Magazines and Their Web Sites
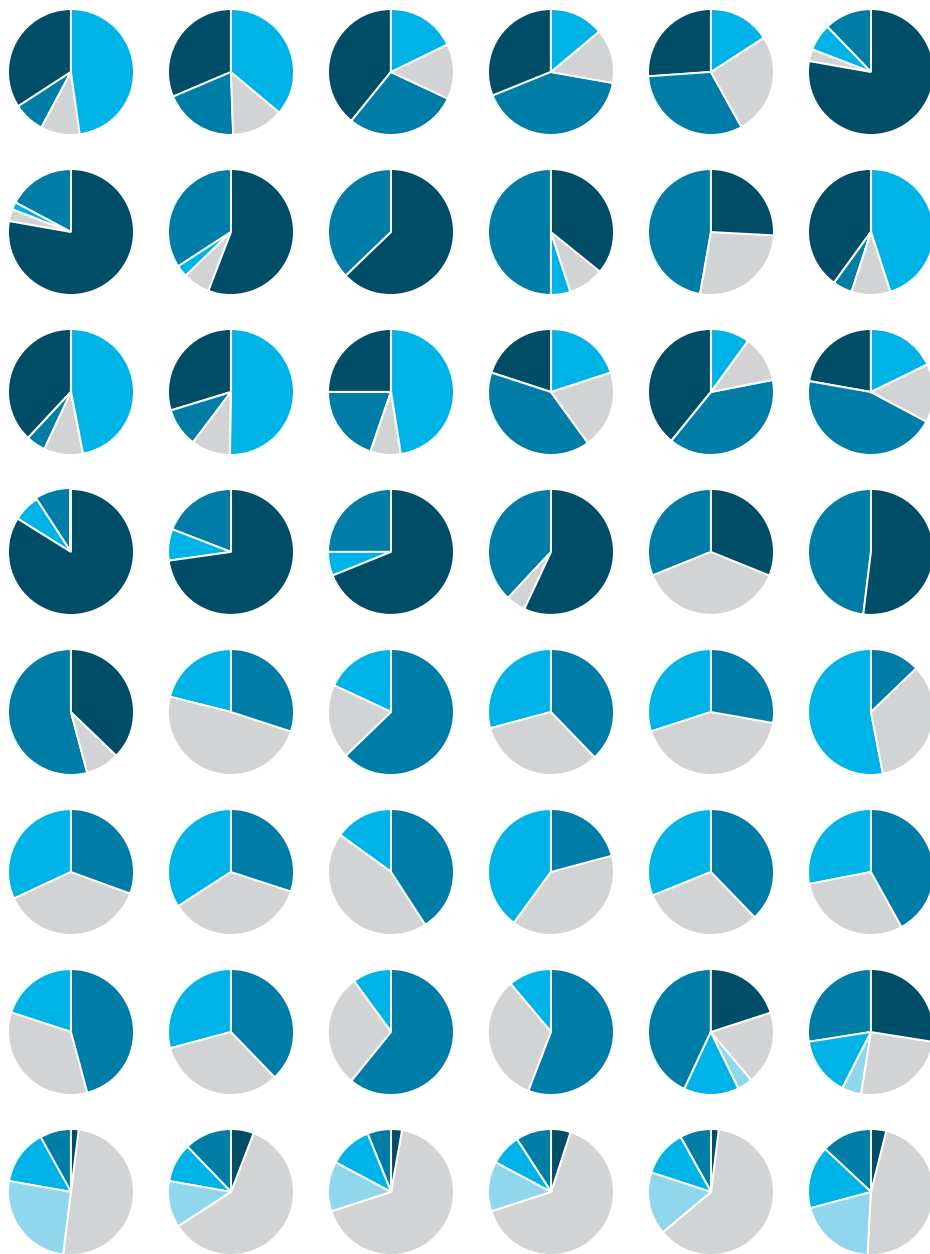
A Columbia Journalism Review survey and report

BY VICTOR NAVASKY with EVAN LERNER

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Introduction

John Perry Barlow, a lyricist for the Grateful Dead and a founder of The Electronic Frontier Foundation, once observed that where the new (i.e. digital) media are concerned, "we are immigrants in the land of our children." Nowhere is this more true than in the no-man's land between print magazines (old media) and their Web sites (new media).

Virtually every significant magazine in the United States—and increasingly abroad—either already has, or is in the process of establishing, a Web site. These interactive Internet offspring speak to a new generation of magazine readers, and often reach audiences well beyond those of their parent publications. But their rise has also created a vast set of ethical, culture, legal, and business issues.

Although those involved with magazines and their Web sites have varying levels of knowledge and sophistication about their métier, it's fair to say that the proprietors of these sites don't, for the most part, know what one another is doing, that there are no generally accepted standards or practices, that each Web site is making it up as it goes along, that it is like the wild west out there.

It was against this background, and with funding provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, that the *Columbia Journalism Review* undertook the first comprehensive study of online practices of print magazines. The survey had various goals: to identify some best (and worst) practices; clarify journalistic standards for new media; and guide journalists and media companies towards a business model that allow revenues not only to be allocated more efficiently, but also channeled back into the kind of news-gathering operations that are essential for democracy.

Among the questions the *Columbia Journalism Review* survey asked: What fact-checking and copy-editing standards apply to magazine Web sites, if any? Who oversees the editorial content of online material, and with what consequences? And what business model is applied to these Web publications, and with what consequences for profitability?

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Charts and Graphs

Methodology

Evan Lerner, Home Page Editor of SeedMagazine.com, served as project director. An advisory board made up of members of the magazine and digital media worlds was established in order to help us prepare a questionnaire, which we would retain a survey research firm to administer. Experts and academics from a variety of relevant disciplines also provided guidance and counsel, while a number of other people served as informal advisors.

Research began with a series of in-depth interviews with industry specialists, and experts from old and new media. The interviews, conducted with the help of Danielle Haas, a Ph.D. candidate in Columbia's Communications program, aimed to identify key areas of policy interest and contestation; areas in which editorial and business considerations are in tension; as well as parallel and overlapping practices of traditional and digital media.

Our survey research firm was Abt SRBI, a New York-based national public opinion and market research firm whose clients have included the Associated Press, *Time* and *Fortune* Magazines, Columbia University, Harvard University, and many other institutions, educational and commercial. Abt SRBI administered the survey online with the promise of anonymity. Respondents were also promised a copy of the survey results, and an offer of a one-year subscription to *Columbia Journalism Review* as an incentive for participating. Abt SRBI approached approximately 3,000 consumer magazines and their Web sites listed in the Cision Media Database. Of these, 665 completed the survey between August 3 and October 1, 2009. These represented a significant cross-section of topical interest, including news, entertainment, sports, shelter, fashion, and men's and women's issues. Respondents' circulations roughly correlated to the distribution found in our overall sample. For details on the sample's demographics, please see Appendix A. Respondents were taken at their word when replying to questions, such as whether their Web sites are profitable[1] or not.

The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions with multiple choice answers and three open-ended questions:

1. What do you consider to be the mission of your Web site? Does that mission differ from that of the print edition?
2. What do you consider to be the best feature or aspect of your Web site?
3. What feature or aspect of your Web site do you feel most needs most improvement or is not living up to its potential?

For a full list of survey questions and tabulated answers, see Appendix A or www.cjr.org.

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[1] Executives across the industry have varying ways of defining and assessing profitability. While providing a technical definition of profitability is a highly complex matter, our working definition, is "taking in more money than is required to sustain the operation."

Findings

Although many of the findings might seem predictable (e.g., that Web site missions are "evolving," that many sites are unprofitable, that advertising is by far the largest revenue source), many are not. More importantly, to see these results documented for the first time has the advantage of clarifying what the issues are, and of underlining the urgency of coming to terms with their implications.

But the research also provides a more detailed, textured—and, at times, worrying—insight into the online operations of magazines than has previously been available. For example, respondents reported:

- Either no, or less vigorous, copy-editing online than in print (59%).
- Less rigorous fact-checking when Web, rather than print, editors are in charge (40%), and sometimes no fact-checking when independent Web editors make content decisions (17%).
- No indication to readers when corrections are made that a mistake had been there (54%).

The questions raised by these and other findings are considered more fully in the Conclusion (see p. 40). But analysis of the responses to the 37 survey questions reveals significant findings in six main areas:

1. Staff structure and decision-making: the consequences of who decides what.
2. Standards and practices: the rules applied to selecting, processing, and publishing online content.
3. Business model: the relationship, if any, between business structure and profitability.
4. Social media and community building.
5. Technology: its cultural consequences and possibilities.
6. Online mission: the goals of magazines on the Internet and how they compare to print counterparts.

1   Staff Structure and Decision-Making

The way a magazine structures its online decision-making is the single most important factor when it comes to how its Web site functions, including whether it operates as a magazine first and Web site second, or vice versa.

Respondents were asked whether the editor-in-chief of the print magazine, another print editor, an independent Web editor, a publisher, or someone with a different title was the primary decision-maker across four areas: budget, content, "look and feel," and editorial tone.

In general, we found that the Web sites surveyed were mostly staffed by people who primarily work for their parent print magazines. Independent Web editors were only the majority decision-makers for their Web sites' budgets and content in the largest and most profitable sites, and less than a quarter of staff are hired with experience working on the Web.

Key findings:

- Decision-making structures for Web sites vary widely.
- Web sites are more likely to be profitable if an independent Web editor or the publisher is in charge of the budget and content.
- Most editorial employees are expected to work on both the print and online magazine, even if they have no previous Web experience—which most do not.
- The higher a magazine's circulation and monthly Web traffic, the more likely it is that an independent Web editor makes budget and content decisions.
- As traffic rises, so does the prevalence of independent Web editors making content decisions.
- Most magazines have one editorial group that commissions both print and online-only content.
- Most Web sites have a single advertising team that works on both print and online accounts.

Decision-making structures for Web sites vary widely (Fig. 1).
The only "practices" with a majority following are that the editor-in-chief of the print magazine sets the editorial tone (64%) and makes content decisions (51%). Publishers are the most likely title to oversee the Web budget, but in less than half (44%) of the magazines. Independent Web editors most often made those choices regarding the look and feel of Web sites (33%).

Figure 1: Decision-Making
Who is in charge of decision-making?

■ Editor-in-chief of print ■ Upper level editor of print ■ Independent Web editor ■ Publisher ■ Other

Budget   Content   Look and Feel   Editorial Tone
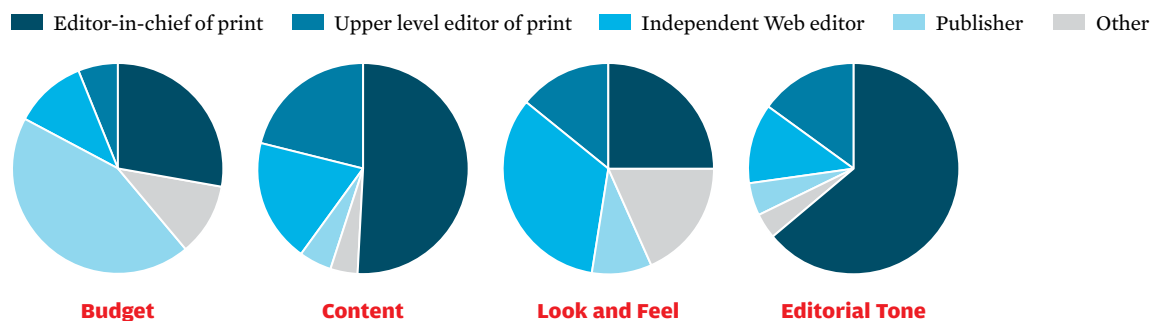
Magazine Web sites are more likely to be profitable when budget decisions are made by the publisher or an independent Web editor (Fig. 2).
Magazine Web sites that do not make a profit (40%) are nearly two times as likely to have the Web budget controlled by the editor-in-chief of the print magazine than those sites that do make a profit (21%). In magazines with profitable Web sites, publishers or independent Web editors control 67% of the Web budgets vs. 43% in unprofitable sites.

Figure 2: Budget decision-making and Web site profitability
Who makes budget decisions?

■ Print Editor ■ Web Editor ■ Publisher ■ Other

Profitable   Not profitable
Web site profitability
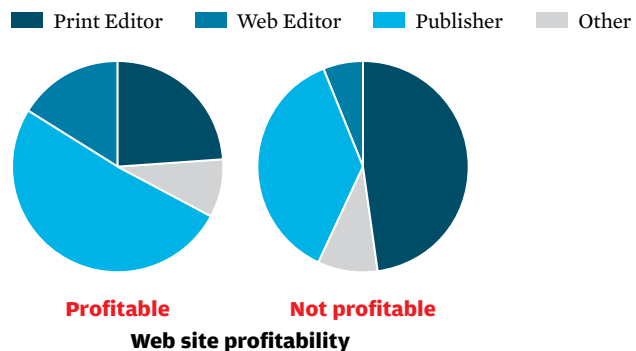
Magazine Web sites are more likely to be profitable when content decisions are made by an independent Web editor (Fig. 3).
Web sites making a profit are slightly more likely to have Web content determined by an independent Web editor (25% vs. 17%) instead of the editor-in-chief of the print magazine.

Figure 3: Content decision-making and Web site profitability
Who makes content decisions?

Print Editor   Web Editor   Publisher   Other

Profitable   Not profitable
Web site profitability
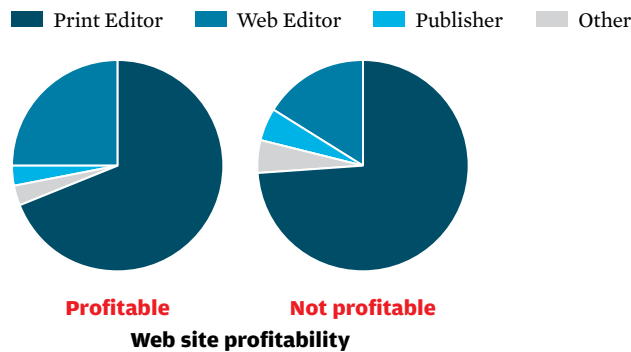
The higher a magazine's circulation is, the more likely it is that an independent Web editor makes its budget and content decisions (Fig. 4, 5).
• For magazines under 100,000 circulation, independent Web editors were in charge of budget decisions only 6% of the time. Above that threshold, they were in charge 17% of the time, with much higher percentages in higher traffic brackets.

Figure 4: Budget decision-making and print circulation
Who makes budget decisions?

