does not apply to the audience. Crowdsourced content does not have such legal and ethic restraints.

Santiago Lyon, vice president and director of photography for the Associated Press, is responsible for the news agency's global photojournalism. He works with hundreds of photographers. His comments in a Summer 2012 article in Nieman Reports neatly summarises the problems (see the last chapter for full details of his article): "In recent years, however, things have gotten more complicated. News production is changing rapidly – from fewer resources in newsrooms to the use of user-generated content. Technologies to manipulate images are becoming ever more sophisticated. There are now cameras that can make people in pictures look skinnier, and in the latest versions of Adobe Photoshop there is the ability to make some manipulation virtually undetectable."

While crowdsourcing appears to be a potential blessing for journalism, it also has issues. As the pre-Socratic Greeks said, every blessing has a curse. These major issues need to be considered urgently. The background music that generates this need for urgency is the speed with which modern media operates. The news cycle has become so fast that a correction often cannot catch up with the error it is intended to correct. Add the fact that newsrooms have fewer staff and resources, and the potential for problems becomes magnified.

The next chapter considers some tools, apps and other technologies that can be used for crowdsourcing.

CHAPTER 6

Tools and sites for crowdsourced journalism

Many blogs and digital tools offer opportunities and ways for media companies to harness the wisdom of the crowds. Many of these are new and untried. Some will fail. But some will succeed. This chapter considers some of the best and most interesting. But it does not claim to be a summary of everything available; merely what the author has discovered in the course of research for this book. Many other tools are waiting to be discovered.

The goal of any media company should to become the place where the community comes to learn about itself. Media companies need to engage their communities because ultimately all journalism is local. As John Juliano, founder of the JJCS company said, "it's all about local". A decade ago, the best tools for this connection used to be the web, and before that the printed newspaper. Now the best options are the mobile phone and social networking sites. Juliano's company has developed an app called JReporter that works across a range of mobile phone operating systems. "Using JReporter your users read your headlines and stories, receive alerts about breaking news, and have opportunities to become contributors, enter contests and stay involved," he said.

In response to your targeted alerts, JReporter users respond with content that is on target and can flow directly into a company's editorial content management system, Juliano said. "Don't create one format for your newsreader, another for your mobile readers and still a third format for your desktop readers," he advised. Media companies should focus on one approach. Media organizations face the conflicting challenge of needing more and more content for their digital presence together with the reality of producing this content with a smaller team of their own journalists.

Noted Juliano: "After years of discussion, user generated content (UGC) is now an accepted newsgathering tool. The Associated Press has released

style guidelines for UCG, and accepted methods of vetting user-generated content are entering use. Since its earliest design phase, JReporter has incorporated content validation and vetting standards beyond those that are currently under discussion. The need for user-generated content is both broad and critical. Customers look to their media company for news about their community, whether their community is geographic or special interest. Media companies need an abundant source of trusted, timely and constantly turning over content to bring the customer back again and again to the media company. JReporter combines customer engagement through targeted messages and news, a reward-for-performance programme and a revenue stream together with user generated content for a complete solution.

“The burden on a news company to format their content across differing formats and platforms is expensive, dilutes the brand and loses the media company’s look and feel. The answer is an HTML5 solution for a responsive website. JReporter’s headline feed and internal web browser keep the customer within the media company’s app, reduce production costs because the responsive website technology correctly formats content across display formats, lowers costs, concentrates the brand and preserves the look and feel.”

Juliano said the journalism industry had tried to cut expenses to zero. “But if there is no revenue stream there is no success.” He decided his app needed to provide a revenue stream. “If JReporter did not provide a revenue stream it could not be a success. JReporter provides three avenues for revenue: traditional banner ads throughout the app, a reward for performance programme that can be used for promotions as well as newsgathering, and sponsorship opportunities.

“With JReporter you can offer your advertisers a unique advertising opportunity. Advertisers can be certain their ads will appear at the right time and place to the correct audience. JReporter’s GPS-targeted messaging allows you to send directed messages to everyone near a news event, or everyone who is not near a news event. With JReporter’s targeted messaging you can send dozens, even hundreds of directed messages without fear of reader fatigue. Your JReporter users will look forward to receiving alerts from you because they know they’re relevant.”

