

2010

# Gatekeeping and citizen journalism: A qualitative examination of participatory newsgathering

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Gatekeeping and Citizen Journalism:  
A Qualitative Examination of Participatory Newsgathering

by

Amani Channel

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Mass Communications  
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Date of Approval:  
March 2, 2010

Keywords: Web 2.0, social media, user-generated content, iReport, CNN

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## Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my loving wife Daphne who supported me throughout this process. It is also dedicated to the many scholars and researchers who have used scientific inquiry to understand how the media and communications affect our society. Finally, this paper is dedicated to my father Charlie and mother Jan, who taught me to learn something new every day, ask questions, and seek the truth.

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Gatekeeping and Citizen Journalism  
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ABSTRACT

For nearly sixty years, scholars have studied how information is selected, vetted, and shared by news organizations. The process, known as gatekeeping, is an enduring mass communications theory that describes the process by which news is gathered and filtered to audiences. It has been suggested, however, that in the wake of online communications the traditional function of media gatekeeping is changing.

The infusion of citizen-gathered media into news programming is resulting in what some call a paradigm shift. As mainstream news outlets adopt and encourage public participation, it is important that researchers have a greater understanding of the theoretical implications related to participatory media and gatekeeping. This study will be among the first to examine the adoption of citizen journalism by a major cable news network. It will focus on CNN's citizen journalism online news community called iReport, which allows the public to share and submit "unfiltered" content. Vetted submissions that are deemed newsworthy can then be broadcasted across CNN's networks, and published on CNN.com.

This journalism practice appears to follow the thoughts of Nguyen (2006), who states that, "future journalists will need to be trained to not only become critical gate-keepers but also act as listeners, discussion and forum leaders/mediators in an intimate interaction with their audiences." The goal of the paper is to lay a foundation for understanding how participatory media is

utilized by a news network to help researchers possibly develop new models and hypotheses related to gatekeeping theory.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Within the last decade or so, scholars and writers have observed, predicted, and attempted to understand how mass communications theory is affected by technology and the Internet (December, 1996; Bruns, 2007; Bruns 2008). More specifically, some have observed that the news has become more participatory. Some organizations now gather content from the public and integrate it into the coverage (Nguyen, 2006; Singer, 2006; Storm, 2007; Domingo et al. 2008; Bakker & Pantti, 2009). It is only appropriate then that scholars make a concerted effort to develop new theories related to the shift from traditional to new media (Morris & Ogan, 1996; Scott, 2005; Dailey, Demo & Spillman, 2005), which is marked by a free flow of information, and driven by technology like computers, cell phones, and the Internet. (Beard & Olsen, 1999; Scott, 2005; Gordon, 2007; Bruns, 2008). Some have suggested that society is witnessing the end of mass communications (Chaffee & Mertzger, 2001). Morris & Ogan (1996) observe that the Internet presents new opportunities to advance mass communications theory, while Friedland (1996) speculates that a new electronic democracy that gives greater opportunity for public discourse is imminent, and Bruns (2006) suggests that a paradigm shift is underway. Though time and thought have been given to understanding the effects that digital media is having in relation to traditional media and journalism (Singer, 2001; Willis & Bowman, 2003; Williams & Delli Carpini, 2004; Gilmor, 2004; Scott, 2006; Nguyen, 2006; Singer; 2006), scholars have yet to establish new theories regarding new media. They have however identified gaps in research related to gatekeeping theory (Beard & Olsen, 1999), newsroom adoption (Boczkowski, 2004), and participatory media (Bruns, 2008). This study, therefore, seeks to

answer the question: how is the adoption of participatory media in a network news organization affecting gatekeeping?

For nearly sixty years scholars have studied how information is selected, vetted, gathered, and shared by reporters and news organizations (White, 1950; Shoemaker 1991; Livingston & Bennett, 2003). The process known as gatekeeping is an enduring mass communication theory that describes the processes involved in gathering, filtering, and distributing news content (White, 1950; Berkowitz, 1990; Beard & Olsen, 1999; Storm, 2007). It has been suggested, however, that in the wake of online communications the media's traditional gatekeeping processes are changing. Singer (2006) asserts, "The Internet defies the whole notion of a 'gate' and challenges the idea that journalists (or anyone else) can or should limit what passes through it" (p. 265). Other scholars speculate that the function of media entities will change from collecting information to directing it (Bardoel, 1996). Bruns (2003) presents a similar thought, suggesting that the emerging online news environment is made up of open communities where anyone can add to the collective knowledge, and asserts that gatekeeping theory is transforming into a gatewatching function, where journalism organizations use the Internet to direct readers or viewers to information that they may be interested.

Some scholars are working to understand how newsrooms are adapting to new media (Boczkowski, 2004; Bakker & Pantti, 2009; Dueze, Bruns & Newburger, 2007; Domingo et al. 2008) and the phenomena of participatory media that is resulting in what some call a paradigm shift (Bruns, 2006; Jenkins, 2006). As mainstream news outlets adopt and encourage citizen participation, it is important that researchers have a greater understanding of the theoretical implications related to participatory media and mainstream news adoption. This qualitative study will be among the first to examine user-generated content and its adoption in a converged network news operation. It will analyze interviews with employees of CNN's participatory online news community called iReport, which allows the public to share and submit "unfiltered" content to CNN. Some



of it is then vetted and broadcasted on CNN's networks, and featured on CNN.com (Dube, 2008). This participatory model appears to follow the thoughts of scholars like Nguyen (2006), who states that, "future journalists will need to be trained to not only become more critical gate-keepers but also to act as listeners, discussion and forum leaders/mediators in an intimate interaction with their audiences" (p. 20). This paper will help advance empirical models that are being developed around convergence and participatory media (Boczkowski, 2004; Dailey, Demo, & Spillman 2005; Bakker & Pantti, 2009). It begins with an examination of the literature surrounding citizen journalism, and gatekeeping theory, followed by a discussion of CNN's iReport. It will then present the argument why this qualitative study is needed to advance gatekeeping theory, and then explain the research methodology.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

Technology, computers, and the Internet have facilitated an undeniable media shift that is changing the way news is gathered, with one result being the phenomena of participatory news (Singer, 2006; Deuze, Bruns & Neuberger, 2007, Gordon, 2007). This is a melding of public participation that involves bloggers who break news on independent websites, and citizens who capture newsworthy events with cell phone cameras. This material is often referred to as user-generated content, and Websites like YouTube and Wikipedia, allow people to easily distribute and share it (van Dijck, 2009). Scott (2005) provides a comprehensive analysis of the changing digital journalism landscape by documenting challenges brought about by technology. He suggests that the Internet has been very disruptive to traditional media, stating, “It has demanded new business models, threatened complacency, and responded to innovation” (p. 93). This response includes adopting practices that now includes news gathered from the public, which is commonly referred to as citizen journalism, participatory publishing, or open publishing to mention a few of the terms (Nguyen, 2006).

#### *Public Journalism to Citizen Journalism*

As some news organizations adopt new participatory practices that include reporting content gathered from the public, a few journalism activists have worked toward a more community-oriented media. Known as public journalism, this movement attempted to include the community’s voice in the newsgathering process (Nip, 2006). Within the public journalism model, public discussion and involvement allow individuals in the community to directly influence and benefit from news coverage (Witt, 2004). The emergence of this

movement was a result of observations that newspaper readership was declining; that there was a growing gap between the citizenry and journalists, and that there was a growing dissatisfaction in the population regarding the news industry's devotion to profits (Rosen, 1994). Despite the ardent and passionate work of those involved in the public journalism movement, it made little impact on day-to-day news operations (Witt, 2004).

The news industry, however, is now experiencing great change. Nip (2006) suggests that the second phase of public journalism is here, and identifies five separate models that exist, being: traditional journalism, public journalism, interactive journalism, participatory journalism, and citizen journalism. The definitions are as follows (pp. 216-218):

- 1) Traditional Journalism - In traditional journalism, professional journalists act as the gatekeepers, filtering, and reporting on world events. The only public involvement is from news sources that provide information, and opinion to the journalists. Interaction from the public comes from letters to the editor, or complaints made after the news is published.
- 2) Public Journalism - Public journalism attempts to engage citizens in both the news making and in the news consumption process. Journalists use town hall meetings, and polls to understand community concerns, and provide feedback to the citizenry in an attempt to help create discussions to reach solutions. The professional journalists maintain their traditional role as gatekeeper, in framing and presentation.
- 3) Interactive Journalism - Interactive journalism is a concept that has been discussed by scholars but has not been clearly defined. It refers to communication and news consumption that is facilitated through the Internet. Content interactivity allows users to select the stories they read, and interpersonal interactivity allows the public to become engaged with the reporters. However, this only happens when the reporter responds to e-mails, chats, or communicates in online forums.

4) Participatory Journalism - Participatory journalism allows news users to take an active part in the news gathering process, and work with journalism professionals to distribute the content. Users create the content independently, but the outlet provides the platform to publish it.

5) Citizen Journalism - Within this mode, independent news content is generated, and produced by a non-professional individual or organization that is not paid staff. Examples of citizen journalism include blogs, independent news websites, community radio stations, or newspapers.

Other writers like Jarvis (2006) have proposed alternative definitions related to participatory media. He calls it *networked* journalism, which explains how professional and amateurs work together to share facts, questions, and perspectives to get to the real story. These amateurs are often said to be a part of Generation C. They produce “an avalanche of consumer generated 'content' that is building on the Web” (Trendwatching, 2005). The “C” in this case refers to *content* and doesn't define a demographic group, but rather identifies individuals who participate in the creation and distribution of information. Though there are specific differences in all of the aforementioned definitions, this paper is not attempting to analyze the various terms used to describe participatory newsgathering, but rather will examine how a mainstream news network gathers, selects, and integrates user-generated news into its online news site and broadcast programs.

### *Convergence Media*

Livingston and Bennett (2003) argue that as communications technologies open new gates, new studies will be needed to measure changes in gatekeeping, and in turn, develop new theories. These new technologies include cell phones with cameras that anyone can use to capture and share newsworthy images with the media (Gordon, 2007). Interactivity, convergence, cross media, and produsage are terms used to describe the fundamental changes that have been taking place in the media.

Interactivity is more of a buzzword in digital media studies and is most often used to explain the process by which people engage in communication over the Internet (Cover, 2006). Boczkowski (2004) defines interactivity as the “many-to-many, and one-to-one communication spaces such as forums, chat rooms, and user-authored sites, in addition to the one-to-many mode of traditional media. (p. 199).” Hujanen & Pietikainen (2004) see it as being, “the increasing opportunity to communicate across ‘old’ boundaries of time and place, and between journalists and citizens” (p. 384), while Cover (2006) simply states that interactivity “cultivates some element of user control of the narrative content in a new media text” (p. 141).