Print Editor   Web Editor   Publisher   Other

< 100K   100K–200K   250K–500K   500K–1M   1M–2M   > 2M
Print circulation
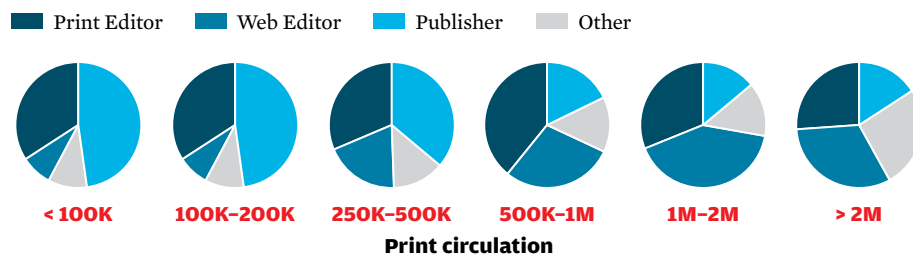
Figure 5: Content decision-making and print circulation
Who makes budget decisions?
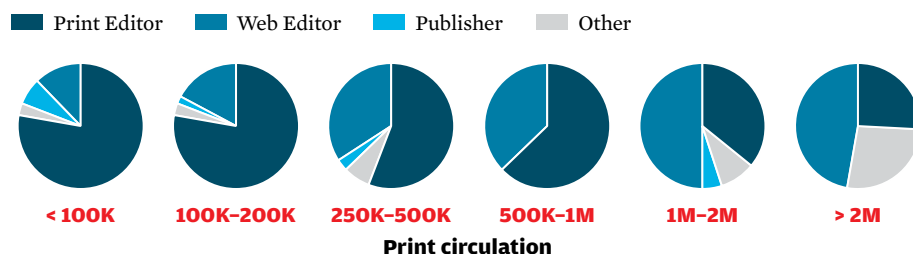
Print Editor   Web Editor   Publisher   Other

< 100K   100K–200K   250K–500K   500K–1M   1M–2M   > 2M
Print circulation

The higher a magazine's monthly Web traffic is, the more likely it is that an independent Web editor makes its budget decisions (Fig. 6).

- For magazine Web sites that have less than 100,000 unique monthly visitors, independent Web editors are in charge of budget decisions less than 5% of the time.
- For magazine Web sites with 2 million or more unique monthly visitors independent Web editors are in charge of budget decisions 44% of the time.

Figure 6: Budget decision-making and Web site traffic
Who makes budget decisions?
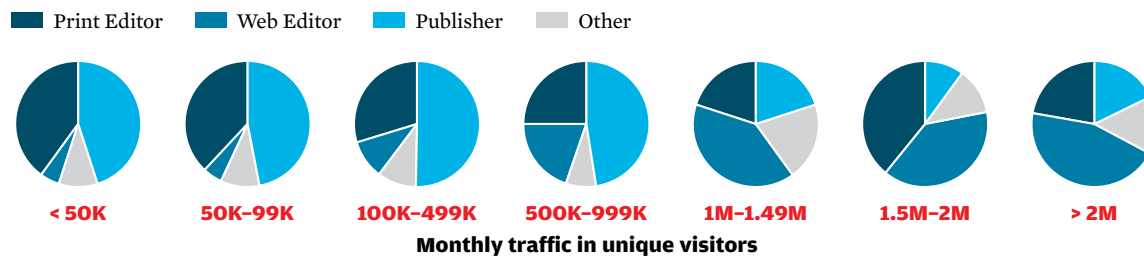
■ Print Editor   ■ Web Editor   ■ Publisher   ▨ Other

| < 50K | 50K–99K | 100K–499K | 500K–999K | 1M–1.49M | 1.5M–2M | > 2M |

Monthly traffic in unique visitors

The higher a magazine's monthly Web traffic is, the more likely it is that an independent Web editor makes its content decisions (Fig. 7).

- For magazine Web sites that have less than 50,000 unique monthly visitors, independent Web editors are in charge of content decisions 7% of the time.
- For magazine Web sites with 2 million or more unique monthly visitors independent Web editors are in charge of content decisions 56% of the time.

Figure 7: Content decision-making and Web site traffic
Who is the person that makes content decisions?

■ Print Editor   ■ Web Editor   ■ Publisher   ▨ Other

| < 50K | 50K-99K | 100K-499K | 500K-999K | 1M-1.49M | 1M-2M | > 2M |

Monthly traffic in unique visitors
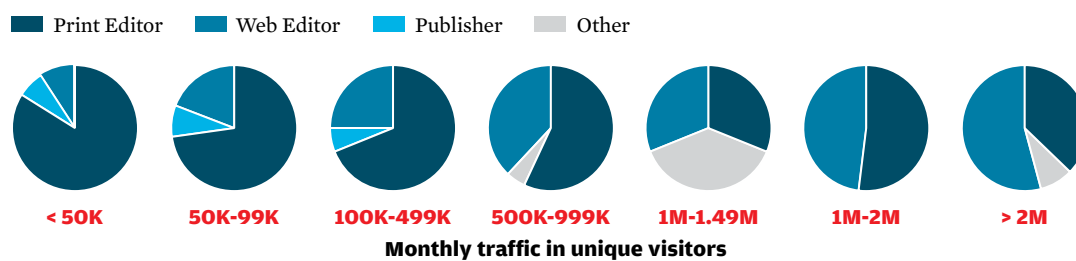
On average, about two-thirds of staff are expected to work on both the print and Web editions of magazines (Fig. 8).

- 27% work only on the print edition.
- 6% work only on the Web site.

Figure 8: Staff division between Web and print

Percent of staff that works exclusively on print, exclusively on Web, or on both.

24%
Work on print only

5%
Work on Web only

9%
Not sure

62%
Work on print and Web
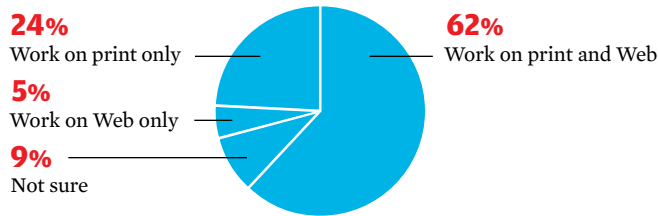
When independent Web editors are in charge of content, there is a greater tendency to have dedicated staff for print and Web, rather than the majority of staff expected to work in both media (Fig. 9).

Figure 9: Content decision-making and staff division between Web and print

What percentage of your staff works on print, Web, or both?

■ Works on Web and print   ■ Works on Web only   ■ Works on print only   ■ Not sure

Print Editor   **Web Editor**   **Publisher**

Control of Web site content
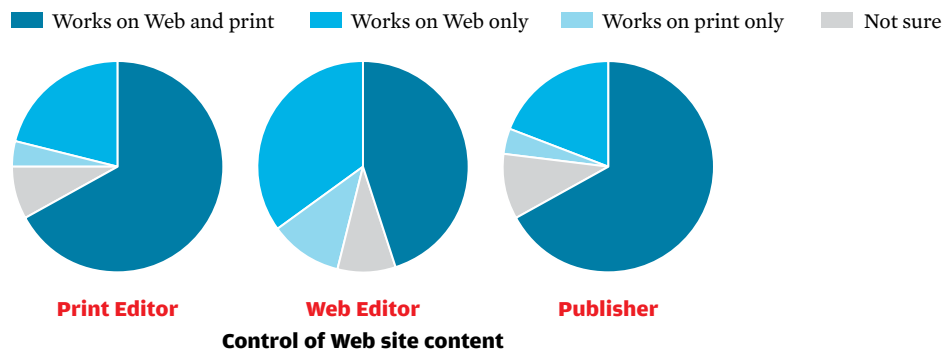
Most employees are hired without Web experience and learn on the job (Fig. 10).

On average:
- 59% learn to work on the Web while on the job.
- 29% are hired with Web experience.

Figure 10: Staff Web experience

Percent of staff that works on the Web who were hired with Web experience
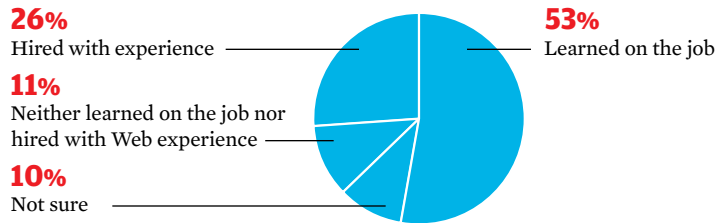
26%
Hired with experience

11%
Neither learned on the job nor hired with Web experience

10%
Not sure

53%
Learned on the job

Most magazines have one editorial group that commissions both print and online only content (Fig. 11).
- 63% say there is a single editorial group that commissions both print and online-only content.
- 20% have two distinct editorial groups: one print, one online.
  - 6% do not regularly interact.
  - 14% meet to discuss content ideas and assign them to either group.
- 16% have no online-only content; content comes exclusively from the print edition.

Figure 11: Staff Division in Commissioning Online-Only Content

Which best describes how staff commission online-only content?

16%
No online-only content, content comes exclusively from the print edition

14%
Two editorial groups, one print, one online, that meet to discuss content ideas and assign them to either group

6%
Two disinct editorial groups, one print, one online, that do not regularly interact

1%
Other

63%
There is a single editorial group that commissions both print and online-only content
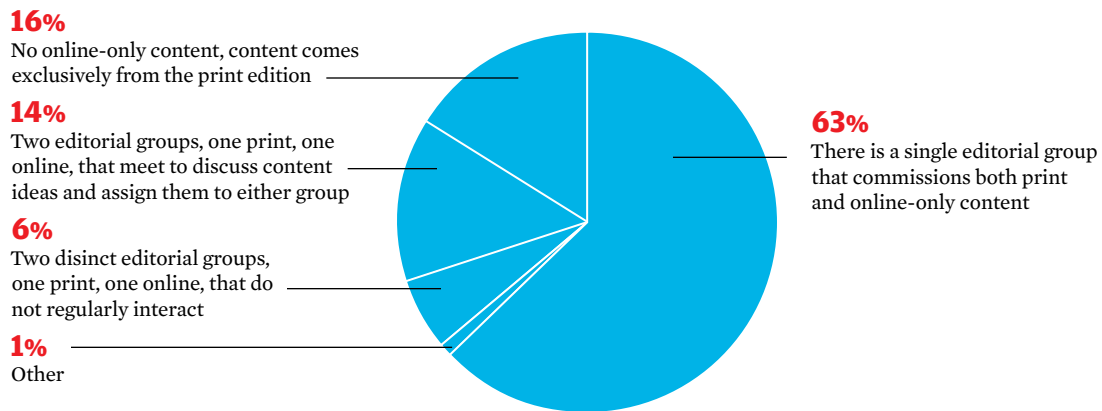
Most Web sites have a single advertising team that works on both print and online accounts (Fig. 12).
- 87% of respondents said there was one advertising team that works on both print and online accounts.
- 13% said there were two separate teams, one for print, one for online.

Figure 12: Advertising staff division
What is the makeup of your advertising staff?

13%
To separate teams, one for print, one for Web

87%
One advertising team that works on both print and Web
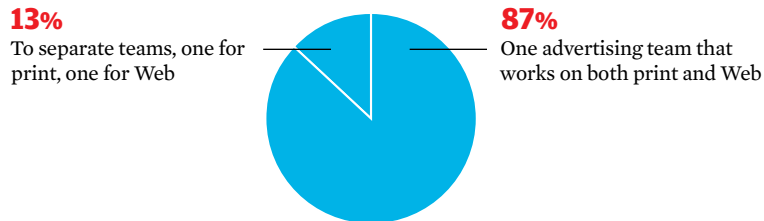
When independent Web editors are in charge of Web site budgets, their Web sites are more likely to have a dedicated Web advertising team than when print editors or publishers are in charge (Fig. 13).

Figure 13: Budget decision-making and advertising staff division
What is the make-up of your advertising staff?

■ One advertising team that works on both print and online accounts

■ Two separate teams, one for print, one for online

Print Editor   **Web Editor**   **Publisher**

Control of Web site content
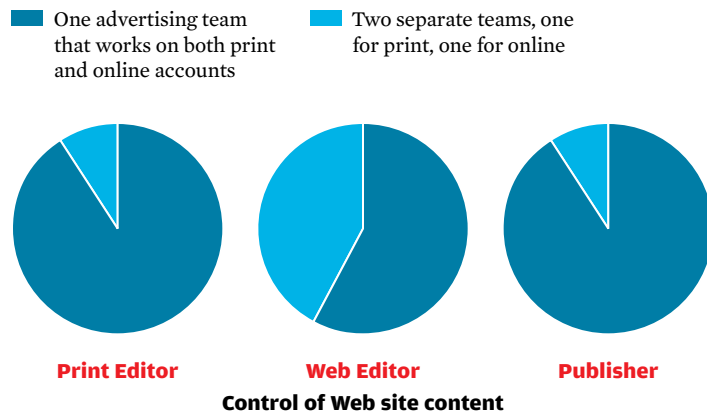
2   Standards and Practices

Is online content, with its rapid turnaround requirement, held to the same standards as material that appears in print? In general, the answer is no. Over half (51%) of original content that appears on Web sites is either not copy-edited at all, or is copy-edited less rigorously than in print. Moreover, just under half (43%) of respondents say that there is either a lower standard for fact-checking online (35%) or no fact-checking at all (8%).

Web sites are more likely to have lower standards in these areas as their traffic rises, and when content decisions are made by independent Web editors.

Key findings:

- Most magazines do some copy-editing of online-only content, but most have less rigorous copy-editing online than in print.
- Web sites with more than 50,000 unique visitors a month have less vigorous copy-editing than print publications.
- Profitable Web sites are slightly more likely to have less rigorous copy-editing online.
- Web site content is less rigorously copy edited when independent Web editors, rather than print editors or publishers, make content decisions.
- Fact checking (excluding blogs) is less rigorous online than in print.
- Web sites with more than 50,000 visitors a month fact-check less rigorously than sites with less traffic.
- Fact-checking is more likely to be lax when independent Web editors are in charge of online content decisions.
- Many magazines Web sites correct errors without acknowledging the mistakes.
- Error correction rises with Web traffic and profitability, but methods of doing so are inconsistent.
- Error corrections rise when independent Web editors make content decisions, but independent Web editors are more likely than print counterparts or publishers to correct with no notice.

The most common reason for content to be on the Web site is "recycling" of material from the print edition (Fig. 14).
Also, more than one in five say that quality issues are a reason for relegating content to the Web at least sometimes.

Figure 14: Online content section
Why does content appear on your Web site?

■ Always a Reason ■ Often a Reason ■ Sometimes a Reason ■ Never a Reason

Space constraints in print edition **Quality under print edition standards** **Maintain "freshness"** **Multimedia** **Breaking news** **Ran in print**
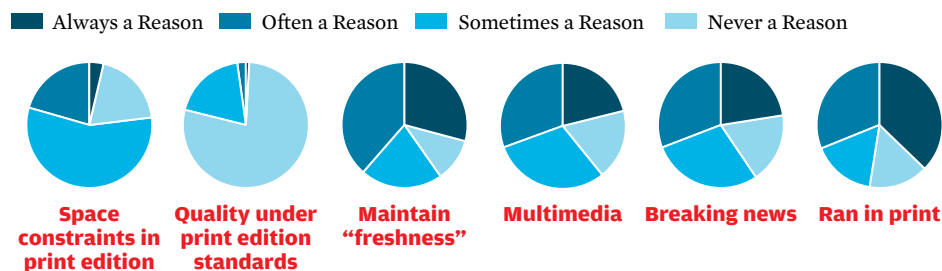
Copy editing (excluding blogs) is less rigorous online for more than half (59%) of magazines surveyed (Fig. 15).
- 11% do no copy-editing for online-only content.
- 48% copy-edit online-only content, but less rigorously than print content.
- 41% use the same copy-editing process for online-only and print content.