Here are some of the features of JReporter. Headlines are hyperlinked, so the app eliminates the need for a separate news reader. Users receive

a coupon at the successful submission of a story. The app has a progress bars to show upload times. Videos, audio and stills upload using standard data connection or Wifi.

Mobile apps for crowdsourcing: Scoopshot and Newsflare

Scoopshot is one of the best mobile phone apps designed to allow citizens to contribute photographs to news organisations around the world, and get paid. This latter fact means the company has a different perspective to many media companies that expect to receive free content from the audience. Founded by a group of entrepreneurs and journalists in Helsinki in Finland, Scoopshot describes itself on its web site as a crowdsourcing service for news organisations that provides eyewitness photos and videos. "Get access to a global pool of mobile and pro photographers eager to create the unique visual content you need. Use the power of the crowd to get unique, relevant and authentic content." Scoopshot was established in April 2010. As of mid 2013, it offered the media access to more than 270,000 photographers in more than 170 countries worldwide. About 60 media companies use Scoopshot's services, including Metro International, WAZ Media Group, the *Daily Star*, *De Persgroep*, *Ebyline*, *MTV3 Finland*, *Expressen* and *Hürriyet*.

In May 2013, Scoopshot launched a new web-based platform, Scoopshot Labs that aimed to make crowdsourced mobile photographs available to media companies and citizens. "We aim to make the service bigger, better, more social with more tasks, more visibility — and most importantly get more of your photos sold," it announced on its web site. The minimum payment for a photograph was set to US\$ 2.5. Before May 2013, the minimum was about US\$ 15. Asked about the reduction, the company replied: "To get more photos sold."

Newsflare (<http://www.newsflare.com/>) offers an example, like Scoopshot, of a site that helps citizens get paid for submitting photographs and videos to news organisations. Content is delivered via apps. The process appears simple: People capture newsworthy videos on a smartphone and deliver the video via Android, iPhone or online. Newsflare sells that video to a news organisation, and when the video is purchased the photographer gets paid. The site has a section called "Assignments" which represents for video by news buyers. On 21 June 2013 that section had 149 assignments. The highest fee was 30 GBP.

The site's home page noted that Newsflare specialised in covering news that was too breaking, too remote or too local for traditional news organisations. "We are all about news. Unlike many other online video sharing sites Newsflare is dedicated to user-generated news content and encourages an ethos of journalistic values. "

The service pays people, which makes it a true crowdsourcing site based on the definition of the academics quoted in the introduction of this book: "Our goal is to ensure that all our members get the rewards they deserve. We actively broker your content to news organisations and when your content is sold we share the revenue with you." The site's member reward program is designed so that the more people contribute the more rewards they receive.

According to the frequently-asked questions (FAQ) on the site, payment depends on a member's level. New members and "bronze" reporters receive half of the sale price (excluding value-added tax, or VAT). For "silver" reporters the payment is 60 per cent and for "gold" reporters, 70 per cent. A Newsflare Pro receives 80 per cent. The FAQ says contributors get paid within a maximum of three working days "but in most cases you will receive the money faster than this". Newsflare uses PayPal to deposit money into a member's PayPal account. These accounts are available for free at Paypal.com. Reporters are identified by the badges that accompany their profile. The higher the level, the more trust the community has in the reporter. Noted the FAG: "We promote our reporters based on their performance on a pure journalistic and not commercial basis. Their sales don't influence their status, it is the ratings they get from the community what makes them grow."

The site has a Newsflare Academy designed to help members improve their skills and "learn more about the world of video journalism". But as of June 2013 when this book was being finalised, the most recent post in the Academy was a year old.

Sites linking journalists with news companies

The FindStringers site, similar to Photoscoop and Newsflare, opened for business on 8 April 2013 with more than 500 freelancers and 63 media companies registered. FindStringers is an agency connecting newsrooms with freelance journalists, particularly reporters who can provide breaking news reports. "Our goal is to get news to air almost as fast as Twitter," said

Gary Symons, the president of parent company VeriCorder Technologies. He pointed out that journalism was a tough market because of layoffs at newspapers and broadcast companies. More freelancers than ever were consequently on the market. "Our job is to help you find work, and sell your content," he wrote in an email to members.