Convergence describes the melding of media on an organizational, technological, or production level (Erdal, 2007). It usually involves newsrooms that have consolidated news-gathering operations across different platforms whether it is print, broadcast, or the Web. Scott (2005) suggests that convergence is related to the economics of content production and distribution. He asserts that mainstream operations are implementing newsroom convergence, crossmedia partnerships, and digital news networks in an effort to remain economically viable. Others, like Dailey, Demo, and Spillman (2005), suggest that the weakness with convergence is that it lacks a general definition, and that it is constantly changing as TV stations and newspaper organizations create partnerships.

Crossmedia production more specifically explains the different ways that producers or organizations share and distribute media across platforms. Dailey, Demo, and Spillman (2005) identify the various modes of crossmedia, that include, cross-promotion (promotion of content by media partners; e.g. a TV station and newspaper), cloning (re-publishing content with little editing), cooperation (news organizations both compete and collaborate), content sharing (sharing of content by partners), and full convergence (partners gather and share the news together).

Bruns (2008b) suggests that the collaboration, creativity, and more

community-oriented media production are part of a paradigm shift that he calls *produsage*. Examples of produsage include blogs, wikis, and citizen journalism communities. It follows the peer-to-peer and many-to-many content distribution model, and the open source nature of knowledge building through the creation of online content. Bruns (2008b) explains that, "These *producers* engage not in a traditional form of content production, but are instead involved in *produsage* – the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement" (p. 2). Though Bruns has made an effort to develop, and explain the functional characteristics related to participatory media, he suggests that there are challenges in both mainstream adoption and in its theoretical development (Bruns, 2008c).

Several studies have laid groundwork for this current study. Erdal (2007) argues that the digitization of media has fundamentally changed the way broadcast news is produced, giving broadcasters the ability to produce content for TV, radio, and the Web. Boczkowski (2004) focuses on the processes used by news workers in the adoption of new technologies. The ethnographic study involved an examination of three online newspapers to explore how gatekeeping tasks shape multimedia and interactive adoption. The author concludes that media organizations engage in multimedia adoption differently depending upon the organizational structures, work practices, and the users representation. Dailey, Demo, and Spillman (2005) develop a conceptual approach toward studying newsroom convergence. The model proposed is called a convergence continuum and defines the methods of identifying the different genres of crossmedia. In addition, they propose a research method to measure gatekeeping and news partnerships. The authors do not attempt to test the method, though qualitative and quantitative methodologies are suggested. Domingo et al. (2008) designed a study to test the degree to which online international and domestic newspapers are adopting participatory news gathering practices. The research design included a model that tests if the public is given access to share content; how the section and filtering process works; the amount of processing or editing of the content; how the content is distributed; and if the

public is allowed to interact with features such as commenting. The authors conclude that the model successfully described the strategies of news organizations regarding participatory media, yet the results indicate that most of the journalism outlets do not allow significant amount of participation from the public. Finally, Baaker & Pantti (2009) qualitatively examine how amateur photography is being used by mainstream news organizations. Twenty interviews were used to collect the data across a variety of print and broadcast news organizations. The results yielded beneficial insights regarding overall trends, attitudes, and adoption practices.

Fewer studies have examined television news organizations. Bruns (2008c) makes the following observation about the technological shift and TV.

What becomes obvious here is that the technologies and processes of television – once constituting an effective and powerful network for widespread content distribution – have now been outclassed by the Internet, to the point that in the absence of significant innovation on part of television operators, many users themselves have begun to do the industry’s work of shifting content from one network to the other” (p. 4).

In other words, the Internet challenges traditional news operations, and media consumers are now empowered to share content themselves. In light of this shift, this paper is investigating how a news network is integrating user-generated content into its news product.

### *The Internet & Newsgathering*

The Internet has played a central role in the growth of news that is produced by non-traditional journalists. Examples include the DrudgeReport.com Website, which broke the Monica Lewinsky/President Clinton scandal in January 1998. Williams and Delli Capini (2000) suggest that it represented erosion in traditional gatekeeping and called the situation, “a complete obliteration of the boundaries between mainstream press and other media outlets” (p.73). More recently, big news events seem to cause a strong supply and demand for citizen-produced photos, text, and video that is commonly shared on the Internet (Du, 2007). He argues that the Internet enables sources other than mainstream news

to become alternative news providers. The author observes that, from the four-year span that marked the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to the Iraq War, and the Hurricane Katrina Disaster, the Internet became a significant source of information for consumers. In addition, citizen journalists seem to have a stronger voice during major disasters like the London train terrorist bombings (Sambrook, 2005) and the Virginia Tech shooting (Clairmont, 2007). They also capture and share content on the Web that is deemed newsworthy and is then picked up by media outlets (Lizza, 2006).

Mainstream news outlets have realized the power of the public's participation in newsgathering. WABC New York news director Kenny Plotnic says, "Anyone with a camera is tantamount to being a reporter" (Romano, 2006). News outlets that include the BBC, public broadcasting stations, and Websites like the Korean-based OhmyNews are leveraging the collective knowledge of the public to create news content (Neiman Reports, 2005). Some writers, however, have been critical of so-called journalism produced by amateurs (Hazinski, 2008). Brown (2005) maintains that citizen journalism is in no way professional journalism and notes the following difference: Traditional journalists are required to adhere to standards that include accuracy and fact checking, while citizens have no obligation or requirement to do so. That being said, some writers have suggested that citizen journalism has gone mainstream (Catone, 2007) and have welcomed the open nature of communications that has emerged. Friedland (1996) predicted that society is on the cusp of an electronic democracy that promotes public deliberation and discussion. Bardoel (1996) speculated that traditional media would change from information gathering to directing the flow of information, while Hermes (2006) argued that communication technologies will create a more informed citizenry. More recently, O'Donnell (2009) suggests that the popularity of user-generated content will create a community of better listeners. It is a welcomed development for critics of traditional media who have noted that investigative news reports, issues of diversity, and community-related stories have been replaced by infotainment and sensationalism (Scott, 2005).



Even though news outlets appear to be making efforts to engage the public, and include more voices, the research suggests that scholars are just beginning to understand the greater implications for professional journalism and mass communications theory (Domingo et al., 2008). Nguyen (2006) asserts that journalism must transform, “from a lecture to a conversation, listening and talking to the public rather than remaining a closed stubborn profession that has long been a potential detriment to a healthy public sphere” (p. 2). Some professional journalism organizations appear to be more open to including content from amateurs (Bakker and Pantti, 2009). This paper therefore is examining how participatory newsgathering is possibly changing gatekeeping in a converged news operation. Having traced the emergence of citizen-produced news, it will now examine gatekeeping theory and explain CNN’s iReport before presenting the research methodology for this study.

### *Gatekeeping*

Within journalism studies, gatekeeping is the daily process by which the many messages in the world are reduced by news decision makers and shared with the public (Shoemaker, 1991). Singer (1998) argues that gatekeeping is well-suited to study how online journalists select newsworthy stories. In a recent study of online newspaper editors, Singer (2006) adds that, “The Internet defies the whole notion of a “gate” and challenges the idea that journalists (or anyone else) can or should limit what passes through it” (p. 265). Researchers are now giving attention to how new media and participatory practices are affecting gatekeeping activities (Beard & Olsen, 1999; Singer, 2006; Bakker & Pantti, 2009). Before delving into how gatekeeping may be affected in this digital realm, a historical theoretical perspective will be considered.

Gatekeeping has a history of longevity in journalism studies dating back to 1947, when psychologist Kurt Lewin noted that information flows through the gate and that individuals control what makes it through the gate (Lewin, 1947). David Manning White (1950) was the first researcher to apply gatekeeping to journalism in his study of a newspaper wire editor named “Mr. Gates.” In this

seminal case study, White examined the process of selecting news stories over a seven day period to determine what criteria was used to choose or reject stories for publication. During the period of data collection, Mr. Gates wrote down the reasons why each story was rejected. White found the newspaper editor's decisions to be highly subjective. The top reason for rejecting a wire story was because the news item was not interesting, however reasons such as "trivial" or "propaganda" also led to their rejection. In addition, the author used a short survey to glean additional insights into the decision making process. White concludes that the gatekeeping process reflects the psychological phenomenon that "people tend to perceive as true only those happenings which fit into their own beliefs concerning what is likely to happen" (p. 390). In other words, Mr. Gates, in making his news decisions, allowed news to pass through the gate that reflected what he believed to be culturally true.

Since that study, researchers have found that along with personal and professional news judgment, news organization's routines, economic restraints, and communication technologies all play a role in the news selection process (Livingston & Bennett, 2003). Additionally, in broadcast newsrooms, gatekeeping activities are dictated by daily deadline pressures and the ability to capture visual video elements (Harmon, 1989). Studies have also considered how communication technologies like the Internet affect gatekeeping (Beard & Olsen, 1999), while other scholars have more recently focused on the effect the Internet and citizen-produced content is having on journalism (Storm, 2007; Bakker & Paanti, 2009). Singer (2001) noted that print journalists could be relinquishing their traditional gatekeeping roles because the Internet empowers the readers to decide what is newsworthy, and Singer (2004) subsequently found that online newspapers were adopting participatory newsgathering practices that included blogs from both editors, and the public, as well as from discussion boards. The studies suggest that online editors could be stepping outside of their traditional gatekeeping roles by giving users a voice in the news product. More recently, Bruns (2008) asserts that the era of open news is here. In open news, producers, and consumers interact together in the distribution and creation of

information. In her investigation into citizen-produced news, Storm (2007) provides some insights into how a print and online paper called *Bluffton Today* integrated public media. Although the organization allowed community input on the online site, she found that little Web-generated content is ever printed in the paper. “The lack of freestanding attributed Web-generated user content at *Bluffton Today*... signifies that Web-generated user content is not published in its newspaper as a new dimension of credible journalism, but rather is used by the newsroom’s professional journalists to add breadth to their own work,” says Storms (2007, p. 22). In other words, information submitted by the public is not used as news content, but the contributors are used as news sources.

Bakker and Pantti (2009) provide relevant insights regarding the adoption of amateur content by professional news outlets. This study examines broadcast, print, and online outlets in the Netherlands that utilized user-generated content. The authors in general found a lack of standard practices and little to no agreement on how the outlets used user-generated content across platforms. While one of the main perceived benefits was the community building that occurred when the public was allowed to share its media, another notable finding was “the role audience members are increasing taking on – or which is given to them – is that of a source, not of ‘collaborator’” (p. 485).