In total, 89% of magazines surveyed do at least some copy-editing of their online only content.

Figure 15: Copy-editing
Which best describes how online-only content is copy-edited?

41%
Online-only and print content use the same copy-editing process

48%
Online-only content is copy-edited, but less rigorously than print content

11%
No copy-editing for online-only content
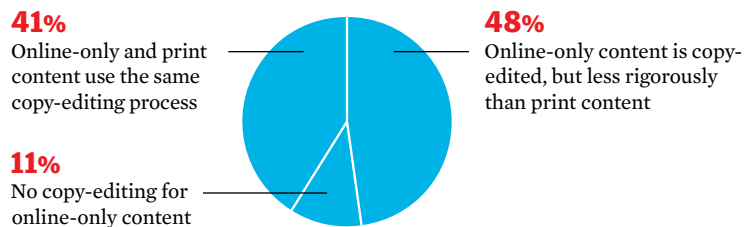
Web copy-editing is less rigorous than print for Web sites that have more than 50,000 unique visitors a month than those that have less (Fig. 16).

Figure 16: Web site traffic and copy-editing

How does copy-editing differ between Web and print?
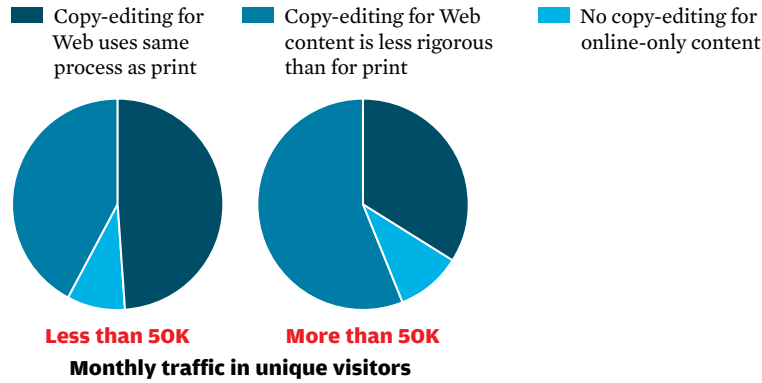
■ Copy-editing for
Web uses same
process as print

■ Copy-editing for Web
content is less rigorous
than for print

■ No copy-editing for
online-only content

Less than 50K　　　　**More than 50K**

Monthly traffic in unique visitors

Profitable Web sites are slightly more likely than unprofitable Web sites to have a less rigorous form of copy-editing than their parent print magazines (Fig. 17).

Figure 17: Content decision-making and copy-editing

How does copy-editing differ between Web and print?

■ Copy-editing for
Web uses same
process as print

■ Copy-editing for Web
content is less rigorous
than for print

■ No copy-editing for
online-only content

Profitable　　　　**Not profitable**

Web site profitability
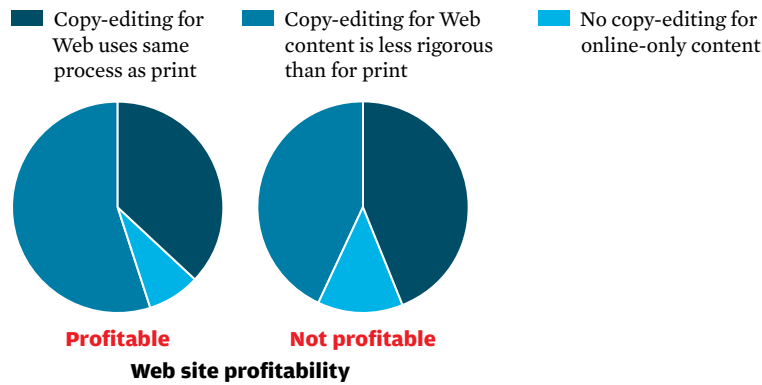
When independent Web editors are in charge of content decisions, their Web sites have a less rigorous form of copy-editing than their parent print magazines (Fig. 18).

Figure 18: Content decision-making and copy-editing
How does copy-editing differ between Web and print?

■ Copy-editing for Web uses same process as print   ■ Copy-editing for Web content is less rigorous than for print   ■ No copy-editing for online-only content

Print Editor   **Web Editor**   **Publisher**

Control of Web site content
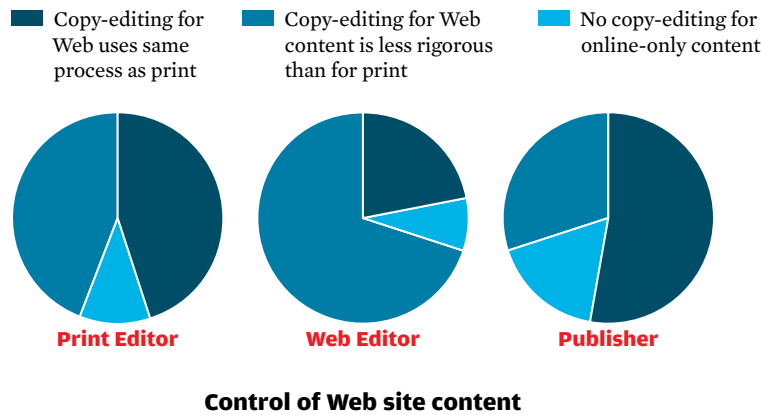
Fact-checking (excluding blogs) is less rigorous online than in print for 35% of respondents (Fig. 19).
- 8% do not fact-check print or online content.
- 8% do not fact-check online-only content.
- 27% say online-only content is fact-checked, but less rigorously than print content.
- 57% use the same fact-checking process for online-only and print content.

In total, 84% of magazines surveyed do at least some fact-checking of their online-only content and 92% fact-check their print content.

Figure 19: Fact-checking
Which best describes how online-only content is fact-checked?

27%
Online-only content is fact-checked but less rigorously than print content

8%
Online-only content is not fact-checked

8%
Neither print nor online content is fact-checked

57%
Online-only and print content use the same fact-checking process
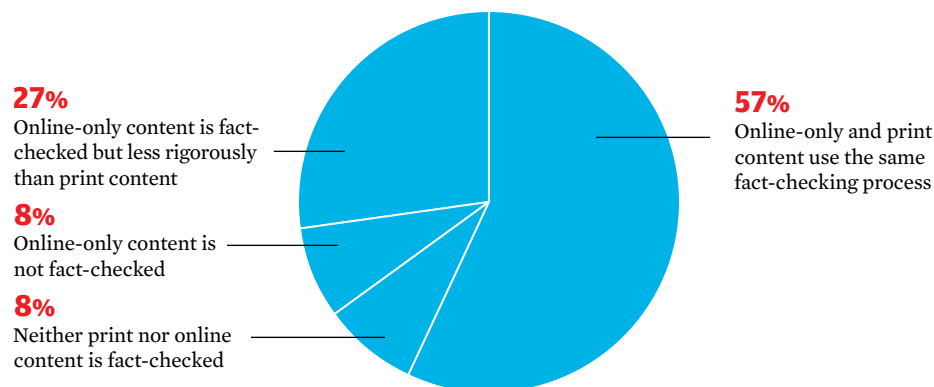
Web sites with more than 50,000 visitors a month use less rigorous fact checking methods than sites with less traffic (Fig. 20).

Figure 20: Web site traffic and fact-checking
How does fact-checking differ between Web and print?
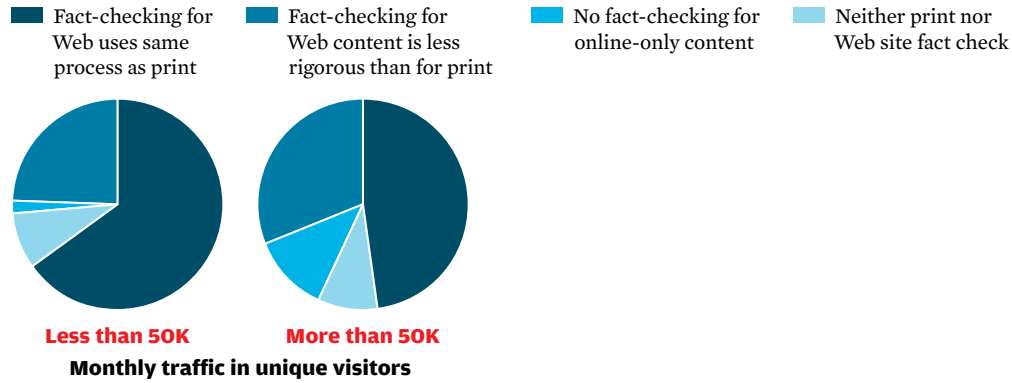
■ Fact-checking for Web uses same process as print	■ Fact-checking for Web content is less rigorous than for print	■ No fact-checking for online-only content	■ Neither print nor Web site fact check

Less than 50K   **More than 50K**
Monthly traffic in unique visitors

Profitable Web sites are slightly more likely than unprofitable websites to have a less rigorous form of fact-checking than their parent print magazines (Fig. 21).

Figure 21: Web site profitability and fact-checking
How does fact-checking differ between Web and print?

■ Fact-checking for Web uses same process as print	■ Fact-checking for Web content is less rigorous than for print	■ No fact-checking for online-only content	■ Neither print nor Web site fact check

Profitable   **Not profitable**
Web site profitability
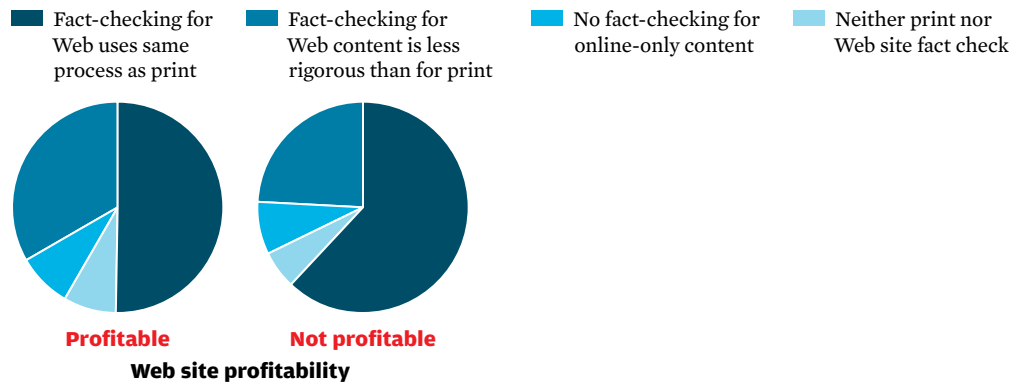
When independent Web editors are in charge of content decisions for a magazine's Web site, fact checking procedures are likely to be more lax for the Web than for print (Fig. 22).

Magazines with independent Web editors in charge of content decisions are almost twice as likely to have a less rigorous fact-checking process for Web content than print content, and almost three times as likely to have no fact checking at all for Web content.

- 40% said that when independent Web editors, as opposed to print editors, are in charge of content decisions, fact-checking is less rigorous (17% said there was no fact-checking online when independent Web editors made the content decisions).

Figure 22: Content decision-making and fact-checking

How does fact-checking differ between Web and print?

Fact-checking for Web uses same process as print

Fact-checking for Web content is less rigorous than for print

No fact-checking for online-only content

Print Editor   Web Editor   Publisher

Control of Web site content
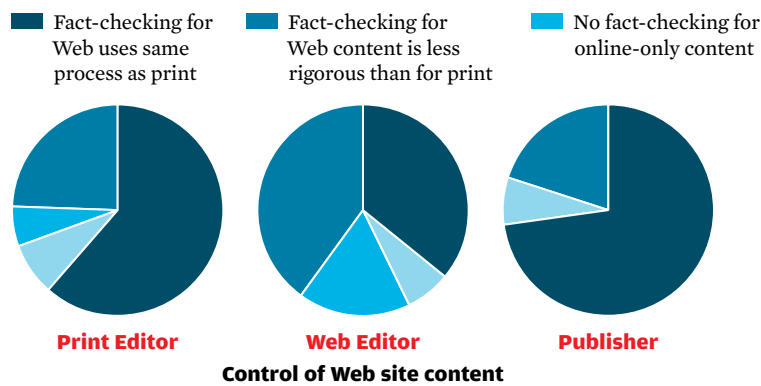
Many magazines Web sites correct errors without acknowledging the mistakes (Fig. 23).

- 87% correct minor errors, such as typos or misspellings, with no indication to readers.
- 45% correct factual errors with no indication to readers.
- 37% correct factual errors and append an editor's note detailing the nature of the error to the content where the mistake appeared.
- 6% leave major factual errors in as they originally appeared in the content, but add an editor's note at the point of the error.
- 1% note all errors in a special section of the Web site.

Figure 23: Error correction
Which best describes how errors are corrected online?
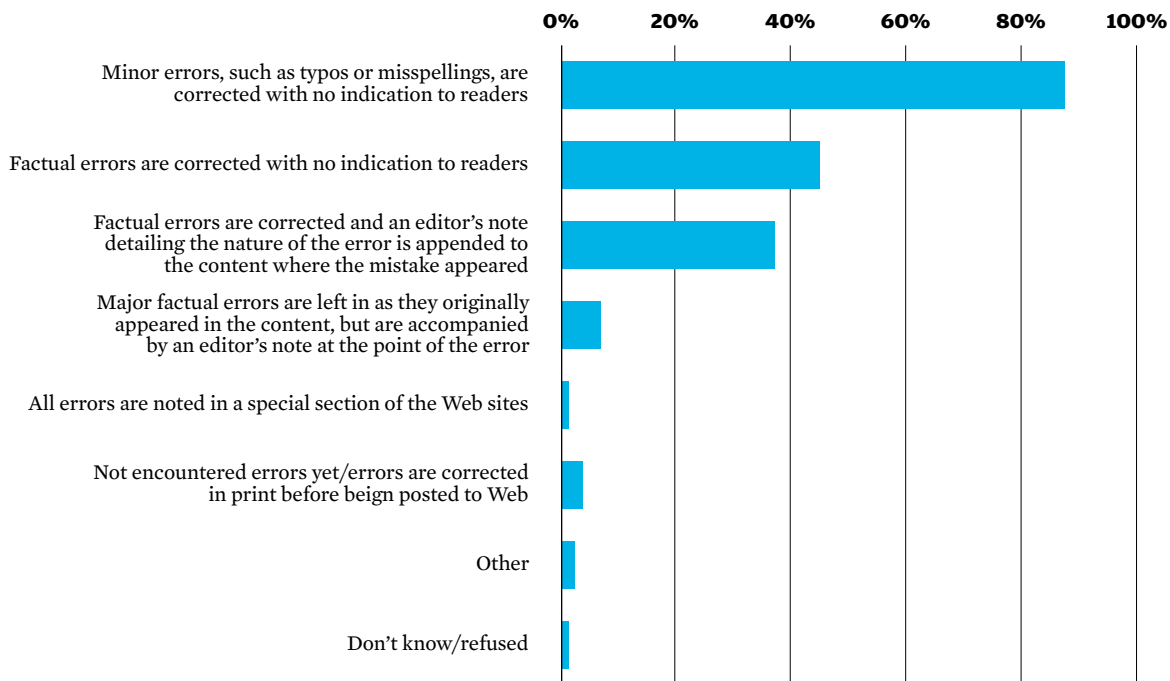
Error correction goes up with Web traffic and profitability, though how errors are actually corrected is inconsistent (Fig. 24, 25).