The company created a mobile phone app that stringers could use to file stories to media companies, or upload content to the web. The Voddio app was in the iTunes store but was not yet available for Android and other platforms. "We can allow a media company to find, hire and integrate any reporter in the world directly into their newsroom, either through our app or via a laptop." The site has a "Media Marketplace" designed to take submissions, and Symons encouraged stringers – another term for a freelancer – to upload as much news or editorial content as possible. "Video clips and photos are the main draws for most media companies, but we sell audio and text stories too."

Freelancers pay to join FindStringers. The freelancer sets their own rate which the newsroom confirms and they enter an agreement. A stringer uploads video from the field. It is transcoded into the newsroom's preferred format and delivered to a Voddio Console in the newsroom. Symons said that journalists were vetted to ensure they were professionals. All the company's apps were "designed by reporters for reporters," Symons said. Until 2009, when he founded VeriCorder, Symons was a reporter and investigative journalist at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Newsmodo (<http://www.newsmodo.com/>), based in Melbourne in Australia, connects videojournalists with news organisations around the world. It is an online marketplace where freelancers can pitch stories or images, naming whatever price they like. At the same time, media companies can locate a freelancer whose profile they like and send them an assignment. Freelancers can join for free. Media organisations pay a monthly fee depending on their level of access. Newsmodo arranges all the invoices and technical support and takes a 30 per cent commission for each transaction. It was the brainchild of Rakhal Ebeli, a former television producer and reporter.

As a producer he was often buying images and videos from eyewitnesses who had captured things on their mobile phones. "There appeared to be a gap in this market, where newsrooms were unaware of where to search for this content," Ebeli told the Columbia Journalism Review in June 2013.

“They would sometimes look on Facebook pages, sometimes on YouTube, but there was no single destination for both buyers and sellers of that content to go to.” Newsmodo allows video journalists to submit news stories from any location via the website or a mobile phone app. It also allows freelancers to create and develop a personal portfolio to showcase their work. As of June 2013 Newsmodo had more than 4,000 contributors signed up.

Crowdfunded photography and video journalism

Emphas.is is a platform for crowdfunded photojournalism that says it offers a unique bond between photojournalists and their audience, and in the process aims to create a new financial model for photojournalism in the twenty-first century. As of mid 2013, the site had produced more than 50 stories by 60 journalists in 60 countries. In an interview in the *British Journal of Photography* in May 2013, co-founders Tina Ahrens and Karim Ben Khelifa said the site had raised US\$ 500,000 since it launched in early 2011. “Emphas.is and the concept that the public would be willing to pay for the production of high-quality visual storytelling was just a theory when we launched the platform two years ago. We saw the social media trend take off and with it the possibilities for us, the visual storytellers, to create communities around the subjects we were experts on.”

They concluded that a “complete re-invention of the relationship between journalists and their audience was needed”. They built Emphas.is as a platform with the tools “to engage and solicit financial support”. Many news and photograph aggregators were doing well, but they did little to sustain the production of independent storytelling. “A handful of organisations are doing great work out there to fill the same gap that we worry about, such as The Open Society Institute, The Magnum Foundation, FotoVisura and other smaller organisations,” the pair told the magazine.

“Photojournalism depends on the willingness of newspapers and magazines to publish and finance it. In the digital age, many media have decided that photojournalism is no longer a priority. We think this is a mistake,” Tina Ahrens and Karim Ben Khelifa said. “Crowdfunding has already proved to be a successful model in other areas, and we believe photojournalism has a large and enthusiastic following that is willing to contribute financially when given the right rewards. Emphas.is offers these

rewards in the form of unique access to photojournalists and their work process.”