### *CNN’s iReport*

In general, few studies have examined how network news organizations are adapting to technology and participatory news. Some have focused on gatekeeping and the Internet (Beard & Olsen, 1999), but studies have primarily centered on print news or online outlets (Singer, 2001; Singer, 2006; Storm, 2007). A study of CNN’s iReport will help delineate how user-generated news is integrated into a network news operation. This paper will utilize in-depth interviews in a study of CNN’s iReport Website, to lay groundwork that could help researchers develop new hypothesis and models related to gatekeeping, as well as participatory newsgathering. Before explaining the research methods that were used in this study, a brief background of CNN’s iReport will be useful.

CNN started soliciting and featuring audience-gathered content in 2006 under the iReport brand. During the first phase of implementation, approximately ten percent of the news-related photos and video were featured on air or on CNN.com after being carefully reviewed by journalists. In February 2008, CNN launched an online community dedicated to gathering un-moderated user-generated content. The Website explained that, "CNN makes no guarantees about the content or the coverage on iReport.com." The site was developed to build an online community; help the network gauge what people consider to be news; and empower the community to drive news conversations. CNN continues to use iReports on-air, and on CNN.com once newsworthy reports are vetted. Trained journalists are charged with verifying the authenticity of news reports and events submitted by the public before any clips are aired (Dube, 2007).

One of the most notable iReports occurred on April 2007 when Virginia Tech student Jamal Alburghouti shared video captured on his cell phone camera of the worst shooting massacre on a college campus in U.S. history. Alburghouti was walking across campus when he happened upon the scene. He captured the only video of police entering a building and audio of the gunshots (CNN, 2007). As significant as this appears, some iReporters and journalists have discussed the ethical issues that come into play (Witt, 2008; Callan, 2008). One example involves iReporter Grayson Daughters, who is also a media consultant. Daughters posted an iReport video of one her former clients that received ten thousand hits and was subsequently featured on CNN. The author of this paper is not implying that anything unethical occurred, and Daughters says she fully disclosed to CNN staff that she at one time worked for the political pollster featured in the video. She said she was "testing" the system, explaining that, "anyone can use iReport, under just about any guise, if they chose to be less than transparent" (Witt, 2008). In another instance, an iReporter posted a hoax on the Website about Apple Inc.'s CEO Steve Jobs, claiming that Jobs had suffered a heart attack. Apple's stock plummeted 5.4 percent after the information was published. CNN responded by suspending the user's account,

and the SEC launched an investigation into whether or not the hoax about Jobs was intended to devalue Apple's stock. "The event underscores the need for news organizations to verify content by users before it is published," said the dean of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism (Callan, 2008). CNN did not air the report or publish it on CNN.com, nor has it modified its vetting policy (Callan, 2008).

The purpose of this research is to explore the selection and decision-making process of CNN iReport staff who are responsible for overseeing the iReport community and are involved in vetting the content to determine if these activities are similar to or different from traditional gatekeeping practices. CNN was selected for the study because its location in Atlanta is accessible and because the iReport brand is well-recognized among mainstream news organizations.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

Bruns (2008) suggests that qualitative studies can play an important role in understanding how citizen journalism is integrated into news operations, especially in consideration of the limited tools and methods of research established thus far. In alignment with Cresswell's (1998) reasons for conducting qualitative research, this study examines an area that does not have, "firm guidelines or specific procedures and is evolving and changing constantly" (p. 27). With these factors in mind a new media gatekeeping study conducted by Beard and Olsen (1999) was used as a model for the current research. In Beard and Olsen's qualitative study, university and college Webmasters were interviewed to determine the values and principles that guided them in making gatekeeping decisions. Long interviews were used to gather data for the study. The study found that gatekeeping is a valuable approach to study those who are responsible for the selection of messages in online media, and the authors conclude that Webmasters have similar responsibilities and deal with the same constraints as traditional media gatekeepers.

Similar to the study by Beard and Olsen (1999), this paper uses guidelines delineated by McCracken (1988), which suggests that in-depth interviews with eight individuals be used to qualitatively gather data. According to McCracken (1988), the goal of the long interview is to let the respondent "tell his or her own story in her or her own terms" (P.22). The purpose of this kind of study is to, "gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world" (p. 17). The process of inquiry involves a four-step pattern that includes: 1) A review of analytic categories and interview design, 2) A review of cultural categories and interview design, 3) Interview procedure and the discovery of cultural categories, and 4) interview analysis and the discovery

of analytical categories (p. 29). A semi-structured survey questionnaire was used to interview the subjects who were audio taped with a digital recorder. The questions were phrased in a general nondescript manner. Once the interviews were completed, the analysis stage began, which included a professional verbatim transcription of the interviews followed by a series of analysis that identified common themes.

Eight individuals who work for CNN.com were identified and interviewed for this study. Each individual works in the iReport department, as a manager, community manager, or associate producer. Based on some of the issues that have been examined in the literature review, this study will seek answers to the following questions.

RQ1: How is technology used to gather user-generated media, and what procedures are in place to solicit it?

RQ2: What are the challenges or benefits related to integrating user-produced content into news programming, and how is the content shared across the Web and broadcast network?

RQ3: What criteria are used to determine if user generated-media meets established news standards?

### *Disclosures*

The primary investigator in this study is a broadcast journalist with more than ten years of experience working for news stations in Washington, D.C. and Tampa, FL. He also briefly worked for the Black Family Channel, where he developed a pilot for a citizen journalism news program. In addition, he worked as a freelance correspondent for HDNews, and as a freelance video journalist for the Associated Press. He is a member of the iReport community and has uploaded a few stories. After the CNN YouTube debate, he uploaded a commentary that was featured on CNN and HLN on July 24, 2007 (CNN, 2007). None of the other videos uploaded have been featured on the network.

### *Description of the Sample*

CNN's iReport unit was selected for this study for several reasons. The employees are primarily responsible for monitoring, reviewing, and vetting user-generated content that is uploaded to the iReport community. The iReport department is three years old and has established best practices and a method to identify and vet content. Additionally, content submitted to iReport is used across CNN's broadcast networks and on the Web.

On October 26, 2009, CNN re-launched CNN.com and integrated iReport into the main news site. Prior to that, iReport existed on a separate domain, www.iReport.com. All of the information that is presented in this study is based on data that was collected prior to the re-launch. The interviews took place between August 26, 2009, and September 25, 2009, at the CNN.com offices in Atlanta, Georgia. Throughout the discussion and findings they are referred to as respondents, iReport producers or iReport team members. iReporters, iReport community members or contributors refer to the community members who produce and share iReports.

All of the participants who participated in this study did not object to having their names disclosed, however to conform with Beard and Olsen's (1999) study, and to protect their identities, the eight respondents are identified by letter only.

Respondent A is the manager of the iReport team. She has eight years of experience working at the network. She leads the team and sets the tone for the overall vision for how the community operates and how goals are executed. She started as a Webmaster and moved into the editorial side creating interactive content before she helped launch iReport in 2006.

Respondent B is the Community Manager. He has more than fifteen years of experience working in news. His primary responsibilities are to moderate the site; make sure members are following the community guidelines; and that they are having a positive experience. He has worked in the iReport department for a year and a half.



Respondent C is the iReport News Manager. He has more than seven years of experience working in news. He has been with iReport since the community launched in 2006. He is responsible for deciding what kind of assignments the department is interested in gathering from the community.

Respondent D is an Associate Producer. Working for iReport is her first professional job working in news. She has worked for the network for about a year. Her job is to monitor and vet content and then pitch it to CNN and CNN.com.

Respondent E is a Senior Associate Producer. She has worked at the network for three years. Her responsibilities include monitoring the community content and verifying information.

Respondent F is an Associate Producer. Her responsibilities include attending the morning news editorial meeting and pitching iReports to CNN and CNN.com. She is also responsible for linking iReport stories to the CNN.com Website. This is her first professional news job.

Respondent G is an Associate Producer. He has worked at the network for four and a half years in various departments and has worked in the iReport unit for about a year. He assists in community management duties, and monitors, vets, and pitches content for use on CNN or CNN.com.

Respondent H is an Associate Producer. She works the evening shift and weekends. She has less than a year of experience working at CNN.com. Her responsibilities include vetting content that can be used for on-air for either CNN or CNN.com and linking iReport stories to the CNN.com Website.

It should also be noted that a CNN.com Public Relations representative was in the room monitoring all of the interview sessions. Though CNN was open and willing to participate in this study, the investigator was informed that certain information about the operation could not be discussed publicly.

## Chapter Four

### Findings

#### **1. How is technology used to gather user-generated media, and what procedures are in place to solicit it?**

For all of the respondents, technology plays a major role in the gathering, selection, vetting, and distribution of user-generated content. The iReport community is made up of approximately 300 to 350 thousand individuals who participate in a variety of ways. In general, community members use the site to share their photos and videos with CNN, discuss the news, communicate with each other and build real relationships with CNN/iReport staff. Respondent A stated that the department's job "is to be the ears on the ground listening to what the iReport community is bubbling up and be the voice for that inside the news agenda meetings." In other words, iReport producers pay attention to what the community gravitates toward and they work to get the content featured on CNN and CNN.com. All of the respondents indicated that the Internet has changed newsgathering practices in various ways. Respondent C said, "information can be shared, obviously, more readily, and easier." Respondent D said that the Web has made the process of finding sources easier, while Respondent F said that, "citizen journalism enables people to report on news so much quicker, like immediately after it happens to them."

The primary way that content is collected on iReport.com is through the iReport.com Website. Online visitors who want to contribute must register to be able to upload photos, video, and text. iReporters also comment on content, engage in conversations about the news, and share the content with external Websites and communities. The most common types of content that are

contributed to the site are: 1) breaking news, 2) feature stories, 3) enterprise stories, 4) community commentary/conversations, and 5) fun projects.

During breaking news events, the iReport staff does not do much to solicit content. For example, Respondent D shared the story that broke during President Obama's inauguration. No one with the network knew that some of the ticketed attendees were having trouble getting into the event until the iReports started being uploaded to the site. "When the people started sending iReports, we were like... 'This is a huge story,'" she explained. In the case of the Iranian election crisis, the iReport site quickly became "flooded with content," said Respondent H. Though technology allows the greater public to quickly and easily share content, Respondent A stated that nothing is new about the public sharing footage with news outlets. She recounted a tsunami story that occurred pre-iReport, saying that, "when CNN asked for that footage, what we got was video tapes. Like, people actually, physically mailed in video tapes of the footage... it's amazing, like these huge bins full of, just stacks of video tapes." She continued, "iReport represents a change in the technology behind news-gathering, but more than that, it represents a change in the people who can contribute to the news."