Figure 24: Web site traffic and error correction

How does error correction differ between Web and print?

- Minor errors, such as typos or mispellings, are corrected with no indication to readers
- Factual errors are corrected with no indication to readers
- Factual errors are corrected and an editor's note is appended to the content where the error appeared
- Major factual errors are left in and are accompanied by an editor's note at the point of the error

Monthly unique visitors less than 50K

Monthly unique visitors more than 50K
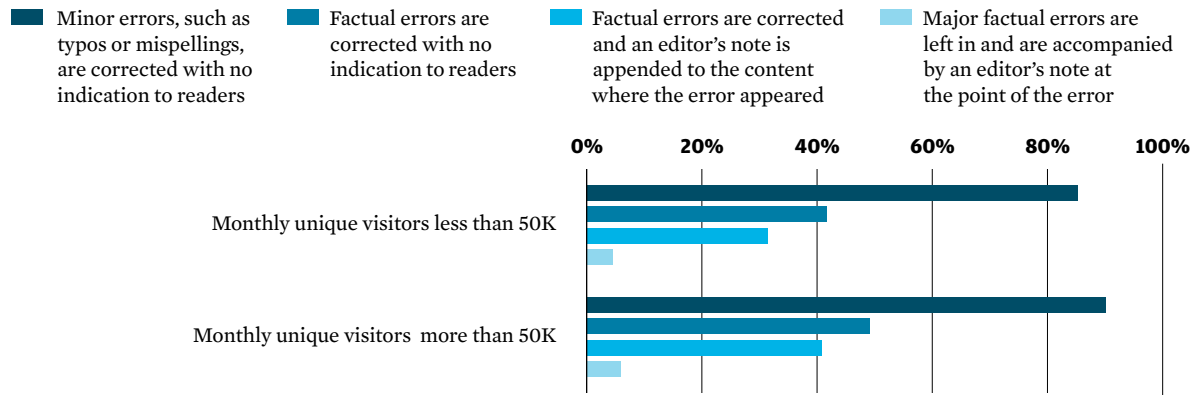
Figure 25: Web site profitability and error correction

How does error correction differ between Web and print?

- Minor errors, such as typos or mispellings, are corrected with no indication to readers
- Factual errors are corrected with no indication to readers
- Factual errors are corrected and an editor's note is appended to the content where the error appeared
- Major factual errors are left in and are accompanied by an editor's note at the point of the error

Web site profitable

Web site not profitable
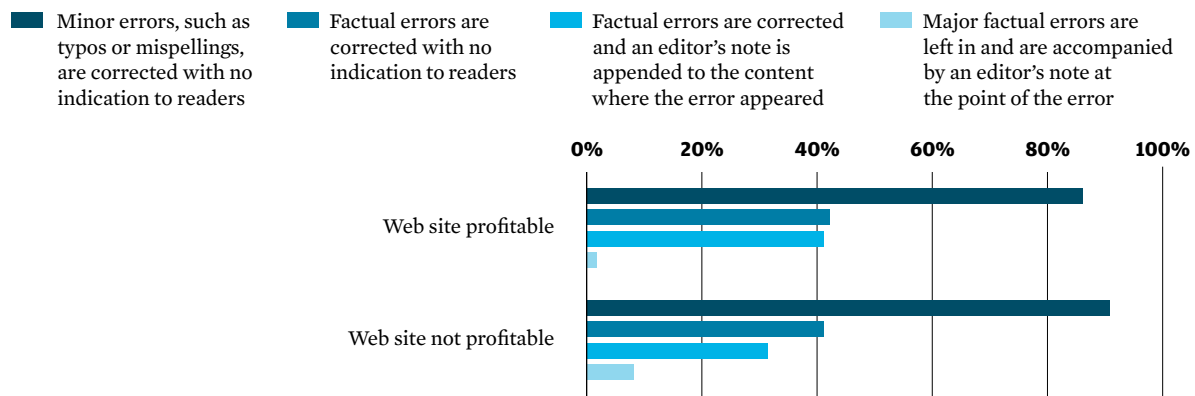
While error correction goes up when Web editors are in charge of content decisions, they are more likely to correct with no notice than print editors or publishers (Fig. 26).

Figure 26: Content decision-making and error correction

How does error correction differ between Web and print? How does error correction differ between Web and print?

■ Minor errors, such as typos or mispellings, are corrected with no indication to readers

■ Factual errors are corrected with no indication to readers

■ Factual errors are corrected and an editor's note is appended to the content where the error appeared

■ Major factual errors are left in and are accompanied by an editor's note at the point of the error
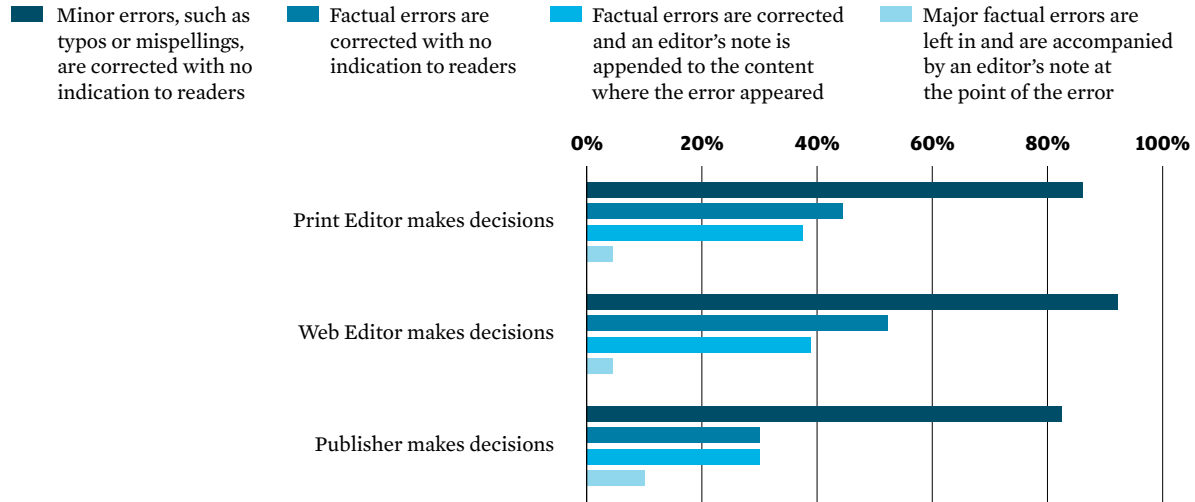
3 Business Model

Despite widespread discussion about the inevitability of paywalls and bleak prospects for advertising on the Web, the survey shows that advertising is by far the largest revenue source for magazine Web sites, 68% of which say that it is their primary revenue source.

Just over half of the magazines surveyed offer *all* of their print content online for free, and profitable sites offer all of their content for free more often than unprofitable ones. Though only a small portion of our sample uses a paywall, such sites were less often profitable than those which did not.

Key findings:

- Only about a third of magazine Web sites make a profit.
- Magazines that publish more frequently tend to have more profitable Web sites.
- Print magazine circulation and Web site profitability show weak correlation.
- Web site traffic is more strongly correlated with profitability than print magazine circulation.
- Just over half of all magazines surveyed (52%) provide all their print content online for free.
- Providing content for free does not necessarily hurt profitability.
- Advertising is by far the largest revenue source for magazine Web sites.
- Advertising is the largest revenue source for most profitable magazine Web sites.
- A variety of ad pricing models are used online.

Only about a third of magazine Web sites report making a profit (Fig. 27).
- 31% say the Web site does not make a profit.
- 17% do not calculate the Web site's profitability separately.
- 20% do not know.

Figure 27: Web site profitability
Does your Web site make a profit?

31%
No

32%
Yes

8%
Web site profit not
measured or not
calculated separately

20%
Unsure
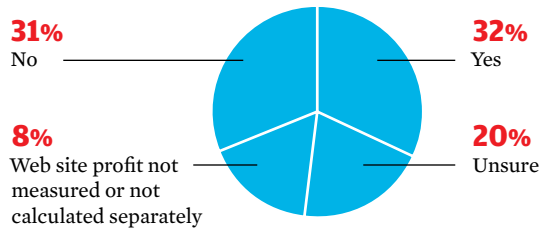
More frequently published magazines tend to have profitable Web sites more often (Fig. 28).
The Web sites of weekly magazines were more than twice as likely to be profitable than those of quarterlies.

Figure 28: Web site profitability and print frequency
What is your Web site profitability?

■ Profitable ■ Not Profitable ■ Unsure

Weekly **Biweekly** **Monthly** **Bimonthly** **Quarterly**
Print frequency
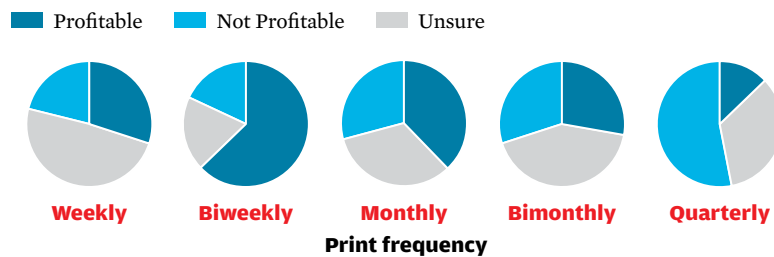
The circulation of a magazine has only a small correlation with Web site profitability (Fig. 29).
Only magazines with circulations of 2 million or more showed a strong trend towards profitability, with 42% of those we surveyed being profitable. All other brackets had about 30% profitable.

Figure 29: Web site profitability and circulation
What is your Web site profitability?

■ Profitable ■ Not Profitable ■ Unsure

< 100K **100K–250K** **250K–500K** **500K–1M** **1M–2M** **> 2M**
Magazine circulation
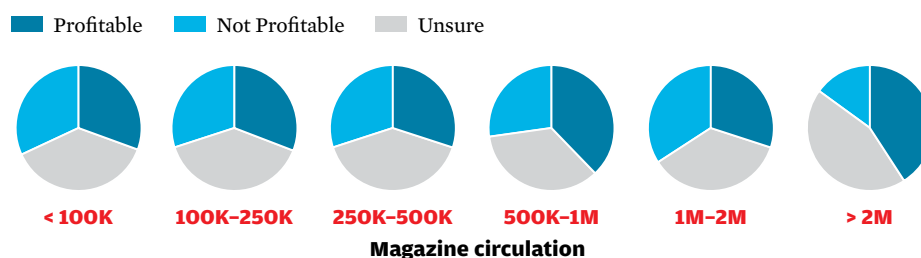
Web site traffic is a much more strongly correlated with profitability than print magazine circulation (Fig. 30).

- 21% of the magazine Web sites we surveyed with less than 50,000 unique monthly visitors were profitable.
- 62% of the Web sites with between 1.5 million and 2 million unique monthly visitors were profitable.

Figure 30: Web site profitability and Web site traffic

What is your Web site profitability?

Profitable　　Not Profitable　　Unsure

| < 50K | 50K–99K | 100K–499K | 500K–999K | 1M–1.49M | 1.5M–2M | > 2M |

Monthly traffic in unique visitors
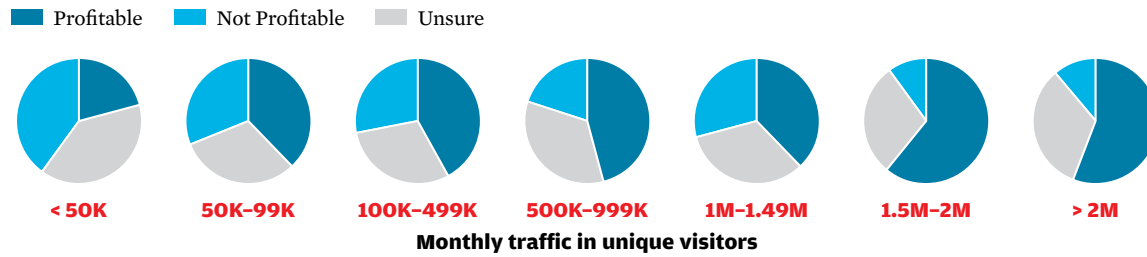
Just over half of all magazines surveyed (52%) provide all of their print content free online (Fig. 31).

Respondents were asked to report on the amount of the magazines' print edition content available on-line and the payment structure to access that information.

- 52% of the survey respondents indicate that all significant content from the print edition is available free online.
- 31% say that some print edition content is free online.
- 10% say some is free online and some is online behind a paywall.
- 4% have all or almost all print content behind a paywall.

Figure 31: Availability of free content

How much print content is available online for free?

52%
All significant content from the print edition is available free online

31%
Some print edition content is available free online

10%
Some print edition content is available free online, with the rest behind a paywall

4%
All or almost all of printed content is behind a paywall

2%
Other

1%
No printed copy is available online
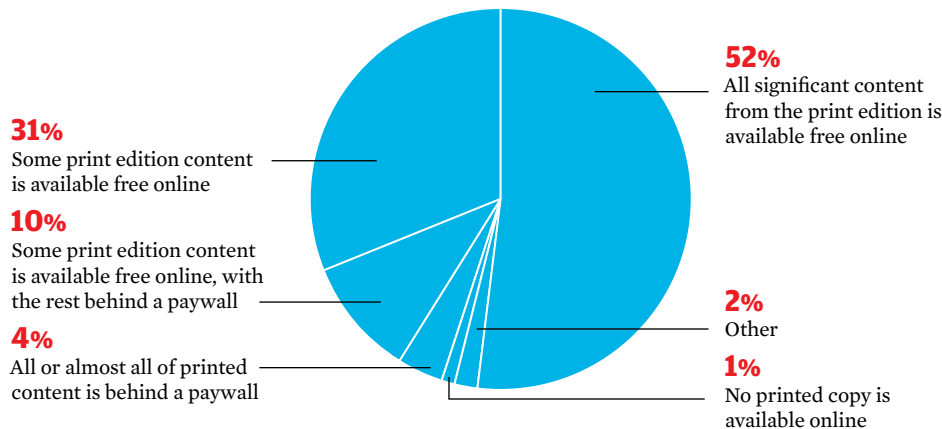
Offering free content does not necessarily hurt profitability (Fig. 32).
- 49% of the Web sites that don't make a profit offer all significant content from the print edition free online.
- 65% of the sites that do make a profit offer their content for free.