How does it work? Professional photojournalists submit a story proposal together with a detailed budget estimate. A board of advisors, consisting of photography and journalism experts, reviews the work and judges the photojournalist’s capacity to accomplish the project and checks the validity of the budget. They use a set list of criteria. A trio of reviewers from a board of more than 40 experts is allocated to each pitch. Almost all of the members of the review board are based in the United States or Europe. Only two board members are based in Asia: Sujong Song in South Korea and Shahidul Alam in Bangladesh. Dr Alam is a former chair of the World Press Photo judging panel.

Individuals can make a contribution towards a project via Paypal. Contributions start at US\$ 10. “For this you get full access to the ‘making-of zone’ where photojournalists communicate with their backers,” Ahrens and Ben Khelifa said. “Photojournalists may offer extra rewards for bigger contributions. They and their backers are encouraged to use all available social media tools to gather additional support for the project.”

Each project must reach 100 per cent or more funding by the end of a set deadline. If it fails to reach the full amount by the deadline all contributions are returned to the backers’ accounts. When a project is fully funded the money is transferred to the photojournalist, though 15 per cent goes to Emphas.is for operational costs. Part of that is the 4 per cent needed to be paid to PayPal, as the conduit for transactions.

After full funding has been achieved, the project is moved to the “making-of zone”. This is only available to project backers. Photojournalists are expected to keep their backers updated about the progress of a story through blogging, video and pictures. Photographers sometimes offer extra rewards for bigger contributions, such as exclusive prints, invites to screenings or exhibitions or signed copies of their photo books.

Interested media can acquire first publication rights in their market by funding up to half of a project. “The money raised on Emphas.is is meant for expenses only; it is up to the photojournalist to negotiate a publication fee,” Ahrens and Ben Khelifa said. “Backers will have the first, exclusive viewing of a finished project for four days before the photographer can show the work elsewhere. Photographers whose projects are funded through Emphas.is keep the full rights and control over their images.”

Crowdfunded video journalism

Vourno is a crowdfunding site designed to fund video journalism. The name is a merging of the words “video & journalist”. It launched 20 May 2013. Vourno operates like other crowdfunding sites such as Indiegogo and Kickstarter but focuses solely on news, and features its own viewing platform. Journalists who want to produce a story, create a project page and pitch video, set a target money goal and promote their campaign. Each project has 30 days to reach its goal. Funding is all or nothing. If a project reaches its goal, the journalist produces the video and then posts it on Vourno. Completed news stories are the journalist’s property, and are free to be shared, sold and posted elsewhere after they’ve been on Vourno for seven days.

As this book was being written only journalists with an American bank account could participate, but Vourno planned to expand overseas in coming months. One project had been funded by June 2013. Entrepreneur Joseph Verdirame, one of the site’s founders, told IJNet: “We love the news and are not happy with the current state of the industry. As entrepreneurs, we saw a great opportunity to fix the problems that exist. In doing so, we focused on two things: 1. How do we get journalists funding so they can stay independent and flourish? 2. How can we remain 100 percent neutral?” Vourno plans to grow advertising revenue as content and viewership rises, and eventually share that revenue with participating journalists.

Crowdsourcing via Facebook

In 2013, Facebook launched a new feature that has been used by a number of high-profile journalists to host conversations and work with the audience. The feature was being rolled out as this book was being completed, as Facebook pitched it to individual accounts where the person has more than 10,000 followers. The roll-out was scheduled to be completed by 10 July 2013.

Journalists can take questions in real-time, similar to the way Reddit’s AMA (ask me anything) works. Reddit is a social news and entertainment website founded in June 2005 where registered users submit content in the form of either a text (“self”) post or a link. Other users then vote that submission “up” or “down” – a way to rank the post and determine its position on the site’s pages and front page. Reddit is based in San

Francisco. Facebook's Q&A feature was announced on 25 March 2013, and has been used by Arianna Huffington, ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer, and CBS News senior correspondent and former FBI spokesman John Miller. The last did a live Facebook Q&A about the investigation into the Boston marathon bombings, with which we began this book.