Other than breaking news, human-interest stories are common according to the respondents. They usually solicit and gather these stories from community assignments. "We have to have it out there and let people know we're looking for it," according to Respondent E. The iReport site includes an assignment desk page. After an assignment is featured the iReport team works to inform the community about what they are seeking. In addition to featuring assignments on the iReport community, iReport producers also publicize assignments with their Twitter and Facebook network. The hope is that people will find an assignment interesting and share content that will become part the news programming on CNN or CNN.com. Respondent C explained that he makes the decisions about the assignments that are featured, but said that usually it is a group decision that involves the community manager and the rest of the team. One example of a successful assignment mentioned by

Respondents A and D focused on the anniversary of the Summer of Love in 1969. The assignment asked the iReport community to reflect back on the last forty years. One story that was submitted involved the son of a NASA employee who helped save the mission to the moon when he reconnected a piece of equipment by reaching his arm into a tiny space. The boy ended up meeting Neil Armstrong, but never talked about it publicly until he shared it with iReport years later. Respondent A explained that the story became the centerpiece of the news coverage. During the anniversary of World War II, the iReport staff invited people to share their stories. Respondent C stated, “We’re having some really incredible people share some really incredible photos that I’ve never seen before, and it offers yet another fresh perspective.” In general the characteristics of these stories are personal, interesting, and powerful.

A third type of content that is submitted is “enterprise journalism,” according to Respondent C, who said that several iReporters have developed relationships with the team and will find, develop, and produce stories on their own. Often, “we’re available to help walk them through certain things and discuss with them, like story angles and story ideas and hopefully make it better,” he said. Respondent A mentioned a contributor who lost his job and produced a video diary type series that documented his move from the west coast to the East coast to live with family. As a final example, Respondent B mentioned an underwater photographer who is working on a project to document raising a schooner that may have sunk in the War of 1812. Since there is no record of the ship, it is believed that it may have been used to help slaves escape to Canada.

Though this next category of participation was mentioned to a lesser degree, the community also helps CNN find people to participate in interview segments or pundits who can offer their opinions during debates. “We also play the role of... guest bookings,” Respondent C explained. “You could send an iReport, and literally, within 10 minutes or less, you could be on the air talking to Wolf Blitzer about something that just happened. In another instance, iReporters were allowed to submit questions to guests on “The Situation Room.” A recent

college grad was chosen to ask a question to President Obama, and after Michael Phelps won multiple medals in the 2008 Olympics, iReporters had the opportunity to ask him questions on air as well. Respondent A added that iReporters were featured on other news programs like “AC 360.” “It would be you talking to Anderson Cooper on air and describing what you saw and describing... who you are and why you were in that position to begin with.” The common theme that was repeated by the senior iReport team members was that news is shifting from a lecture to being more of a conversation and that iReport is a valuable tool for enabling that process. “It’s a two-way conversation between CNN and its audience that ultimately results in richer, deeper, more personally relevant stories for all of us,” said Respondent A.

The final category of content mentioned by respondents is fun content. Examples include a bi-weekly assignment called the Photo Club and crowd-sourcing assignments. With the Photo Club, the iReport team comes up with an assignment, the community’s photographers take pictures and share, and the iReport staff produces an interactive photo gallery that is featured on CNN.com. The gallery gets some of the highest traffic on the site. Another example is crowd-sourcing projects, which involve asking a question that affects a lot of people. Respondent C said one successful crowd-sourcing assignment occurred during a spike in gas prices. People not only took pictures of the high prices at the pump, but one iReporter in the Midwest started biking to work and produced a story about it.

## **2. What are the challenges or benefits related to integrating user-generated content into news programming?**

The respondents in general indicated that the benefits outweigh the challenges, however, they primarily identify two categories of challenges: internal organizational challenges that involve how other CNN employees have adopted and accepted user-generated content, and community challenges, which pertain to issues related to how the iReport staff manages the contributors, makes assignments, and decides how the content is used. As far as the benefits, the

respondents' responses focused on how iReport has helped improve the quality of news programming.

### *Internal Organizational Challenges*

When CNN launched iReport in September 2006, the first challenge involved the adoption of the news platform by the CNN organization. Respondent G stated that it was an uphill battle initially. "It's hard to convince people of the average guy or woman out there who is sending this video or sending this picture is newsworthy, it's real journalism," he said. Respondent A said that the first iReport that aired was a squirrel on a branch, and explained that, "that was the tone for what... we could squeeze into the main CNN ship." Six months later the benefits of iReport were realized during the Virginia Tech shooting. Respondent A said that it was an "aha" moment because the only person who captured any part of the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history that left 33 people dead was a student with a cell phone (MSNBC, 2007). "Listening to the gun shots in the video is what helped CNN and the rest of the world determine that there had been a second shooting, and it was much more serious than the first one, and that, you know, this story was enormously serious and something we needed to focus on," she said. Respondent C echoed those sentiments and added that from a news gathering perspective, the Virginia Tech example demonstrated the value of iReport to other CNN employees.

The process of getting widespread acceptance of iReport has not happened overnight, and the iReport producers both pitch content and focus on relationship building to get others in the organization to understand how iReports can be included in news coverage. Respondent B explained that CNN is a large organization, and some people who have not used it are hesitant, so the iReport team often has to lobby producers, "to get them excited about it." Respondent A added that building one-on-one relationships has been key to helping CNN as a whole understand the value of it. She said that each time a submission makes air and helps CNN tell a particular story, "you create ambassadors and believers outside of your group, and that's everything." She said those ambassadors

include everyone from people who are in the control room during breaking iReports to people who work on CNN and CNN.com, “who got sources and material they never would have had otherwise.” The examples of success stories are beginning to stack up and include: the California wild fires, the Minnesota bridge collapse, the Chinese earthquake, and the Jakarta bombings.

As useful as iReport can be, it can also be a challenge to find ways to include content in some of the programming, said Respondent C, who spends a good amount of his time working with CNN’s producers around the world who want to learn how to use iReport. He likened it to being a coach and said that sometimes they have creative ideas that do not always work. One example included a CNN.com producer who wanted iReporters to cook recipes and talk about it. Respondent C did not feel that it was a right fit for the community, so he tried to offer some alternative ideas that could work.

### *Community Challenges*

The iReport team has encountered challenges that pertain to the online community of iReporters who share their content. These challenges include controlling content quality, managing assignments, and keeping the overall experience on the site enjoyable for iReporters.

Although some content was said to be creative and interesting, most of the respondents expressed concerns regarding the quality of submissions. Respondent B stated that the content from iReporters is inconsistent, while Respondent H gave an example of a number of blurry images that were submitted during President Obama’s inauguration. “There’s no control... there’s good and bad,” said Respondent E. In contrast, Respondent B added, “if we send a CNN crew to tell that story, it will be amazing.” He also stated that sometimes the content is good, but the iReporter will fail to add any text details. This can be a challenge because the iReport team wants to collect as much information as they can about a story, and it sometimes takes additional digging to find a newsworthy angle. Respondents A and C said there are ongoing

concerns with people who post erroneous content. “People try to trick us,” said Respondent H. She gave an example of a plane crash that occurred in the Northeast and recalled reviewing a submission from a 16-year-old. After initiating a conversation with the iReporter, she suspected that he wasn’t being honest about the story. “The person said the news channel told him to film. I’m like, ‘What news affiliate would tell you to do that? Why did you have a \$30,000 camera?’” She said that when a story doesn’t check out, they place a note on the submission that says, “Not Approved. Do not use this.” Respondent D also spoke about the challenges of confirming information. “If you’re talking to someone on the phone or on the Internet, as opposed to meeting them in person, it’s harder to figure out how legit their story is or if they are who they say they are,” she said. Respondent A called these issues “risks” for the network because, “CNN... lives on its integrity as a news organization.”

There are also challenges with creating and managing the assignments. It has been a work in progress, and they have had to learn as they go along, explained Respondent B. He shared an example of a memorable story that was submitted shortly after the community launched of a woman who tattooed a message on her arm from her husband who had been deployed to Iraq. “It’s one of the most beautiful things I’ve ever seen,” he reflected. “It’s, like, ‘if anything ever happens to me, know that you were... you know, I loved you more than anyone has ever been loved,’ never forget that,” he said. As compelling as the story was, he admitted that they really did not know what to do with it at the time. “We found that when we don’t have a plan... then we sort of flail a little bit, and we get all this stuff, and it’s like, what are we gonna do with that,” he said. Respondent C indicated that their overarching goal is to create value for the community members by helping get their content featured on CNN and CNN.com. “If we ask for something in an assignment, and a user follows those instructions and produces something, well then we damn well better make sure we do everything we can that that gets incorporated into our news coverage.” That being said, the community does not always respond favorably to



assignments, according to Respondent H, who shared what she called a “classic editor moment.”

So I want a reaction piece on X from iReporters. We may put up an assignment; iReporters don't feel it or just maybe the discussion is kind of dry or nothing...it just gets a little argument, but nothing you can really write about. And the editor says, “hey, where's that story?” Well, the community wasn't receptive to that topic. You just can't bank of them giving you a good response every time, because if they don't feel it's newsworthy, or if they don't feel like it's something they wanna discuss, they won't.

She added that not everything contributed is newsworthy, like a photo of a dog. “I mean, they're more than welcome to do that, but that's not gonna make, um, you know, CNN TV or anything, unless it's like a five-legged dog.”

Respondent B is responsible for monitoring conversations and making sure the community rules are not violated. Although he didn't emphatically state that his job is challenging, he has to weed out bad behavior and conversations that violate community guidelines. “Well, there are people who are mean or racist or hate speech,” he said, adding that he removes content that breaks the community rules. He also keeps an eye on content that is offensive, but if it does not break the rules, he will let it remain even if he does not agree with it. Respondent C said though they are “constantly struggling” with some of these issues, they are learning from each experience and trying different approaches to create an environment where the users feel comfortable, and safe, and find value in their participation.

### *Benefits*

Each respondent expressed perceived benefits from CNN's ability to utilize the community to gather three general types of news and information: 1) breaking news; 2) interesting, new and diverse content; and 3) witnesses and guests.

### *Breaking News*

The first and most obvious area where CNN benefits from iReport.com is during breaking situations. The Virginia Tech shooting was a seminal moment for the network. Respondent C said it is an example of iReport.com being able to gather “never-before-seen images of a major breaking news event.” Respondents E and H talked about using iReport to gather news during the Iran election crisis. Respondent H also gave the example of the 2009 Atlanta floods and added, “CNN can’t have reporters everywhere all the time, so these iReporters are almost... like semi-reporters.”

### *Alternative Sources & New Angles*

The iReport team believes that CNN greatly benefits from the stories, conversations, and perspectives from the iReporters. The contributions from the community helps the network share more complete stories, get different angles or perspectives, and gather stories that would have been missed altogether. Respondent G recalled a devastating brush fire in Australia where an iReporter shared the devastation in his neighborhood. “I don’t think there’s any way that would have been documented at all,” he concluded. Respondent G also referred to the 2009 G20 protests. CNN had one or two cameras covering the event, but, thanks to iReporters, the network received multiple submissions that allowed them to get more sides of the story. Respondent D said iReport producers benefit from being able to pick and choose the best content to feature. “We’re able to... gather information and allow the community to paint the picture to tell the story,” said Respondent E. Though the iReports tend to be personal, subjective, first-person stories, Respondent A did not see it as a drawback. “News coverage is deeper; it’s richer. News coverage is more interesting, and therefore, more important with iReport than without it,” she said.