Figure 32: Web site profitability and availability of free content
How much of your print content is free on the Web?

■ All major content from the print magazine is available on the Web for free

■ Some content from the print magazine is available on the Web for free

■ Some content from the print magazine is available on the Web for free, other content is behind a paywall

■ All content from the print magazine is behind a paywall
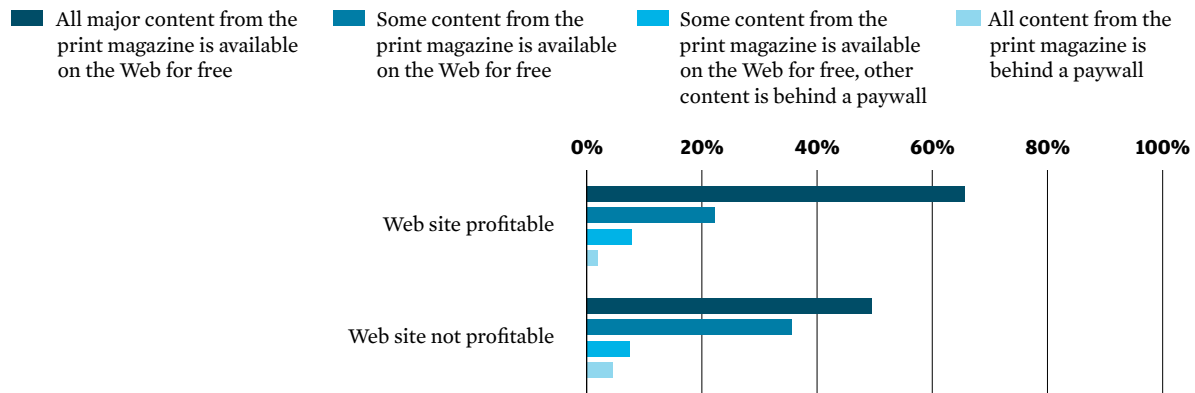
Advertising is by far the largest revenue source for magazine Web sites (Fig. 33).
The largest revenue source for more than two-thirds (68%) of respondents is advertising on the Web site. Just over 1 in 10 (11%) say that print subscription sales are the largest revenue source for the Web site.

Figure 33: Revenue Sources
What is the principal revenue source for your Web site?
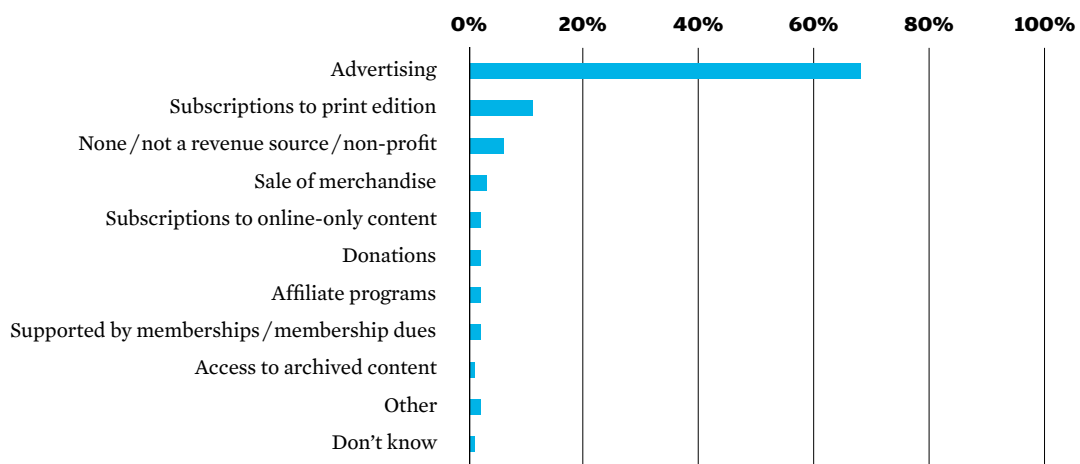
Among magazines Web sites that are profitable, 83% say that advertising is their largest revenue source (Fig. 34).

Figure 34: Revenue Sources and Web site profitability
Profitable Web sites only

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

Advertising
Subscriptions to print edition
Subscriptions to online-only content
Sale of merchandise
Affiliate programs
Donations
Other
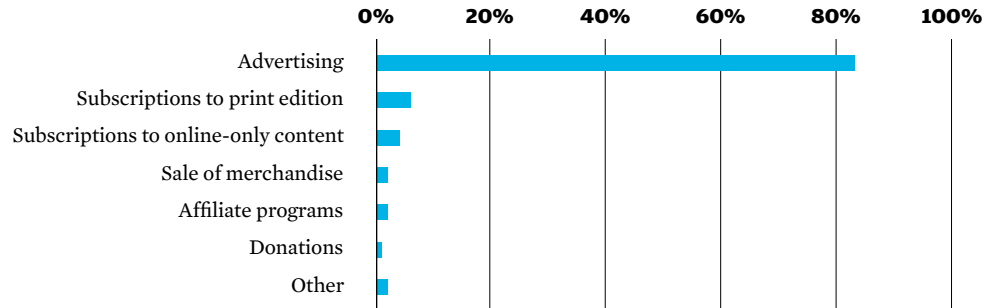
There are a variety of ad pricing modes being used online (Fig. 35).
The most prevalent price structures used among magazine Web sites are:
- 44% use cost per impression pricing.
- 32% use sponsored sections (micro-sites).
- 21% use cost per click pricing.
- 19% use cost per sale pricing.
- 17% use affiliate programs.

See Appendix B for a definition of terms.

Figure 35: Advertising models
What kind of advertising models do you use?

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

Cost per impression
Cost per click
Cost per action
Cost per sale
Affiliate programs
Sponsored section or micro-sites
No ads/no paid ads/in-house ads only
Monthly rate
Online and print advertising tied together
Other
Don't know/refused
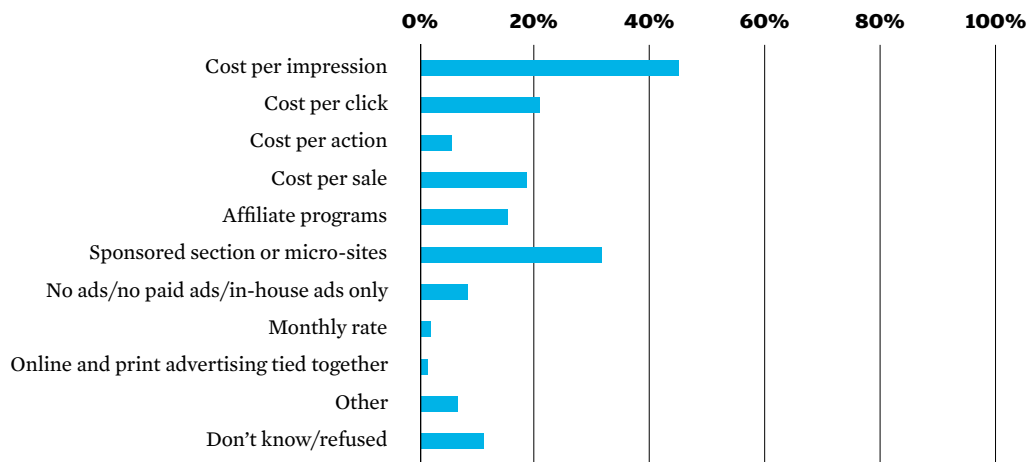
4 Social Media and Community Building

One of new media's most salient features is its capacity for interacting with audiences and building communities of readers via blogs, "comment threads," discussion forums, and "social media" that lie beyond the borders of individual Web sites.

Transparent dialogue is, of course, of value in-and-of-itself. But there is also a self-serving motive to fostering community-building: developing a loyal readership that creates its own content and can attract others to do the same.

Most Web sites have adopted social media tools and techniques, and do so more when independent Web editors are in decision-making roles. However, editorial standards are even more scattershot in those venues; blogs are rarely copy-edited or fact-checked and comments are moderated at editors' discretion.

Key findings:

- Most magazines use social media sites.
- Most respondents say Twitter and Facebook are the most effective social media sites.
- Most magazines have blogs on their Web sites (64%).
- Web sites are more likely to have blogs when independent Web editors are in charge of the budget.
- Most magazines allow comments on blogs or other online content (73%).
- Most magazine Web sites do at least some email marketing for publicity.

Social media sites are used by three quarters of magazines surveyed (Fig. 36).
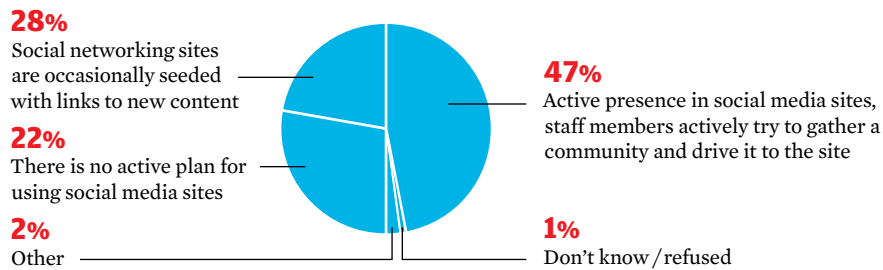
The use of social networking sites as a business tool has increased as they have gained in popularity in recent years.

- Close to half (47%) of respondents have an "active presence" in social media sites.
- 28% occasionally seed links to new content on social network sites.
- 23% have no active plan for using social media sites.

Figure 36: Social media usage

What best describes how you use social media sites?

28%
Social networking sites are occasionally seeded with links to new content

22%
There is no active plan for using social media sites

2%
Other

47%
Active presence in social media sites, staff members actively try to gather a community and drive it to the site

1%
Don't know /refused

Respondents report the most effective social media sites were Twitter and Facebook (Fig. 37).

- More than 60% of respondents said both Facebook and Twitter were either very or somewhat effective in driving traffic to their sites.
- All other sites had at least 50% of respondents unsure of their effectiveness.
- MySpace had the most respondents saying it was not at all effective, with 26%.

Figure 37: Social media effectiveness

How effective are the following social media Web sites in driving traffic?

■ Very Effective ■ Somewhat Effective ■ Not Too Effective ■ Not At All Effective ■ Not Sure

Facebook   Twitter   MySpace   Digg   Reddit   StumbleUpon   Delicious   LinkedIn

Social media Web sites
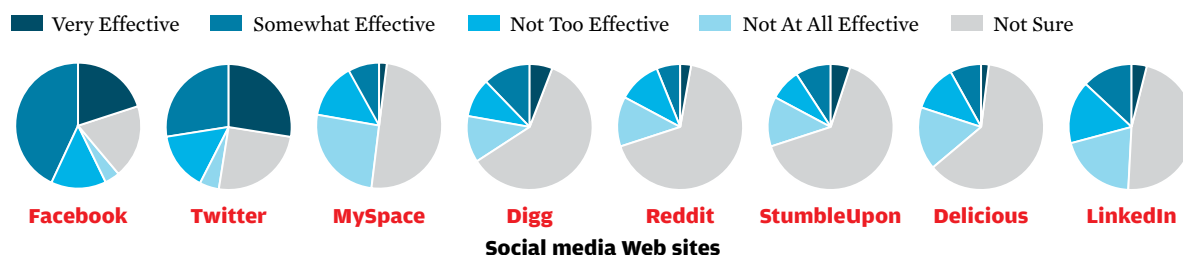
These eight Web sites represent only a fraction of the many that have sprung up around the internet over the last few years. In this survey, we have not attempted to define what a social media site is, or what to be "active" in one means. However, one prevailing theme of the social media Web sites we have selected is that they all allow a user to maintain a consistent identity (sometimes under a pseudonym) and post content (which may be as simple as a single sentence or a hyperlink) that is associated with that identity.

64% of magazines surveyed have blogs on their Web site (Fig. 38).
For the magazines that have blogs most (87%) are maintained by staff members
and 39% use freelancers or contract-writers for blogs.

Figure 38: Blogs

Which apply to your Web site's blogs?

		ONLY THOSE WITH BLOGS
There are no blogs on our Web site	36%	—
Blogs are maintained by staff members	55	87%
Blogs are maintained by freelancers or contract-writers	25	39
Blogs are fact-checked	16	25
Blogs are copy-edited	29	46
There are incentives in place for attracting traffic	6	10
Bloggers' content is more-or-less independent from the magazine's editorial control	23	36
Don't know/refused	1	1

When independent Web editors are in charge of the budget, Web sites are more likely to have blogs (Fig. 39).
Magazine Web sites with independent Web editors in charge of the budget have
blogs 82% of the time, compared to 67% when print editors in charge.

Figure 39: Blogs and budget decision-making

Who makes budget decisions?

Print Editor Web Editor Publisher
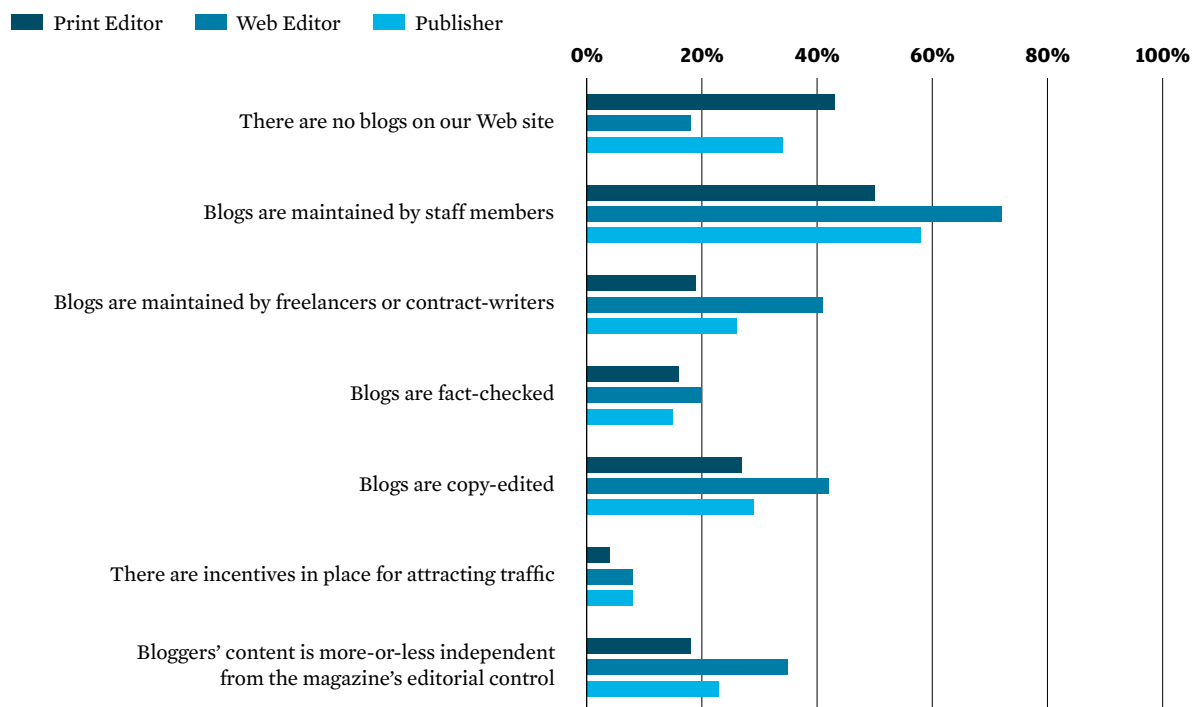
Independent Web editors being in charge of content significantly increases the prevalence of blogs (Fig. 40).
84% of respondents who said independent Web editors were in charge of content said their Web sites have blogs, 60% said they have them when print editors are in charge.