The new feature was highlighted by Vadim Lavrusik, Facebook's journalism programme manager, at news:rewired, a digital journalism conference held 19 April 2013. Later in a post to Facebook's journalism site, Lavrusik said through using the Q&A feature, journalists and their readers "will have the ability to reply directly to comments left on your page content and start conversation threads, which will make it easier for you to interact directly with individual readers and keep relevant conversations connected".

As with Reddit AMA's, the most engaging and active conversations on Facebook Q&A are shown at the top. The feature will initially be available on desktop computers but Facebook plans to make it available on mobile devices, Lavrusik wrote. He also explains how the comments were organised. An algorithm considered various elements such as "positive feedback, based on the total number of 'likes' and replies in a conversation thread, which includes 'likes' or replies by the page owner". It will be interesting to see whether news organisations in Asia embrace this approach. Rappler.com in the Philippines has a sex therapy columnist, named Angie. who appears on video each week, answering questions sent to her via Facebook and Twitter.

Flickr users get more space

As of early 2013, Yahoo's Flickr photo-sharing service has offered users one full terabyte. This is enough storage space to hold millions of photographs. Most users will never exceed this level of storage. This will probably attract dedicated photographers to the service along with some lapsed users. As Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer noted in her presentation, the move was about "bringing lifetimes of beauty into Flickr". Flickr was one of the original photo-sharing sites and remains a pioneer as a source of crowdsourced images.

The final chapter offers a range of resources people interested in crowdsourcing can read or watch to learn more.

CHAPTER 7

Resources about crowdsourcing

Publications

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Turner, David (2012). "Inside the BBC's Verification Hub", Nieman Reports (Summer 2012). Found at <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102764/Inside-the-BBCs-Verification-Hub.aspx>

Nieman Reports, Summer 2012, published a series of excellent articles about accurate information under the title Truth in the Age of Social Media. Find it at <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/issue/100072/Summer-2012.aspx>

Videos

This site (<https://www.nyvs.com/>), which costs \$US 79.95 a year, gives access to thousands of training videos.

Or you can look at free versions of the same material by searching for what you want on YouTube. For example, this is a handy introduction to scripting for online video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTvlAXmDfAE>

Rosenblum on storytelling, part 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-Vc_bdgqYc

YouTube Reporters' Center: <http://www.youtube.com/user/reporterscenter>
Zhubajie video scripted by DJ Clark, with animations by Xu Jiye, about the company at <http://video.chinadaily.com.cn/2013/0327/174.shtml>

Yes Men fake video on BBC World. Available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiWlvBro9eI>

Biography

Stephen Quinn runs MOJO Media Insights, a Hong Kong-based digital consulting business. He teaches organisations how to make interactive books using iBooks Author and trains media professionals to make broadcast-quality videos using only an iPad Mini or iPhone. Examples of his videos can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/ningbomojo>.

Dr. Quinn is the former digital development editor at the *South China Morning Post* where he helped re-launch the site that in November 2012 won the WAN/Ifra gold medal for best news website that year. From 1996-2011 Dr Quinn, an Australian, was a journalism professor in Australia, the UAE, the US and China. In the two decades to 1995, Dr. Quinn was a journalist with Australian newspapers, the *Bangkok Post*, the UK's Press Association, BBC-TV, ITN, *The Guardian*, and TVNZ. He has written 20 print books. The most recent, the third edition of *MOJO: Mobile Journalism in the Asian Region* published by KAS, appeared in 2012. Contact him via email at sraquinn@gmail.com

Crowdsourcing occurs when media companies solicit content from the audience. Much of the time that process involves digital tools and invokes social media and social networking platforms to collect that content. Crowdsourcing represents a grassroots initiative that potentially could produce better journalism.

Asia's Media Innovators Volume 3: Crowdsourcing in Asian Journalism describes a form of journalism where the audience contributes content and where media companies embrace those contributions, seeing the end product as a form of collaboration between audience and media with the aim of doing improved journalism.

Topics include:

- Key concepts of crowdsourcing
- Recent major crowdsourcing initiatives
- Early pioneers of crowdsourcing in Asia
- Asian examples of crowdsourcing
- Key issues related to crowdsourcing
- Tools and sites for crowdsourced journalism
- Resources for further information