### *Witnesses & Guests*

A final benefit according to the respondents is that iReport allows new sources to easily participate in the news. Respondent A said iReport producers

seek out alternative guests that are sometimes booked for on-air segments, and iReporters offer new voices to other guests who appear regularly on the network. “It can diminish the quality of the debate when you hear the same sound bite over and over,” she said, speaking about professional pundits who are often featured on multiple news networks. Respondent A shared the example of an experiment they tried on “The Situation Room” with Wolf Blitzer. During the 2009 Presidential election race they booked high profile guests like John McCain or Barack Obama and allowed half of the questions to be asked by iReporters. “It meant the character of the interviews was a lot different because it was divided between two approaches to interviewing, which I think was really compelling,” she explained. Respondents B and C explained that iReport makes it easier to find people who are affected by newsworthy issues, and both gave the example of the swine flu story. They explained that experts are usually always included in health stories, but with iReport they can find real people to talk about it. “Traditionally, you might be working a beat, and you would call up your sources and say, ‘Well I’m looking for someone that has kids, and they’re really worried about the swine flu.’” Through the iReport Website, the community news assignments allows them to quickly find people to participate in new stories. “It’s a lot easier to do, so we do it more... I think it adds more life and personality to the stories, and it’s a differentiator,” explained Respondent C.

## **2b. How is content shared across the Web and broadcast network?**

The process of distributing iReports across CNN’s Website is constant and involves vetting, pitching, and outreach. iReport producers pitch newsworthy content to the various producers, who make the final decisions about using it. It should be mentioned that, before an iReport can be pitched, iReport producers vet the content to make sure the information is true and that the iReporter who submitted it also produced the content. All approved iReport content receives a red “on CNN” stamp, indicating that it is CNN ready, and then producers across the company can use it as they like. In general, nine to ten percent of all iReports submitted get approved for use on CNN or CNN.com,

however that does not mean that all of it gets used. “So, once it’s been vetted and has the green light to be used on any show, and individual show producers look at that content, and if they think they want to put it on TV, they’re totally welcome to,” explained Respondent F. In other words, producers are not required to use iReports. In some cases it is a two-way outreach effort. “It’s a conversation we have as a group and with the producer in the different sections of CNN.com, with the producers of the different shows on CNN... We’ll pitch stuff to them from iReport, or they’ll come to us and say, ‘We saw this on iReport and want to use it,’” explained Respondent E.

The process starts every weekday morning in the CNN.com editorial meeting. The group consists of about ten people who are mostly former newspaper editors and now work for CNN.com. Respondent F attends the meeting after reviewing recent iReport submissions, and then she, the editors, and producers have a discussion about what news will be covered that day. “I bring the perspective from iReporters. Here’s what people are talking about. Here’s what people are experiencing and sending pictures of,” she said. “It’s totally pitching for iReport,” explained Respondent A. Pitching means that the iReport editorial team actively promotes newsworthy iReports with producers. As iReports are submitted throughout the day, iReport producers search for content that they think is newsworthy. Once they identify potentially newsworthy content, a producer will vet it and give a summary of what they have gathered to other producers through out the network. “We have an e-mail daily that anyone at CNN can sign up for, and we put out a note twice a day that’s basically, here’s the good stuff... here’s the best that we’ve seen,” explained Respondent C. As far as determining what stories should be pitched, “It’s a conversation we have as a group,” explained Respondent D. In some cases when an iReport producer finds content that he or she thinks will be in demand like a fire or breaking news, she will start the process of vetting and pitching right away. The process also involves helping CNN producers who work around the world understand how they can integrate iReports into their shows. “I spend a lot of time trying to walk them through that process,” explained Respondent C.

There are some differences in how iReports get shared on CNN's broadcast channels versus content that is featured on CNN.com. In general, producers on both platforms have the final say regarding which iReports get used, however the iReport team controls some of the content that appears on the Website. The top story, called a "T-1," is decided by a producer, but the section of links known as "T-2" are managed by Respondent F during the week and Respondent G during evenings and weekends. Respondent F said the link, "generates a lot of our side traffic." Respondent G added that the biggest part of her job is making sure iReport stories are linked to CNN.com during her shift. Respondent F also said that during brainstorming sessions the iReport team will come to a consensus about the most compelling submissions. A member of the iReport unit will either edit the video or write the story, then pitch it to CNN producers. "We'd say, 'We've got this great story about whatever,' and it makes it to the site," she said. A final type of content that the iReport team produces and posts directly to CNN.com is the Photo Club galleries, which are themed beauty shots contributed by iReporters.

Another interesting point is that the iReport staff does not have exclusive authority to monitor, vet, and approve content for CNN. Approximately 600 CNN employees outside of the iReport department have been trained on how to search for content, vet it, and use it in CNN programming. Respondent A said that everyone from, "reporters to correspondents to executive producers, it's like this incredible swatch of people who are tasked in gathering and vetting news from all over the world, and when it comes to CNN... iReport is just one other avenue." It appears that iReport is viewed as another source of information, but like all news, it has to be verified first.

Once the content is approved, it can be used in numerous ways according to Respondent C:

It can be a photo that's in a photo gallery of a CNN.com article. It can be directly linked from inside a story. It could be, um...it could wind up on the Tony Harris show, you know, part of a segment on CNN.com Live, Headline News, CNNi.

In conclusion, he pointed out that CNN has no official system that tracks how iReports are used, but felt that a good amount of the vetted content is used in some capacity.

### **3. What criteria are used to determine if user-generated content meets established news standards?**

Each respondent has his or her own definition of what makes an event, situation or piece of content newsworthy. Overall, the iReport producer's view regarding what makes something newsworthy is personal and subjective. The attitude of the iReport team most likely has been shaped by their exposure to the non-professional content that is submitted on iReport.com. Respondent A said, "I really feel like the kind of traditional, capital "N" version of news is very, very different from the way we approach it on a daily basis on the iReport team." Her definition of news was simply "something that's true and new." Respondent C said, "news is just a good story." Respondent D said, "news is something that happens to someone." As a final example, Respondent G said news is, "anything that affects people, anything that's going on, that's out of the ordinary too." That being said iReports must meet CNN's established traditional news standards on one hand, but the stories are more personal and subjective, instead of being objective like traditional news content.

Respondent A stated, "we've developed a model for encouraging people to share content and incorporate it with CNN. It allows CNN to maintain its integrity as a trusted news source." To maintain this level of accuracy, iReport content must meet the same rigorous standards as any other information that is featured on CNN and CNN.com. After analyzing the process, iReports that get published or broadcasted on CNN must pass through multiple gates that include: 1) the community and technological gates; 2) the iReport team's technologically assisted vetting process; and 3) CNN producers.

The iReport platform is designed to give everyone a voice, and contributors include professional journalists, students, amateur video producers,

news eyewitnesses, and people who are passionate about news. The overall objective of the iReport team is to locate newsworthy content that can be included into the network's news coverage. There are at least three gates that user-generated content must pass through to get featured on the network. The first gate is the iReport community. Anyone can contribute content as long as it does not violate the community's standards. The respondents said the main type of content that would fall into this category is pornography, obscene discussions, or an extreme personal attack, but there is no indication that the community has had any big problems in those areas. Since the iReport team does not work around the clock, CNN has hired a third party moderation team to look at everything that is uploaded to make sure it is within the community guidelines. They call it a "post moderation" system, which means that the content is reviewed within fifteen minutes of being posted to the site. These moderators do not operate at CNN's headquarters in Atlanta, but they have the authority to pull content if it is in violation of the guidelines. Respondent D explained that the moderators normally contact an iReport staff member before removing content. "We think that's really important because we don't want to have any censorship," she explained. Sometimes if the content is questionable, iReport producers will contact the community member to explain why there is a problem. "A lot of times, they're like 'oh, sorry,' and they'll go ahead and change it." Respondent D said. Respondent C stated that editorial freedom is important in the iReport community. "Our definition of news is not necessarily the one that's important, so we should allow people to weigh in on all kinds of subjects," he said. Other than the post moderation process, iReport editors generally let the community police itself through a flagging process. "It's worked really well having the community being in charge of letting us know if something is wrong," said Respondent F.

Once the content is uploaded to the site, the second gate is the professional iReport producers or the other trained CNN employees who identify photos and video that may be suitable for use on the network. Respondent F said that breaking news and weather is big, adding that "we look for really solid content, stories that are really well-edited and told, and just interesting in general

and something we haven't seen." It would seem to be a time-consuming task, and the associate producers primarily search for newsworthy content on the site, however, they are unable to physically review everything. During this phase of the news selection process, the community plays a role in deciding what content should be considered by the iReport team. It happens through technology, which helps them identify the most popular, and best content on the community according to Respondent A and the other respondents. She explained that in 2008 CNN added an algorithm to help filter content on the iReport Website. The formula uses data from community activity such as the number of comments, how it is rated, and how many times the content is shared to determine how newsworthy the story is. It essentially allows content that is getting significant attention from the community to rise to the top. It appears in a "newsiest" section on the iReport site. All of the respondents said that the community itself plays a role in helping them choose newsworthy submissions to review. "They can help, elevate something that maybe would have slipped through... We get a lot of submissions a day, so sometimes we don't always see the stuff that is maybe worth a second or third look," said Respondent C. Respondent D added, "if there's a story we would have otherwise not paid attention to that has, like, 100 comments on it, we're gonna go, 'Whoa, what's this?'" Respondent G shared an example of how the community helped bring newsworthy content to their attention. He said there was a story from an iReporter who attached a camera to a balloon and sent it to the edge of space and took some pictures from above earth. Online users outside of iReport started linking to the story, and it received about 50,000 page views. Respondent G said, "It kind of slipped under our radar. We saw how many people were responding to this, and we went after it, and it became a story on CNN.com the next week." During this phase of the news selection process the stories do not necessarily meet the established news values of CNN but rather reflect what the community determines to be newsworthy.

After the iReport producer or trained CNN employee decides to pursue an iReport story, the network's established news standards are applied to the vetting



process. Respondent A explained that, “the philosophy behind news gathering hasn’t changed at all. The rules of engagement are still exactly the same... Double check. Verify.” Respondent C added, “we apply the same standards to iReports as we do to any of our newsgathering, so we hold that up to CNN’s very high standards.” The steps are the same for every piece of content that is considered, and this is where professional journalism standards are applied. These are the key factors that will help CNN staffers decide if user-generated content is newsworthy: 1) A verbal conversation with the submitter is required; 2) The content gathered must be a real event; 3) The video or photo cannot be altered or modified; 4) The iReporter who submits the content must capture it and have the rights to share it; and 5) The iReporter must be of legal age, or if the submitter is a minor, their parents must give permission to share the content.