Figure 40: Blogs and content decision-making
Who makes content decisions?

Legend: ■ Print Editor ■ Web Editor ■ Publisher

Categories (top to bottom):
- There are no blogs on our Web site
- Blogs are maintained by staff members
- Blogs are maintained by freelancers or contract-writers
- Blogs are fact-checked
- Blogs are copy-edited
- There are incentives in place for attracting traffic
- Bloggers' content is more-or-less independent from the magazine's editorial control
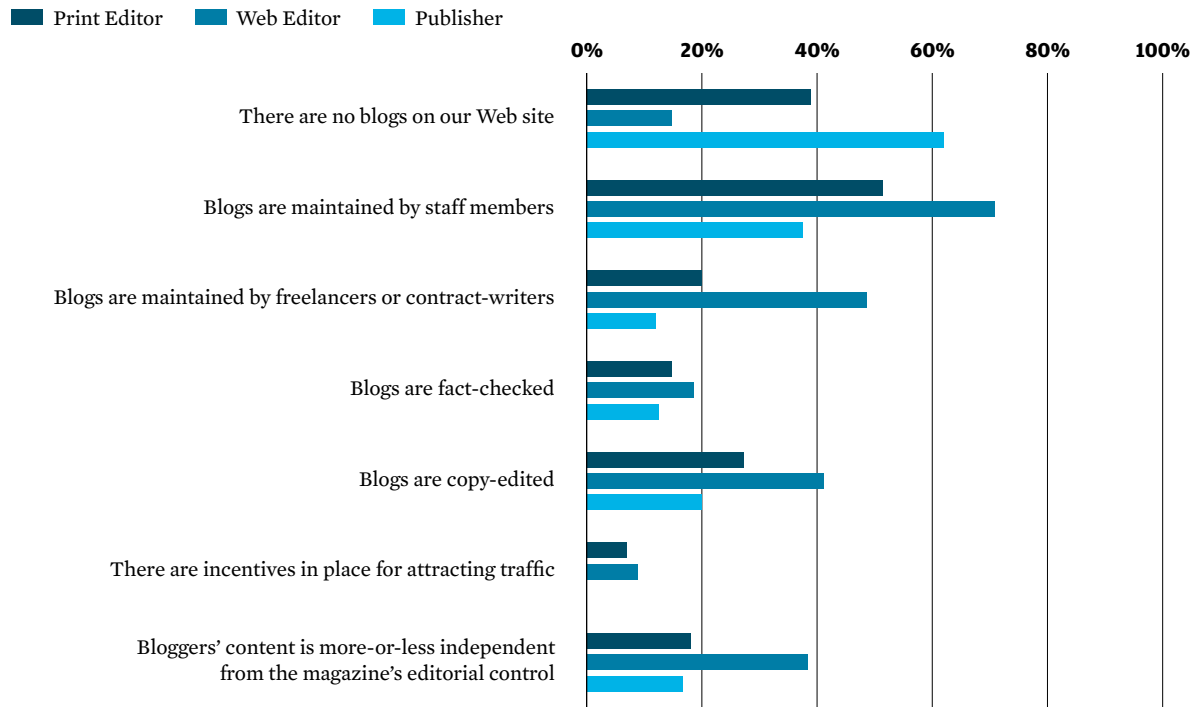
Nearly three quarters (73%) of the sample publications permit comments to be posted to the Web site (Fig. 41).
Among the magazines that allow commenting, 84% do at least some form of moderating of the comments.

Figure 41: Commenting

Which apply to commenting on your Web site?

		ONLY THOSE WITH COMMENTING ON SITE
There is no opportunity for readers to comment on content	27%	—
Comments are not moderated	12	16%
There is an automatic moderation system that holds or edits all comments, using their discretion to hold or edit comments	15	20
One or more staff members are in charge of moderating all comments, using their discretion to hold or edit comments	45	61
One or more staff members are in charge of moderating all comments, using a codified list of rules to hold or edit comments	9	12
Content authors are responsible for moderating their own comments	7	10
Content authors are encouraged to respond to comments	24	32

The ability to comment on magazine content can add a tremendous amount of value to readers; beyond enabling discussions between readers, comment threads can be forums for questions to be answered, potential errors to be pointed out, or updates and further information to be appended. However, one stereotype of Internet commenting is that it is highly prone to vulgarity, off-topic digressions, and malicious disruption by so-called "trolls." Whatever value such behavior has, it is not journalistic in nature. For these reasons and more, almost all respondents whose Web sites featured commenting said that there was some form of moderation in place. However, only 10% of these respondents say that moderators rely on an explicit code of conduct to make moderating decisions.

Four out of five magazine Web sites (80%) do at least some email marketing (Fig. 42).
Another publicity tool utilized by magazines is email marketing. Email messages that include a newsletter with links to Web site content were the most common (66%) and also deemed the most effective (62%) form of email marketing.

Figure 42: Email Marketing

Which applies to our email marketing?

		ONLY THOSE WITH EMAIL MARKETING
The magazine does no email marketing	20%	—
Email marketing includes a newsletter with links to content on the Web site	66	83%
Email marketing includes a newsletter with original content	37	46
Email marketing includes a newsletter that has advertising embedded	48	60
Email marketing includes subscription reminders and offers	51	64
Email marketing includes stand-alone advertising messages from third parties	30	37
Email marketing is "opt-out" rather than "opt-in"	19	24
Other	2	2

The technology that undergirds the Web presents fresh possibilities for magazine content and presentation. Indeed, the Internet combines form and function like no other medium before it, allowing readers, for example, to go directly to primary material with the click of a hyperlink.

Just as technology allows magazines to provide a new dimension of information to readers, so too can it provide publications with valuable information about reading trends and habits, such as which sites are most read, and what layouts are most likely to catch a reader's eye.

The differences between print and digital media that are rooted in technology are too many and too varied to fully encompass in this broad survey. Our questions deal with the ways back-end technology influences front-end experience.

Key findings:

- Roughly half of magazines use metrics to guide content decisions (47%), but very closely monitor and rely on them (8%).
- Less than half use traffic statistics (43%). Those that do so regularly for content decisions are significantly more likely to be profitable.
- Web sites that receive more traffic are more likely to use traffic statistics in content decisions.
- Most magazines name Google Analytics as the online metric that is most helpful to their Web sites.
- Content management systems vary, with custom-designs proving most popular.
- Most magazines are not keeping pace with mobile display and interactivity technology. Less than 1 in 5 are designed for smartphones and very few are formatted for e-book readers (4%).
- Web sites are more likely to have multiple display options when independent Web editors are in charge of budget or content decisions.

About half of the magazines surveyed are using metrics to guide content decisions, but only 8% closely monitor and rely on them (Fig. 43).
Although monthly Web traffic statistics are often used as metrics to measure the overall success of a Web site, only about half of the sample (47%) uses traffic measurements to make editorial decisions.
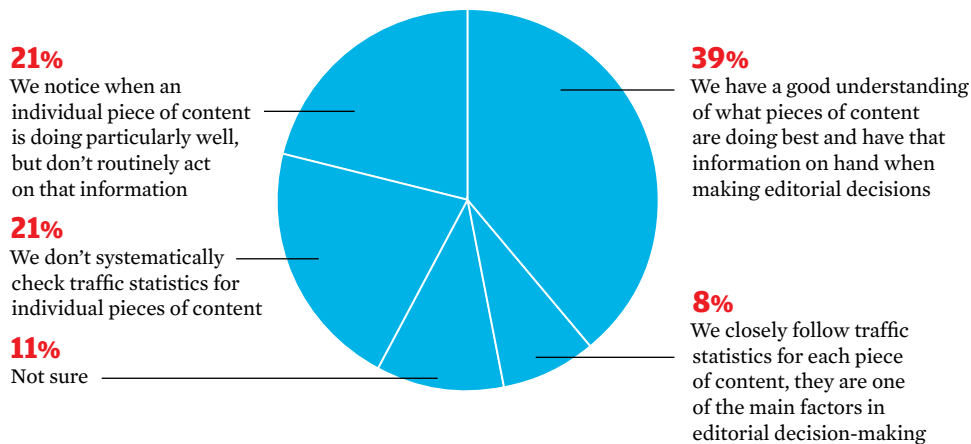- 8% closely follow traffic statistics for each piece of content and they are one of the main factors in editorial decision-making.
- 39% have a good understanding of which content is doing best and have that info when making editorial decisions.

Another 43% do not really use traffic statistics.
- 21% notice when individual content is doing well, but don't usually act on that info.
- 22% don't systematically check traffic statistics for individual pieces of content.

Figure 43: Use of traffic statistics
Which best describes how you use traffic statistics?

21%
We notice when an individual piece of content is doing particularly well, but don't routinely act on that information

21%
We don't systematically check traffic statistics for individual pieces of content

11%
Not sure

39%
We have a good understanding of what pieces of content are doing best and have that information on hand when making editorial decisions

8%
We closely follow traffic statistics for each piece of content, they are one of the main factors in editorial decision-making

Web sites that regularly use traffic statistics for content decisions are significantly more likely to be profitable (Fig. 44).
61% of profitable Web sites use traffic statistics, as opposed to 34% of unprofitable Web sites.

Figure 44: Web site profitability and traffic statistic use
Do you regularly use traffic statistics to make content decisions?

■ Use　■ Don't use　■ Not sure

Profitable　　**Not profitable**
Web site profitability
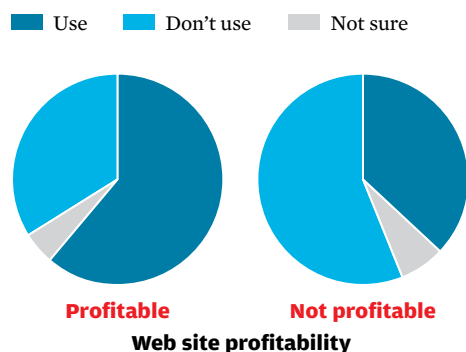
As Web sites are more trafficked, they are more likely to use traffic statistics in content decisions (Fig. 45).
More than 90% of the Web sites surveyed with more than 2 million unique visitors a month use traffic statistics for making content decisions.

Figure 45: Web site Traffic and Traffic Statistic Use
Do you regularly use traffic statistics to make content decisions?
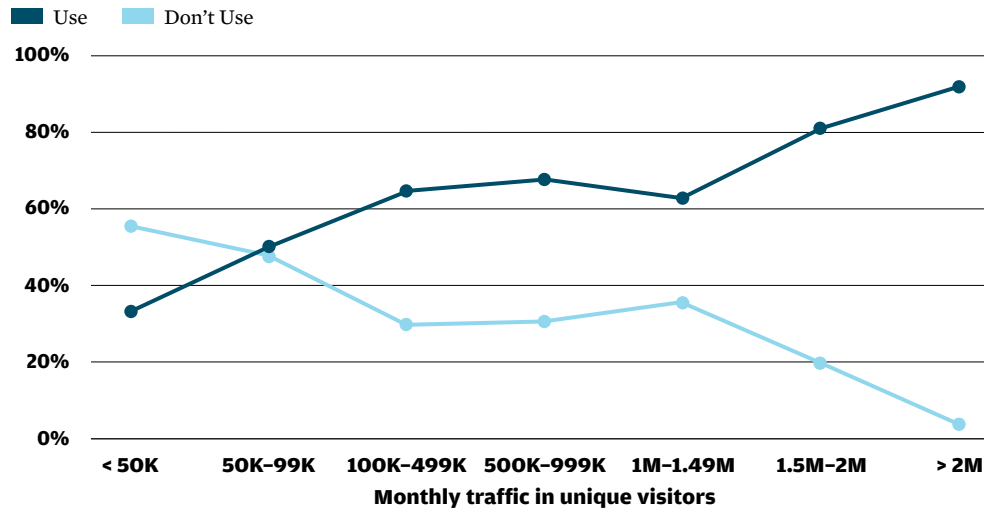
Google Analytics is far and away the online metric named most often as most helpful to magazine Web sites (Fig. 46).
- 61% say Google Analytics is most helpful.
- 7% mention Ominiture (Sitecatalyst).
- 4% say Comscore Media Metrics.
- No other names exceed 3%.

Figure 46: Traffic analytics systems
Which is most useful for analyzing traffic statistics?

Content management systems vary with custom-designs leading the way (Fig. 47).

More than half (54%) have a custom designed system in place:
- 37% use a custom-designed system, shared by multiple sites in their publishing family.
- 17% have a custom-designed system used by their magazine alone.
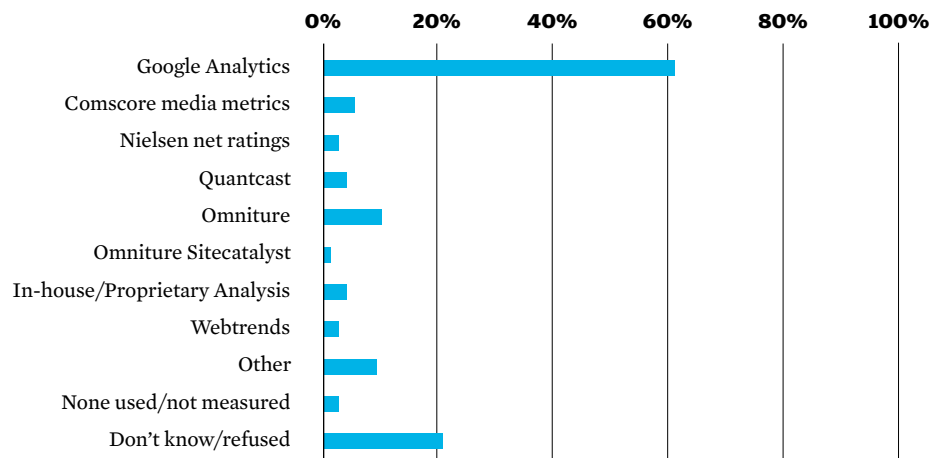- 16% use an off-the-shelf commercial system.
- 11% use an open-source system.

Figure 47: Content management systems

Which best describes your content management system?