The conversation with the iReporter is an important step in the process because iReport producers often have to gather additional facts or details to help tell the story. The degree of questioning differs from situation to situation. If they are verifying an on-camera commentary from the iReporter, they may ask some basic questions about their background and area of expertise. If it is a breaking news story or weather video the vetting process is more in depth. The iReport team may consult experts outside of their department at CNN to verify the details related to the content. Respondent E explained, “We check to see that their story matches what other reporters are saying or what other people are saying and what we know about that area.” If they suspect the submitter is not being honest, they will continue to probe until they are able to determine if the story is true or real. They are also able to use technology to determine if photos are authentic. The primary method of checking photos is by opening the picture up in Photoshop and asking the submitter questions about the camera that was used. The software indicates what kind of camera captured the image, which allows them to verify whether or not the iReporter took the photo.

The 2009 Iran election crisis was one breaking news story that stood out for Respondents E and H and demonstrated the diligence that the iReport team

puts into verifying user-generated content. Both participants monitored the community and vetted iReports when the unrest broke out surrounding the controversial election results. When the violence erupted, CNN created a special area and brought in specialists from all over the company to gather information about the events and to communicate in one area. Some of the employees spoke Farsi, some were brought in to monitor content on YouTube, while Respondent E was responsible for monitoring iReports. She said it was very difficult because, “There was no media in there, and nothing coming out. Communication was hampered and limited, so it was very challenging.” She said the main challenge was making contact with iReporters and verifying information. In many cases, she used triangulation and had to rely on CNN experts, as well as people who had been there. She said she also relied on her journalistic sense or “gut instinct.” Respondent E said she was even more careful, so she often consulted with others at the network. Since iReporters could have been in danger for sharing the content, she was also extremely careful not to identify them, which normally isn’t the case. “I mean even if the iReporter wanted their name used, we wouldn’t use it.” CNN also used content from YouTube, but that content did not go through the CNN verification process, so the network was able to differentiate its iReport content by reporting that the YouTube content was unverified.

Respondent H had a similar experience and said she was working alone on the iReport desk the day after the election when the unrest started. She said the Iranian government shut down many of the popular video-sharing sites, so a lot of content was coming into iReport. She used both e-mail and the phone to try to contact people:

And right away I would say, ‘Oh, did you shoot this video’ or ‘Where did you get this from?’ And they would say, ‘Oh I got this from my friend on Facebook.’ ‘Can I get this friend?’ And in one instance, I actually got hold of the person’s friend who e-mailed me the original files.

She didn’t rely on the iReporter’s words alone however. She used Photoshop to confirm that the contributor actually took the pictures, and she

spoke to the international desk to confirm that the situations really happened. Respondent H explained, “it took a lot of steps to make sure, but then, it’s such a case where, you know, it’s such a huge event, and people’s lives could be endangered...” The diligence of the iReport team appears to be working as designed. Respondent A said that they have never had to correct an iReport on CNN that has been through the vetting process.

iReport content can be rejected as well. The reasons include: not being able to contact the iReporter; a lack of specific detail or concrete information; the content infringes on copyright; the quality was subpar; or the iReporter falsified information. In addition, there are other factors that may prevent an approved iReport from being used by the network. The most common are that either CNN received multiple submissions and did not have room for other reports, or the iReport was sent in too late.

It is difficult to generalize what kind of iReports get selected because no producers participated in the study. Respondent E said, “any producer can go on there and look for content that appeals to them or that they need.” As far as the iReport department goes, some respondents gave subjective reasons for selecting iReports, like the content was exciting, it had great production value, or “you feel it in your gut.” Others stated that stories that affected a lot of people and breaking news caught their eye. Nearly all of the respondents also seemed drawn to unusual stories that involved a personal experience, which is a big difference between traditional news content and iReports. iReports tend to include opinions and personal accounts compared to objective, neutral reporting produced by professional journalists who work for CNN. Respondent A explained that, “when you put them both together, you get the whole story.”

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate CNN's participatory newsgathering process through the iReport.com Website to examine how user-generated content may be affecting news gatekeeping. Though scholars have examined how various news outlets have attempted to create participatory and interactive news initiatives, (Bozkowski, 2004; Duze, Bruns & Neuberger, 2007; Storms, 2007; Domingo et. al, 2008; Baaker & Panti, 2009), it appears that CNN is among the first news networks that have established procedures, norms, and best practices for gathering and distributing content that is gathered from the general public. This is a multi-faceted process that involves technology, the iReport community and CNN's iReport unit, as well as the network's Web and show producers. After considering how the iReport community is structured, the methods used to gather content, how iReport staffers communicate and interact with contributors, and how the content is vetted then selected for the news, it appears that the process of selecting user-generated content involves a technological process as well as traditional gatekeeping.

The role that Websites play in the publishing of user-generated content is a recent addition to news production (Boczkowski, 2004 p. 206). In the case of iReport.com a specific online community has been designed that allows users to upload images and video, share the content to external sites, and engage in conversations. More importantly though, technology built into the Website allows visitors and iReport producers to see what content is being viewed the most or generating a large share of the conversations. The Website and the community then become a part of the gatekeeping process because popular content gets featured and receives greater exposure. In addition, community members can flag content that they believe is objectionable, and if content is obscene or in

violation of community guidelines, third party site moderators have the ability to remove it.

Once iReport producers identify content that may be newsworthy, they use established practices that is similar to traditional gatekeeping (White, 1950; Shoemaker, 1991; Livingston & Bennet, 2003). Several of the respondents said that this is when their professional journalism skills are utilized. Once a submission is deemed potentially newsworthy, iReport producers go about contacting the iReport contributors and confirming that they in fact captured the media, did not alter it in any way, and witnessed the event. Through this process, they apply CNN's same strict standards to content that is uploaded on iReport. There are other factors that contribute to their decisions to consider content like the quality of the submission, the overall news value and the timeliness. Once iReport producers are confident that the content is true and newsworthy, they will pass the material onto CNN Web and show producers who have the final say in using it or not.

When asked if the public has a role in deciding what iReports are used by CNN, the respondents gave similar, but sometimes opposing answers. Respondent A said, "Yes." Respondent B said, "Not exactly." Respondent C said "No." Each of those responses were followed with an explanation to the effect that iReport allows collaboration between the public and CNN and that iReport staff locates content that possibly meets CNN's criteria through the various features on the site. Respondent D said the public does not have the final decision but plays a significant role because the iReport community tells CNN what content people are most interested in. Additionally, Respondents E,F,G and H all stated that the process is community-driven, and the most popular content usually rises up, which usually prompts iReport producers to begin the review process. The author suspects that Respondent A believes that since the public is submitting media that they've gathered, they are playing an indirect role in influencing what CNN is able to feature, while the other respondents view the content as being an additional news source. In other words, once the media is

on the site, they treat it like any other information in the world, and the submitter has little say in CNN's decision to use it, other than being able to confirm that they captured it themselves and that it is a true, newsworthy event. This suggests that the public may have an indirect ability to set the news agenda, however, it is difficult to determine a definitive answer.

It appears that iReport is having the greatest impact on coverage when the community shares images from events that CNN has either missed or has limited access to. Almost every example shared from major news events like the Iran election crisis and the Virginia Tech massacre shared a similar theme: the greater public can gather content quickly via cell phone cameras and can serve as eyes and ears for traditional media outlets during times of crisis (Du, 2007). While other studies indicate that soft news and features are preferred by other news organizations that are working to include public participation (Dueze, Bruns & Neuberger, 2007; Baaker & Pantti, 2009), CNN has developed an effective process of including the public in high profile-breaking news situations. Nearly all of the respondents who participated in this study viewed the general public as an asset and acknowledged that CNN crews can't be everywhere. The key to iReport's success seems to be the method of vetting the content. With visual content like images, it is important that a professional verify and fact-check the submission for authenticity, which is an important step to maintain high journalistic standards (Baaker & Pantti, 2009). The iReport team maintains that they have never let a false news item filter through their gate and end up on air or on the CNN.com Website.

While other studies suggest that some traditional print and online news organizations are dealing with internal and external forces that are limiting the full integration of citizen journalism, or user-generated content into the news product (Storm, 2007; Dueze, Bruns, & Neuberger, 2007; Baaker and Pantti, 2009), CNN encourages people to share images and video of breaking news, their personal stories and other content with the network. McQuail (1994) suggested that gatekeeping, "has a built-in limitation in its implication that news arrives in ready-

made and unproblematic event-story form at the 'gates' of the media where it is either admitted or excluded" (p. 214). With iReport.com, the news is neither ready-made, nor is it either admitted or excluded at the gate because there are numerous scenarios that can affect the content selection process. The community may or may not find the story interesting, and it may not garner attention from iReport producers; iReport producers might like the content, but it may not get approved during the vetting process; there may be quality issues; or the media might not be submitted in a timely fashion. The content might be approved for air during the vetting process, but CNN producers may decide against using it. In addition, the content may be high on the newsworthy scale, however in the event of numerous submissions, some content invariably will not make it onto the network. That being said, the majority of the content submitted to iReport is not censored on the online community. It is designed to and it appears to allow public discourse and conversations around diverse topics, similar to the media eco-system described by Gilmore (2005).

CNN's iReport staff appears to be among the early adopters of this participatory news shift. In general, they all have a broad view of what makes an event or moment newsworthy. For the iReport team, news is a very personal, and subjective experience for iReport users and may not fit into the traditional box of what CNN may consider to be news. The fact that the community can report on personal issues and experiences provides texture and adds a dimension that traditional news reporting often lacks according to the respondents. The iReport team generally believes that there is significant value in allowing the public to share content with CNN through the iReport community. Few studies have shown this level of mainstream adoption of citizen-produced content. When considering CNN's news operation as a whole, this study suggests that gatekeeping theory is being affected by convergence and public participation. The Internet allows new voices from amateur content producers, and allows everyday citizens to have the opportunity to contribute to CNN's news product. Though not discussed in depth during this study, there are additional factors that weigh into CNN's participatory news operation, which includes

conversations occurring on third party social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Overall, this suggests that news could be becoming more inclusive of conversations with the public (Nguyen, 2006). Respondent A said she hopes the department sets the example for the next generation of journalists that participatory journalism can work. “We’re in transition, and that’s the way it’s gonna have to work.” In other words, a participatory news shift is underway, and CNN’s iReport is setting the stage for facilitating conversations around civic issues, personal experiences and newsworthy events with the network and the public.



## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

iReport represents an innovative method of newsgathering that involves the submission of unfiltered content on the community level and a process that insures that submissions meets established news standards once the content is considered for air. The findings of this study suggest that CNN is adopting participatory gatekeeping practices. In general, participatory research that has involved print or online news organizations has yielded little evidence that such operations are significantly including true public participation (Storms, 2007; Dueze, Bruns & Neuberger, 2007; Domingo et al., 2008), and other broadcast networks like ABC have struggled with similar ventures (Becker, 2006). In contrast, CNN's iReport.com community allows open conversations, and encourages the public to submit content with the overarching goal of sharing as much of the media as possible on CNN's domestic and international television networks, and on the CNN.com Website.

Other networks like Fox News Channel and MSNBC have also ventured into the participatory media space. Fox News Channel created "uReport" in March 2007, and MSNBC.com launched "First Person," which allows the public to submit content through the respective Websites. (TVNewser, 2008; Sizemore; 2010). More analysis is needed to identify specific similarities or differences, however, the following information was drawn from an unscientific visit to each site: Fox News Channel has a dedicated Website called uReport for user submissions, and solicits breaking news, however activity on the site appears to be minimal with one or two uploads a day. MSNBC's "First Person" site primarily consists of photo galleries that were created using amateur content. There appears to be some participation, and content includes photos from the Minnesota Bridge Collapse, and Michael Jackson tributes from around the world

however the content is mostly dated. It is assumed that though Fox News Channel and MSNBC have attempted to engage the public through user-generated content, each has yet to build a robust community around user-generated content like CNN.

As far as developing models and hypothesis to help advance the participatory media model, gatewatching is one concept that could be applied to participatory news operations (Bruns, 2003; Bruns, 2008). Bruns (2003) asserts that there are now, “a multitude of gates through which potentially newsworthy events and information emerge into the public arena... and there is a vast range of media outlets which are engaged in some form of ‘news’ reporting, policing their own gates” (p. 4). In light of traditional gatekeeping that assumes that media organizations and news professionals operate under established practices and norms to ensure that newsworthy and credible information is passed on to consumers (Livingston & Bennett, 2003). With gatewatching, however, the news professional metaphorically becomes a librarian and guides newsworthy information to the audience. In Bruns’ model, ‘librarians’ are more interested in the audience rather than the information providers, and it is possible that unverified information and bias are passed on to consumers. This puts responsibility on the consumer to become an active consumer and seek additional sources or find the facts (2003). In applying this model to CNN’s iReport, the community itself holds the library of conversations, user-generated content and commentary. The technology built into the site directs members and visitors to the most interesting and newsworthy content. Gatewatching assumes that, “anyone with access to the Web can be an editor, a contributor, a collaborator or a participant in the online news process” (Bruns, 2008 p. 8), which is the case. On the iReport.com community level, it appears that it could be an example of an open news community however, the second phase of the process also takes on traditional gatekeeping characteristics by the CNN staff in the iReport department and producers who make the final decision whether or not to include user-generated content.

This study may help set the stage for future research in the field of participatory media. On a wider level, two questions that build from this study are: How many network or broadcast news organizations are including content or conversations from the public via the Internet? What processes are in place to insure that news standards are maintained, and what is the most efficient way to collect, review, and distribute the content? To gain insights to these and similar questions, Domingo et al.'s (2008) participatory journalism model could be used to analyze participatory practices at other national or local broadcast news stations. Another model that could be used to measure a news operation's degree of online adoption and convergence is Dailey, Demo and Spillman's (2005) convergence continuum. The one shortfall of the model is that it does not attempt to define nor measure how convergence occurs at the content-gathering stage, which in some cases like this includes user-generated content. As mentioned, studies that examine Bruns (2008) gatwatching model warrants further consideration. Future research could examine participatory gatekeeping on a managerial and operations level, or a qualitative study of CNN's iReport community members may provide insightful data into whether or not the iReport site can become a trusted news source because CNN staff vet and identify credible stories.

There are also several challenges that have been revealed in this examination of scholarly literature surrounding this topic. This study represents an example of a news operation that has a dedicated staff, and the infrastructure to support a citizen journalism community. It may be challenging to develop a theoretical model based on this research because iReport and the technology behind it is unique to CNN. Some additional factors affect this subject matter as well. There is little agreement as to what to call non-professional news content. The term citizen journalism is widely used however that title appears to be too vague for researchers who are looking for terms that can be specifically applied to their area of study. For example, Storms (2007) argues that citizen journalism should be called, "Web-generated user content as it is submitted by users online to the newspaper's Website for the use of other Website users, and the

newspaper's newsroom" (p. 22). Baaker and Pantti (2009) simply call it "amateur images," which applies to still images that are gathered by non-professional photojournalists. Bruns (2008b) coined the phrase "producers," a term that seems to appropriately define content producers who are also users. The majority of CNN's iReport staff frequently used the term user-generated content instead of citizen journalism. Though the topic was not part of the questionnaire, Respondent C was asked, "Is there a difference between user-generated content as opposed to citizen journalism?" He responded by explaining that he viewed citizen journalism to be content produced by backpack journalists who create high-quality stories for a blog as an example. He went on to explain that while some of the content on iReport fits into that category, most of the contributors are people who have no interest in being a journalist, but they have an opinion or an interesting story to share.

Other concepts like convergence also need to be more clearly defined as scholars move towards developing new hypothesis and theories. Regarding convergence, Dailey, Demo, and Spillman (2005) assert that, "Without that definition and instrument, scholars cannot build a research stream that allows comparison of results, and professionals cannot make informed decisions on how to do their jobs better." Journalism organizations also seem to be struggling with the larger implications that citizen journalism may have on their credibility (Baaker & Pantti, 2008). It appears to be hard to predict how news organizations are adapting to multi-media, convergence, and user-generated content because newsrooms have different needs, values, and practices (Boczkowski, 2004; Baaker & Pantti, 2009). Baaker and Pantti's (2009) study of how print and broadcast media in the Netherlands use amateur content found that:

There seemed to be an almost total lack of standardization and agreement on how to facilitate, use and evaluate nonprofessional images. One reason for this uncertainty certainly involves the rapid pace of change occurring in the media industry and the lack of clarity about the direction in which it is moving (p. 476).

Participatory media appears to be more appealing as journalism organizations search for viable financial models. Public participation through

blogs and the sharing of photos and video are believed to be possible solutions, as explained in *The New York Times*, "... if newspapers are going to survive in anything like their current form, they will have to become more digital-centric operations with smaller newsrooms and a greater reliance on outside sources, including contributions from people in the communities they cover" (Adams, 2009). Despite the challenges, this is a fascinating time to be a part of the media, whether it is on the professional, amateur or academic level. The Internet has created an environment for change, innovation, and collaboration. From blogs, user-generated videos, amateur photos, or conversations on Facebook and Twitter, participatory media is evolving into a global phenomenon. Participatory and social media have been used in Africa during post election controversies (Kuiru, 2008; Dumisani; 2009). In the U.S., newspapers like the *New York Times* are trying to provide hyper-local content by embracing citizen journalism (Adams, 2009). As researchers attempt to understand what this means for mass communications, it must be acknowledged that most research designs and theoretical concepts are in their infancy (Dailey, Demo & Spillman, 2005; Bruns, 2008; Domingo et al., 2008; Baaker & Pantti, 2009).

This study documented how the selection of news occurs in an established network has created a participatory model for integrating user-produced content into its programming. This area of research deserves much attention from scholars. It seems that in the case of iReport at least, White's (1950) version of gatekeeping has evolved in some ways to now include participatory forms of newsgathering that involves multiple gates, some of which are technological, while parts of the process are more traditional. Unlike White's selection process, which seemed to be guided by his own beliefs, iReport producers turn to the online community to get a sense of what kind of content the members are gravitating to. This author suggests that a participatory gatekeeping process may more accurately describe the computer-aided processes of gathering, selecting, vetting, and distributing news when the public is involved. The main limitation of this study, however, is that other news organizations may not be using the same method or technology that CNN has

developed. As news professionals continue to turn to the public for content, there may be trends, similarities, or common practices that emerge. There are numerous questions to be answered in this era of digital media, and this study demonstrates that more answers are needed.

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## Appendices

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Questionnaire

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4. What role would you say you play in the decision making process of content in your current position?
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Appendix B  
Respondent Interviews

**RESPONDENT A**  
**8-26-09**

Amani Channel:	Primary Investigator ("INVESTIGATOR")
Respondent:	A ("RESPONDENT A")

*(Muffled noise)*.

*(Inaudible)*.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, I'm not really gonna identify you by your name so I'm just gonna call you "person number A," okay? Is that cool? Does it matter (*laughter*)?

**RESPONDENT A:** (*Laughter*). Okay!

**INVESTIGATOR:** Respondent A (*laughter*).

**RESPONDENT A:** (*Laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, we're just gonna run through these questions then.

**RESPONDENT A:** Okay, sure.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Don't fall off the chair, okay, so um (*laughter*)...

**RESPONDENT A:** (*Laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*). So, to start off with, I kind of do wanna get your age, but how long have you worked in news and what's your background in the news business, what's your news experience?

**RESPONDENT A:** I have, my news experience is mostly CNN. I've been at CNN.com for eight years, and, um, I actually started out here as a web master and worked news from the technical side of the house to the editorial side of the house, starting with interactive storytelling, photo galleries, multimedia, slide shows, interactive maps, that kind of things. And, I'm proud to say I produced the interactive maps on CNN.com for Hurricane Katrina

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which were...um, it was just a really interesting experience. I know New Orleans now, having produced every map (*laughter*). And then, um, that kinda led naturally into, like, truly interactive storytelling, which is not just giving users the opportunity to, like, press, choose which button, you know, which path they wanna take to a story, but actually contribute to it in a meaningful way. So, it was kinda a natural slide from that into what eventually became iReport.

**INVESTIGATOR:** You say “make it interactive.” Could you sort of elaborate on how much you meant by that...letting them...are they participating in...?

**RESPONDENT A:** Sure. Well, I mean, there are a few levels in the activity. You see them, you know, all over the Web, and then in news, in particular, we kind of...like, our word for interactive and what we call interactive means an online presentation of a story that’s something different from a, kind of, lean back video experience and different from a narrative print piece. So, anything like a Google map that has pins on it for stories that are spread geographically, or a photo gallery that lets users choose their paths through that’s not narratively driven.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So linear...it’s not necessarily linear.