17%
A custom-designed system
used by your magazine alone

16%
An off-the-shelf
commercial system

10%
An open-source system

37%
A custom-designed system
shared by multiple sites in
your publishing family

20%
Not sure
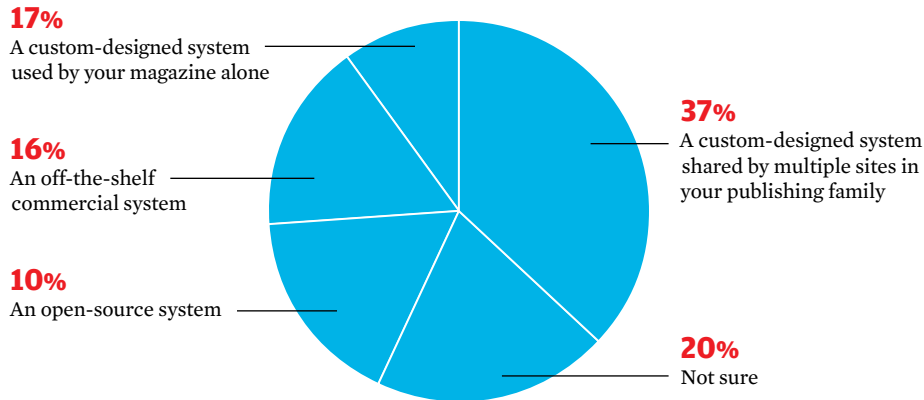
Content management systems make updating and maintaining Web sites possible without needing to know much, or in some cases, any, programming language. By systematizing the various moving parts of a magazine's content into regular forms, however, CMS's can limit the display options available to writers, editors, and producers. Expensive custom designs can be tailored to individual magazines' needs, but even then may have the effect of locking in a particular kind of content or style.

Many magazines are not keeping pace with mobile display and interactivity technology. Less than 1 in 5 are designed for smartphones and only 4% are formatted for e-book readers (Fig. 48).

- 54% offer a digital version of each print issue that replicates the layout of a physical copy.
- 47% of sites allow readers to subscribe to content on their own, using RSS feeds, podcasts on iTunes, etc.
- 18% have a mobile edition of the site that is optimized for portable devices like smartphones.
- 4% have content formatted for e-book readers like the Kindle.

Figure 48: Display options

Which apply to display options for your Web site?
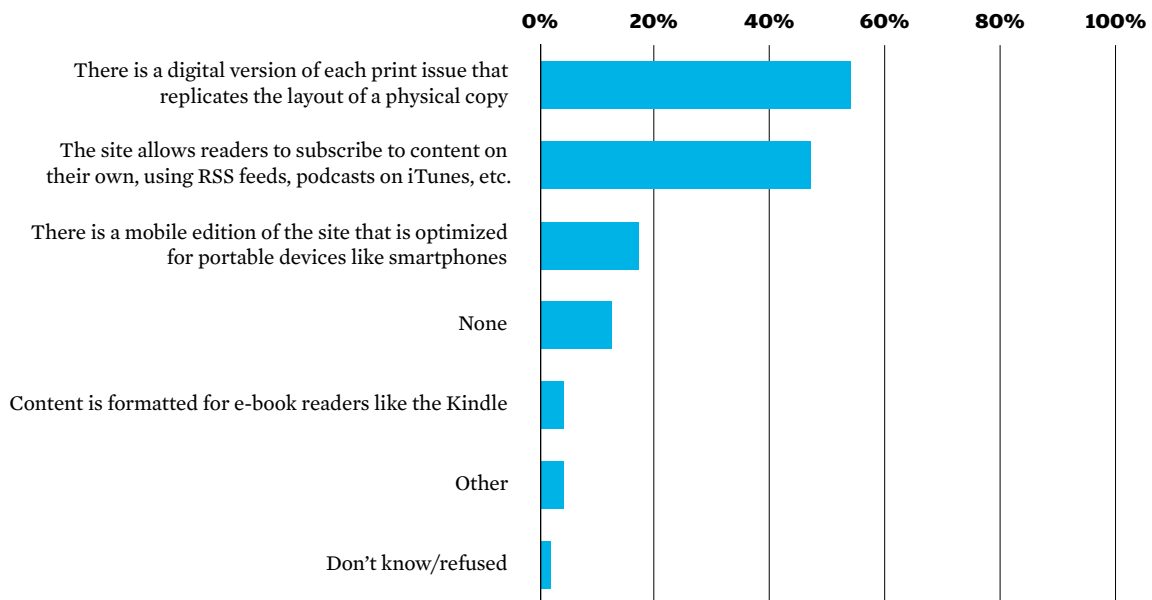
When independent Web editors are in charge of budget or content decisions, their Web sites are more likely to have multiple display options (Fig. 49, 50).
For both, they are about 10% more likely to have versions of their Web sites designed for mobile devices, such as smartphones.

Figure 49: Display options and budget decision-making
Who makes budget decisions?

Legend: Print Editor · Web Editor · Publisher

Categories (x-axis 0% to 100%):
- There is a digital version of each print issue that replicates the layout of a physical copy
- The site allows readers to subscribe to content on their own, using RSS feeds, podcasts on iTunes, etc.
- There is a mobile edition of the site that is optimized for portable devices like smartphones
- Content is formatted for e-book readers like the Kindle
- None

Figure 50: Display options and content decision-making
Who makes content decisions?

Legend: Print Editor · Web Editor · Publisher

Categories (x-axis 0% to 100%):
- There is a digital version of each print issue that replicates the layout of a physical copy
- The site allows readers to subscribe to content on their own, using RSS feeds, podcasts on iTunes, etc.
- There is a mobile edition of the site that is optimized for portable devices like smartphones
- Content is formatted for e-book readers like the Kindle
- None

6   Mission

The survey concluded with three open ended questions:

1. What do you consider to be the mission of your Web site? Does that mission differ from that of the print edition?
2. What do you consider to be the best feature or aspect of your Web site?
3. What feature or aspect of your Web site do you feel most needs most improvement or is not living up to its potential?

Responses indicate that some magazines have entirely repurposed the role that their Web site plays in relation to their print product.

Most magazines originally viewed Web sites and the unlimited capacity of cyberspace as a way to promote the print publication, publish material that could not fit inside the magazine, and/or to create new revenue streams by electronically exploiting the print publication's brand.

Yet several respondents reported that they now prioritize their Web operations, migrating, as one respondent said, "from a print publication supplemented with online articles to an online publication supplemented with print editions." According to another: "Instead of developing stories for print and then republishing them online, we now do the opposite—develop for online, and [at the end of the month] pick the strongest articles to appear in print."

More extreme versions of this shift include respondents who report, "It is our mission to be Web only." Another respondent said, "Drop the print edition entirely."

Furthermore, many respondents report being unsure when it comes to the mission of their Web site, stating that "we are still figuring it out," and it's "constantly evolving." This mission ambivalence is further reinforced by responses such as "The mission is to enhance the print magazine, but it could also become a replacement for the print magazine." Comparatively few mission statements identified and published—including for their staff—their organization's "true north."

Key findings:

- Editors who said their print product and Web sites shared a common mission outnumbered those who said they were different three to one.
- 16% of respondents said their Web site's mission involved community-building with readers.
- Only 5% mention creating new or unique content as being integral to the site's mission, whereas 96% said they use content from the print magazine online.

Conclusion

Although the answers to the questions in this first survey of the relationship between magazines and their Web sites by definition deal in the quantifiable (graphs, charts, and percentages), the larger, underlying issues they raise are qualitative. They involve complex questions of history, ethics, and media policy:

> The future (if any) of print, the promise (and perils) of the new technology, the failure of the marketplace to solve the problem of journalism's broken business model, the possibilities (and dangers) of relying on government and/or philanthropic support, the hopes (and limitations) of citizen journalism, the question of how (and whether) to try to tame the blogosphere, and what the First Amendment and "fair use" have to say about all that.

Half a century ago, Jürgen Habermas, the Frankfurt School philosopher, put forth his idea of the public sphere as a place in the Enlightenment tradition where democracy would flourish through a continuous conversation, open argument, and debate. Although Habermas traced his public sphere to the eighteenth century coffee houses and taverns in London that actually gave birth to the first journals and magazines (including *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*), when the Internet came along, many optimistic social theorists thought that cyberspace might be the place where Habermas's version of democracy's dialogue would come into its own.

That, of course, is not quite what happened. But ironically, although on its surface the survey deals with such mundane matters as staffing, standards (not so mundane), business models, technology, and mission; in fact, Habermas's idea of the importance of continuous and public conversation, debate and dialogue could not have been more relevant to a survey dealing with the new world of digital media, a world where Habermas's old journals of opinion are supplemented by a new communications superstructure which thrives on interactivity and new forms of digital communication.

Hence our recommendation for a Habermassian convention: that a representative sample of respondents to this survey in convention assemble, and those who can't be there in person should attend online to carry on the conversation begun in this survey. Other invitations should go to bloggers from the farthest reaches of the Internet, specialists from places like MIT's media lab, the Poynter Institute, the Project on Excellence in Journalism, representatives bearing the collective wisdom of the academy, for-profits, and non-profits. They should carry on the conversation that philosophers like Habermas and John Dewey saw as central to the democratic project, and prophets of the digital age see as its signature capability; but it should be grounded in reality by the presence of publishers and others worried about the bottom line of an industry in transition.

The attendees at this convention should, of course, write their own agenda. But based on the survey results we would recommend that it include the following subjects:

Agenda item 1: Staffing

While we are well into the second decade of magazines' presence on the Web, the survey demonstrates that the people who work on magazine Web sites still largely come from the world of print journalism.

On average, only 6% of a magazine's employees work exclusively on its Web site, while 61% work on both the Web site and print edition. Most surprising, only 25% of magazine staff were hired with any prior Web site experience. A full half of the respondents' staff assigned to work on the Web, at least some of the time, had no prior Web experience.

It is also true that print legacy people dominate the top of Web site mastheads,

despite the finding that Web sites are more likely to be profitable when independent Web editors are in charge of content and budget (Web editors are in charge of content less than half the time, except at Web sites with more than 1 million unique users a month).

The domination of print legacy people over Web-experienced people has another consequence, having to do with form and function. Print people need content management systems (CMS), which make it easy for someone with little technical experience to update and maintain Web sites. But ease of use can come at a price. Only 17% of respondents said their Web sites use a custom CMS; others must make do with varying degrees of a one-size-fits-all approach. As one respondent put it, "We need more flexibility in the look and feel of the site, the ability to do more than put words and photos on a page. I envy magazines with multiple developers on staff who can create a design that works for individual features or sections of the mag."

Question: What is keeping Web experience out of magazine staffs and why?

Agenda item 2: Standards and practices

The survey shows that most magazines have less rigorous copy-editing and fact-checking online than in their print editions.

Does that mean that Web people care less about traditional journalistic standards than their print counterparts? Not necessarily. Many will argue, for example, that they in effect fact-check after-the-fact, by immediately printing corrections on the Web site when an inaccuracy is brought to their attention. Some also believe that since the online world, especially the blogosphere, is more akin to a conversation than a work of scholarship, traditional journalistic standards are therefore inappropriate.

Maybe so. But as many respondents make clear, speed and maximizing traffic as a means to attract advertisers is their number one priority. From that perspective, if the number of "eyeballs" trumps the quality of copy presentation, and produces minor factual errors, so be it.

Moreover, it is clear that what a former Web editor at *ESPN The Magazine* (whom we interviewed) called "a cultural chasm" still exists between print and Web people. The latter are instilled with the daily mantra that "The number one thing…is serving your fan, serving your fan, serving your fan" rather than what "a bunch of smart editors think is a good idea." Furthermore, magazines often privilege print publications over their Web counterparts. According to one respondent, for example, the Web version is "largely seen as inferior, compared to what runs in the magazine" despite enjoying a readership five times larger, "because of a vestigial elitism as to its being more important if it runs in print."

This cultural gulf may narrow with time, but with 22% of respondents indicating that material finds its way onto their Web sites because it didn't fit in or wasn't good enough for the magazine, it is clear that a significant reevaluation of standards needs to occur. A best practices consensus on these may be emerging, although it has yet to be codified.

A further complication: it may well be that the Web sites that take themselves most seriously are using newspapers models (where reporters are relied upon to do their own fact-checking). If that is indeed the case, perhaps the industry should take a stand on whether that is a good or bad idea.

Question: Why doesn't the industry (including such bodies as the American society of Magazine Editors, Magazine Publishers of America, Online Publishers Association) and others, which have already created codes of conduct and guidelines in other areas, come up with their equivalent on such matters as online fact-checking, copy-editing, and error-correction?

Agenda item 3: The broken business model

At a moment when magazines are facing pressure to reduce costs, print

readership is shrinking, and the young, when not watching Jon Stewart, seem to rely more on the Internet for news and information, which is still largely provided by aggregators running content produced by old media organizations, whose oversees bureaus are closing, whose staff are being downsized, and whose budgets are disappearing, a number of survey findings on the business front are of particular interest:

A majority of magazine Web sites offer all of their magazine material for free. More than two-thirds of our respondents say advertising is by far the largest revenue source; that figure climbs to 83% for those with profitable Web sites. Does this then mean that *The New York Times* should reconsider its recently announced intention to charge for content, including, apparently, its blogs? Should Steve Brill's Journalism Online go out of business before it goes into business?

For all the talk about putting content behind a paywall, the survey makes clear that the free content, supported by advertising, remains the dominant business model. That, of course, does not mean that untried systems are doomed. Questions: Are the more service oriented magazines more likely to find success behind a paywall? If advertising continues to play a dominant role in magazine Web sites' revenue, what safeguards should be erected against the rise of content that blurs the line between editorial and advertising?

Agenda item 4: Technology and social media

At a time of rapid technological developments it seems counterintuitive that only 10% of respondents mentioned multi-media content as a positive aspect of their sites, only 8% said they wanted to improve it, less than one in five have arranged for their content to be read on smart phones, and only 4% have content that can be read on book devices like the Kindle.

Perhaps as David Winer, one of the founding fathers of blogging, said upon joining the staff of New York University's journalism program as a visiting professor, only by actually doing (as opposed to studying) digital journalism will we see what works and what doesn't. Indeed, this survey shows that magazine Web sites are in the midst of an ongoing trial-and-error process. The problem is that, although the majority are experimenting with blogs, commenting systems, and social media, what has been missing thus far are standards for distinguishing failure from success. Also, one does not have to be techno-evangelist to see the need for some sort continuing technology education within the magazine communities for old and new media-ites alike.

Technology has its imperatives. But does the fact that a print magazine's Web site has the capacity for running an infinite number of comments (compared with the limited space available in a typical letters-to-the-editor section), mean that unmoderated online "threads" which may go off on irrelevant tangents, or soap box rants, are a good thing? Hypothesis: that can't be what John Dewey had in mind when he observed that "democracy begins in conversation."

Question: Is it true, as one respondent confidently asserted, "If it's fact-checked, it's not a blog," and is this an existential or a definitional question? The issue is an important one because so many in the blogosphere insist that blogs have (and are entitled to) their own rules of the road.

Subject for discussion: Why have earlier attempts at standardizing the world of blogs and social media notoriously failed? Is it, at long last, possible to identify best practices for using the tools and techniques of digital journalism?

Agenda item 5: Mission statements

When we asked respondents about their missions, some reported a 180-degree reversal from the days when the Web site was conceived as a way of enlarging the reach and profitability of the print magazine. One went as far to say that their Web site was a way of putting the parent magazine out of business (see p. 39). This was

in contrast to those who say that their Web sites are still evolving or in transition, and the many who complained that their Web sites remain afterthoughts. What we have here is a case of mission ambivalence.

Another way to think about it: consider some of the many questions that the report thus far has almost, but not quite, joined:

- Should magazine Web sites view themselves as Web sites first and magazines second or visa versa (or, for that matter, *pari passu*)?
- What are the deepest implications of the finding that when a Web editor is in charge of both budget and content decisions, that traffic and revenue increase but quality and ethical standards decrease?
- If, as one respondent reported, material that has already appeared in the print magazine is never re-edited for the Web (after all, it has already been copy-edited) does that suggest that what's good for one medium works for all? (*Pacem* Marshall McLuhan). Or does the Web requires a different prose rhythm, a different argot, a less formal, more casual presentation?

And how do these findings and questions relate to the free flow of information required by our democracy as explored recently by the Knight Commission's report on "Informing Communities, Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age," and the Schudson-Downie report on "The Reconstruction Of American Journalism," published in the November-December issue of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and other recent attempts to grapple with information availability and public engagement and, indeed, the future of journalism itself?

A final thought. In the old days, it was believed that magazines were the creation of great editors, and the last thing an editor would do to determine what would go into his/her pages was market research (though we're aware that editors have been consulting survey data for the last few decades, at least). On the Web, however, all eyes are on traffic, and when asked whether traffic plays a role in determining Web site content, about half said "of course." The profound question underlying this survey then may be whether it is possible or desirable for a Web site to consult its inner William Shawn.

Let the conversation begin or, if you prefer, continue.

Acknowledgments

1   Which of the following best describe your publication?

A printed publication with a Web site	665
A print-only publication with no content on a Web site	N/A
An online-only publication with no printed edition	N/A

(Second and third responses disqualified respondent from the survey)

2   How often is your publication published?

Weekly	47
Monthly	287
Between Monthly and Quarterly	213
Quarterly or less frequently	84

3   Which of the following best describes the main topic area addressed by your magazine?

Business	14%
Science/Technology/Nature	10
Health/Medicine	8
General Interest	6
Regional	6
Entertainment	4
Shelter	4
Sports	4
Travel	4
Women's Interest	4
Education/Higher Education	3
News	3
Automotive	2
Parenting/Family	2
Religion/Religious	2
Literary	1
Men's Interest	1
Politics	1

4   What is your print circulation?

Under 100K	338
Between 100K and 250K	178
Between 250K and 500K	70
Between 500K and 1 Mil	38
Between 1 Mil and 2 Mil	22
More than 2 Mil	19

5   Which *best* describes the availability of print content on your Web site?

All significant content from the print edition is available freely online	52%
Some print edition content is available freely online	31
Some print edition content is available freely online, with the rest behind a paywall	10
All or almost all of printed content is behind a paywall	4
Other	2
No printed copy is available online	1

6   What percentage of your content is free for everyone via the Web?

None	3%
Less than 25%	21
Between 25% and 50%	9
Between 51% and 75%	9
Between 76% and 99%	14
All or 100%	42
Not sure	1

7   Does your Web site make a profit?

Yes	212
No	209
Not Sure	134
Don't Measure, Not measured separately	110

8   How does the revenue generated from the Web site compare to that generated by the print edition

Zero	14%
Less than 25%	38
Between 25% and 50%	9
Between 51% and 75%	1
Between 76% and 99%	1
All or 100%	1
Not Sure	36

9   What is your Web site's largest revenue source?

Advertising	68%
Subscriptions to print	11
None / not a revenue source / non-profit	6
Sale of merchandise	3
Affiliate programs	2
Donations	2
Subscriptions to online-only content	2
Supported by memberships / memberships dues	2
Other	2
Access to archived content	1
Don't know / refused	1

10   Who at your publication makes most decisions for your publication's Web site about each of the following...

	BUDGET	CONTENT	LOOK & FEEL	EDITORIAL TONE
Editor-in-chief of the print magazine	28%	51%	25%	64%
An upper level editor of the print magazine, who also works on the Web	6	21	14	15
An independent Web editor	11	19	33	12
Publisher	44	5	9	5
Other	11	4	18	4

11   In general, what percentage of your staff are expected to work on the Web site, the print publication or both [Total=100%]

Work on print and Web	61%
Work on Web only	5
Work on print only	25
Unsure	9

11a   In general, what percentage of your staff was hired with Web skills, and what percent learned on the job? [Total=100%]

Hired with experience	26%
Learned on the job	53
Neither / no Web experience	11
Unsure	10

12 Which best describes how the editorial process differs between online and print content?

There is a single editorial group that commissions both print and online-only content	63%
Two editorial groups, one print, one online, that meet to discuss content ideas and assign them to either group	14
Two distinct editorial groups, one print, one online, that do not regularly interact	6
No online-only content, content comes exclusively from the print edition	16
Other	1

13 Which best describes how the editorial process compares when copy-editing print versus online-only content (excluding blogs)?

Online-only and print content use the same copy-editing process	41%
Online-only content is copy-edited, but less rigorously than print content	48
No copy editing for online-only content	11

14 Which of the following best describes your fact-checking process (excluding blogs)?

Online-only and print content use the same fact-checking process	57%
Online-only content is fact-checked, but less rigorously than print content	27
Online-only content is not fact-checked	8
Neither print nor online content is fact-checked	8

15 Check all that apply to your process for dealing with errors on your Web site:

Minor errors, such as typos or misspellings, are corrected with no indication to readers	87%
Factual errors are corrected with no indication to readers	45
Factual errors are corrected and an editor's note detailing the nature of the error is a appended to the content where the mistake appeared	37
Major factual errors are left in as they originally appeared in the content, but are accompanied by an editor's note at the point of the error	6
All errors are noted in a special section of the Web site	1
Not encountered errors yet / errors are corrected in print before being posted to Web	3
Other	2
Don't know/refused	1

16   How is content from the print edition archived on your Web site?

Print content that was created before the site went online has been digitized so its text content is searchable	34%
Print content that was created before the site went online has been scanned as images and archived	11
Print content created before the site went online is not archived	55

17   Which *best* describes how print subscribers access your archives?

All archived content is available for free via the Web site	69%
Some archived content is available for free via the Web site, but the majority requires some kind of payment to access	14
No archived content is available for free via the Web site, all access requires some kind of payment	6
Archives are not available via the Web site, but can be purchased through a third-party	3
Archives available on Google	1
Other	3
No archives are available	3
Don't know/refused	< 1

18   In general, what is the make-up of the advertisements on your site? Your best guess is fine.

Not sure	39%
Direct ads	32
In-house ads	15
Other	6
Vertical network ads	4
Remnant ads	3

19   What kinds of price structures do ads on your site use? (Check all that apply)

Cost per impression	44%
Sponsored sections or micro-sites	32
Cost per click	21
Cost per sale	19
Affiliate programs	17
Online & print advertising tied together	17
Don't know/refused	11
No ads / no paid ads / in-house ads only	8
Other	7
Cost per action	6
Monthly rate	3

20 Which best describes the makeup of the online advertising team?

There is one advertising team that works on both print and online accounts	87%
There are two separate teams, one for print, one for online	13

21 Roughly what percentage of the content on your Web site is online-only?

0–24%	50%
25–49%	22
50% +	25
Not Sure	3

22 Why does content appear on your Web site?

	SPACE CONSTRAINTS	QUALITY	MAINTAIN "FRESHNESS"	MULTIMEDIA	BREAKING NEWS	RAN IN PRINT
Never a reason	20%	78%	11%	18%	18%	7%
Sometimes a reason	56	19	22	30	28	18
Often a reason	21	2	38	30	31	34
Always a reason	4	1	29	21	23	41

23 Why does content from the print edition *not* appear on your Web site?

	ARTICLE LENGTH	CANNIBALIZE PRINT	RIGHTS	POOR TRAFFIC EXPECTATIONS
Never a reason	73%	64%	62%	67%
Sometimes a reason	18	16	28	23
Often a reason	8	11	7	8
Always a reason	2	8	3	2

24 The average monthly traffic in unique visitors for your Web site is…

Less than 50K	195
Between 50K and 99K	107
Between 100K and 499K	136
Between 500K and 999K	34
Between 1M and 1.49M	11
Between 1.5 and 2M	21
More than 2M unique	27
Not sure	134

25   Which online metric is most helpful to you in determining the success of your site?

Google Analytics	61%
Don't know/refused	11
Omniture	6
Other	5
Comscore Media Metrics	4
In-house/proprietary analysis	3
Quantcast	3
Nielsen Net Ratings	2
Webtrends	2
None used/not measured	2
Omniture Sitecatalyst	1

26   Which best describes how you use traffic statistics?

We closely follow traffic stats each piece of content, they are one of the main factors in editorial decision-making	8%
We have good understanding of what pieces of content are doing best and have that info on hand when making editorial decisions	39
We notice when an individual piece of content is doing particularly well, but don't routinely act on that info	21
We don't systemically check traffic statistics for individual pieces of content	22
Not sure	11

27   How are your traffic statistics most often used? (Ranked, 1 for the most often, 5 for least. Responses are averaged)

For making editorial decisions, such as what kinds of content to highlight or commission	2.29
For attracting advertisers and setting advertising rates	2.45
For devising new advertising, marketing, or publicity strategies	2.71
For designing or adjusting the layout of the Web site	3.14
For rewarding creators of popular content	4.41

28   Check all that apply to your commenting policy.

		ONLY THOSE WITH COMMENTING ON SITE
There is no opportunity for readers to comment on content	27%	—
Comments are not moderated	12	16%
There is an automatic moderation system that holds or edits all comments, using their discretion to hold or edit comments	15	20
One or more staff members are in charge of moderating all comments, using their discretion to hold or edit comments	45	61
One or more staff members are in charge of moderating all comments, using a codified list of rules to hold or edit comments	9	11
Content authors are responsible for moderating their own comments	7	10
Content authors are encouraged to respond to comments	24	32

29   Check all that apply to your commenting policy.

		ONLY THOSE WITH BLOGS
There are no blogs on our Web site	36%	—
Blogs are maintained by staff members	55	87%
Blogs are copy-edited	29	46
Blogs are maintained by freelancers or contract-writers	25	39
Bloggers' content is more-or-less independent from the magazine's editorial control	23	36
Blogs are fact-checked	16	25
There are incentives in place for attracting traffic	6	10
Don't know/refused	<1	

30   Which best describes you use of social media sites to publicize content?

Active presence in social media sites, staff members actively try to gather a community and drive it to the site	47%
Social networking sites are occasionally seeded with links to new content	28
There is no active plan for using social media sites	23
Other	2
Don't know/refused	< 1

31   How effective are the following social media sites for driving traffic to your content?

	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	MYSPACE	DIGG	REDDIT	STUMBLEUPON	DELICIOUS	LINKEDIN
(1) Very effective	20%	22%	2%	6%	2%	5%	1%	3%
(2) Somewhat effective	43	41	8	12	6	9	8	14
(3) Not too effective	14	12	14	10	12	8	13	16
(4) Not at all effective	4	4	26	12	14	14	16	20
Not sure	18	20	50	60	66	64	62	47

32 Check off all that apply to your email marketing campaign.

Email marketing includes a newsletter with links to content on the Web site	66%
Email marketing includes subscription reminders and offers	51
Email marketing includes a newsletter that has advertising embedded	48
Email marketing includes a newsletter with original content	37
Email marketing includes stand-alone advertising messages from third parties	30
The magazine does no email marketing	20
Email marketing is "opt-out" rather than "opt-in"	19
Other	2

33 Which best describes your content management system?

A custom-designed system, shared by multiple sites in your publishing family	37%
A custom-designed system used by your magazine alone	17
An off-the-shelf commercial system	16
An open-source system	11
Not sure	20

34 Check off all that apply to the different display options available to readers.

There is a digital version of each print issue that replicates the layout of a physical copy	54%
The site allows readers to subscribe to content on their own, using rss feeds, podcasts on iTunes, ect	47
There is a mobile edition of the site that is optimized for portable devices like smartphones	18
None	13
Content is formatted for ebook readers like the Kindle	4
Other	4
Don't know/refused	2

For open-ended questions 35, 36, and 37, respondent answers were coded for common themes. The frequency of the most common themes are below.

35   What do you consider to be the mission of your Web site?

Content	51%
Increase Readership	29
Sales/Advertising	17
Brand Awareness	10
Miscellaneous	10
Multimedia	5

36   What do you consider to be the best aspect of your Web site?

Content	49%
Social Media	21
Design/Layout	17
Multimedia	10
Miscellaneous	8

37   What aspect of your Web site needs most improvement?

Design/Layout	28%
Content	22
Social Media	20
Multimedia	8
Sales/Advertising/Revenue	5
Miscellaneous	5
Readership	2

Appendix B Definition of Terms

Cost per impression   The basic metric of online advertising. With cost per impression, the advertiser pays a pre-determined amount (CPM, or cost per thousand) to have their ad exposed to a thousand visitors of the publishers Web site. Rates vary by size placement and—ads that appear "above the fold" (i.e. above where a typical user will need to scroll down to see) are a premium. Remnant ad networks (such as Google's AdSense) work on this principle, but have significantly lower CPMs than those made by direct sales.

Cost per click   As with cost per impression, the advertiser buys a space on the publisher's Web site, but rather than a set amount per viewer, the publisher receives a pre-determined amount depending upon number of times the advertisement is actually clicked. This technique has received negative publicity because of the ability to "game" such arrangements with software that repeatedly clicks on ads. Publishers may also be wary of this technique because it requires the advertisement to be attractive or compelling enough to warrant clicks.

Cost per action   In this technique the publisher provides ad space or hyperlinks to the advertiser. Once at the advertiser's Web site, the publisher is paid a pre-determined fee for each user that takes a specific action, such as entering his or her e-mail address into a form.

Cost per sale   A specific kind of cost per action advertising, the publisher is paid a pre-determined free from any sales that result at the advertisers Web site.

Affiliate programs   As with cost per action, the publisher provides ad space or hyperlinks to the advertiser's Web site, but shares a pre-determined percentage of revenue generated from sales of merchandise or from other actions taken.

Sponsored sections or **micro-sites**   A relatively new technique, with a sponsored page or microsite, an advertiser creates content on the publisher's Web site that is "advertorial" in nature. Traffic stays with the host site.

Sponsored sections also include "site wraps" where a page on the publisher's Web site is encased in or surrounded by an advertiser's message. The advertiser usually buys all the banner ad positions on that homepage for the duration of the campaign. These arrangements are on a *per diem* basis, and not dependent on impressions or clicks.