**RESPONDENT A:** Exactly, yeah. No linear storytelling. And, like, we tried to call that interactive, um, because users are given a choice in the way they want to get through material and which pieces of it they wanna focus on, but the *true* meaning of interactive is collaboration, right? A conversation that goes two ways, and that’s the reason that...I think that working on interactive storytelling, just in the, you know, slide shows and photo galleries and maps kind of helped me, set me up for moving to iReport where they were already sort of used to offering choices for users, and it was not as much of an enormous leap to, instead of just offering choices, like, offer an actual opening into the, you know, news agenda and storytelling and, you know, what’s the lead and what are the details.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what is your definition of news?

**RESPONDENT A:** Oh gosh. Um, my definition of news is something that’s true

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and new. Um, and...it's...my definition of news is so incredibly broad and I think that's really formed by the fact that I've been, you know, working with iReport for the last three years. I really feel like the kind of traditional, capital end version of news is very, is very different from, um, from the way we approach it on a daily basis on the iReport team. So, I think of news as an incredibly broad category, something that's true that just happened, or, you know, a new understanding of, perhaps, something old. It's so broad, it can encompass history and personal memory. It's new...a new angle on something in our world. I know that's so enormous (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** No, not at all. (*Inaudible*). So, who determines what is newsworthy within your department?

**RESPONDENT A:** Well, so, it's really different within my organization and in my department. Um, my department's job is to ask the audience every day what's newsworthy and then to funnel that information up to the larger organization that makes decisions in a more traditional way, which is having a daily news agenda meeting where, you know, the heads of all the different departments come together and talk about what they're hearing and, you know, what they're getting from CNN correspondents in various bureaus in the field. You know, I think that's really self explanatory. My department's job, in particular, is to be the ears on the ground, listening to what the iReport community is bubbling up and be the voice for that inside the news agenda meetings...we're kinda the bridge.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Gotcha. So, what role do you play in the decision making process of content?

**RESPONDENT A:** Of content? Um...

**INVESTIGATOR:** In your position. What is your position as far as...

**RESPONDENT A:** Sure. Well, I lead the iReport team, so I lead the editorial and product direction for iReport overall. So, my role is...the 3,000 foot view is to set the tone for the daily editorial decision making within the iReport team. Um, on a day-to-day basis, I'm not the person looking at every iReport and deciding whether we're gonna pitch this through or whether it



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meets editorial standards. My job is more to rally the team and articulate the vision for what iReport is supposed to be and how we execute it on a daily basis. So, for example, this morning with Ted Kennedy, we had a long conversation about what kinds of iReports we're interested in with Ted Kennedy, what the community is...like, what we're actually seeing on iReport, what we're seeing on Twitter messages and on blogs, and you know, all over the vast universe (*laughter*) of user-generated content. And, helping to, you know, decide, together with the team, what it is we wanna do for Kennedy, which ultimately is hear from real people who are not the kinds of pundits you would see on air every day, but hear from real people who have actually met Kennedy or who have been touched by him in some way and incorporate their feelings about his passing and his work into CNN's coverage of his funeral.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, based on your past experience, can you explain the traditional news selection process in a typical broadcast news room?

**RESPONDENT A:** Uh, so I can't in a typical broadcast news room; I can in the CNN.com news room environment. So, in the pre-iReport world, the producers for various sections and, you know, the news room editorial leaders would literally sit around this table we're sitting at right now, every single morning, and do, kind of, a roll call, you know, this is what's happening in entertainment and this is what's happening in tech and this is what we're hearing from Indonesia or, you know, whatever, and it would just be a, kind of...it would just be a consensus conversation about usually deciding the three to four main topics of the day. So, you know, it's like a group of about 10 people, mostly, um, former newspaper editors, and, you know, sitting around the table and deciding, like, this is what we're covering, and then, you know, go back out into the news room and give assignments to writers and reporters and cover it. In the post-iReport world, that sitting is not all that different, you know, it's still a group of about 10 every morning who come together to talk about what we're got. The difference is iReport has a seat at the table and is asked every morning to show something to the team, like, here's something that you're probably not aware of that we're seeing from, you know, a guy in a town that CNN is not covering (*laughter*). Let's watch this

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together, can we make this T-1. And, T-1 on CNN.com is the main story. So, it's, kind of, constant, you know...it's pitching. It's totally pitching for iReport, but iReport is in the room, at the table, and there's one person who is an iReport producer who represents the 350,000 contributors from around the world.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Was there a time when iReport was introduced when you didn't have a seat at the table?

**RESPONDENT A:** Oh, yeah, totally. We've, um, we've, um, we've earned the seat at the table, and we've earned the seat at the table through, like, large and small successes over time. iReport celebrated its third birthday earlier this month, and, you know, hurray! Congratulations iReport! Um, at the beginning, they won. Um, you know, our very first iReport was a very hot squirrel on a branch, you know? And, it was, like...that was kind of the tone for what we were...what we could squeeze into the main CNN ship. It was like, oh, here's something funny and quirky that we can, you know, throw in at the end of a segment before we go to commercial, right? It was weather pictures...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Like a (*inaudible*) kind of thing?

**RESPONDENT A:** Totally! Um, but, I think, kind of, our first success that was very different from that which was Virginia Tech, which was six months after iReport launched, and, you know, the only video, the single video of that horrible moment was a graduate student with a Nokia cell phone standing outside of the hall as the SWAT team ran in, and you can actually hear the bullets fired on this tape, it's like, it's completely chilling and a horrible video, but it wasn't just seeing this thing happen. Listening to the gun shots in the video is what helped CNN and the rest of the world determine that there had been a second shooting and it was much more serious than the first one, and that, you know, this story was enormously serious and something we needed to focus on. And, like...it's kind of like...I kind of see it like we have these, we have these series of "ah ha" moments, you know? Like, the big news video where it really makes a huge impact in the way CNN is able to cover a story and the way the rest of the world sees CNN coverage. And, with every single one of

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those, you, kind of, you convince another small group of people, you know? Like, the people who are in the control room the moment that video came in are iReport believers now forever and ever. And, in some ways, it's a slow process, but with that, with California wild fires right after it, and with the Minnesota bridge collapse right after that, with the, you know, Chinese earthquake last year and the Jakarta bombing just a few weeks ago, like, they just add up, and over time, you create ambassadors and believers outside of your own group, and that's everything. That's absolutely everything, and it means, like, the people who, the people who are in the control room at those key moments, like on the television side, and at CNN.com, who got sources and material they never would have had otherwise, when they get that, like, they come back to iReport the next time and they think of it, like, what else could we...what else could we look to be obvious to contribute? What else might be interesting here? And it, like, completely invaluable, and I feel so strongly that in this time, right now, when we're in like enormous transition and the news industry is changing every single day, and we're all, like...everyone at CNN and everyone else is, kind of, scrambling to figure out, you know, what's our model and what's our future and how do we work with the audience and what's our role? I think it's really, really critically important that we make those, like, one-on-one relationships and, like, one-on-one, like, prove to individuals who, you know, have, like, 20 years in the broadcast news industry that this works and it's really powerful and here's why. And, the only way we're gonna do it is in that, like, direct relationship. My hope is that will set the standard for, you know, the next generation which won't need this proof. You know, we're in transition and that's the way it's gonna have to work (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, explain, in your thoughts, how has the Internet changed news gathering practices?

**RESPONDENT A:** Oh gosh. Well, it's changed them extraordinarily, and it's changed them very little. So, I think ultimately, the philosophy behind news gathering hasn't changed at all. The rules of engagement are still exactly the same. Double the source. Double check. Verify. You know, find out every bit of information you can about where information is coming and what the incentives might be for why people share

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particular information. Like, all of those, sort of, high level rules are...I don't think they've changed at all. I think what's changed is the tools that we have for uncovering that information and the tools that everybody has for uncovering it. I mean, when you can go to...when you can go look up every bill that's going through congress, when you can dig up every census record that's ever been filed...I can do it. You can do it. Joe Smith sitting on the corner down the street can do it. I mean, that changes our lives, just in terms of access to information and immediacy, but the rules about how and when we report, I don't think have changed at all.

**INVESTIGATOR:** In terms of this organization, how has iReport changed the news gathering process?

**RESPONDENT A:** Well, it hasn't changed the rules. I mean, the rules for, like, when we can go to air with something are precisely the same as they always have been. Um, iReport changes it in that it offers enormous new perspective and, like, a wealth of...a wealth of voices and perspectives to go to. I mean, news gathering is, you know, it's uncovering facts, but it's also...it's also booking guests, you know, people who can actually speak with authority on issues, and iReport just completely blows open the doors to the number and kinds of perspectives you can get, you know? It's not just, like, the person basically whose job it is to go around to all the news organizations (*laughter*) and, you know...but, I mean, that can be very valuable, but it can also diminish the quality of debate, when you hear the same sound bites over and over, but when you open up the possibility of contribution to anyone who has something to say and has the moral authority to say it, I think can really change the quality of the debate. We saw that especially in...leading up to the 2008 election, we tried just an experiment with the Situation Room, which is Wolf Blitzer's show in the afternoon, and invited...when they would book a really high profile guest like Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton or John McCain or Sarah Palin, which was totally interesting, um, we would invite iReporters to ask the questions, and half the questions would come from Wolf Blitzer and his team and, you know, the things they knew they were responsible to ask, and the other half would come from iReporters, who have just as much interest and authority to ask questions, but it meant that the character of

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the interviews was a lot different because it was divided between the two approaches to interviewing, which I think it really compelling.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh, as we saw with the CNN debate (*inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT A:** Exactly.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what is the most common news gathered from non-full time CNN staff? And, I am speaking more to the participatory news gatherers out there.

**RESPONDENT A:** So, like, iReporters?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah. Yes, more in reference to that.

**RESPONDENT A:** So, are you asking, like, the way they work?

**INVESTIGATOR:** I guess so, yeah. Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT A:** Well, there's not a single answer because the iReport community is...you know...everyone using all these sorts of platforms like iReport like Twitter and YouTube and whatever else are, um...they are so vastly different. We see an iReport...I guess I can use a couple of examples. There is the example of the, of the amateur reporter, like, the best example right now is a woman named Chris Morrow in San Diego, who is...she's very fortunate. She doesn't have to work, you know, she stays at home, and her husband is the main bread winner for her family, and she has a video camera and she goes around San Diego all day long finding out, like, meeting fascinating people and finding out what's happening in San Diego, and because her material is always so interesting...she did a great series of pieces from (*inaudible*) last year, and this year again, and she's got kind of a quirky sensibility, and because her pieces are so visual and interesting, we've had great success getting them on CNN, so it means, like, there's almost a San Diego bureau (*laughter*) for CNN. Were it not for her highly visual and interesting storytelling, CNN probably wouldn't cover quite as much San Diego specific coverage on its air, but it's sort of fascinating to see characters (*inaudible*), and she interviews this...she interviewed the mayor and was...his name escapes me right now, but this mural painter, he made, like,

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a big, famous whale mural in San Diego, and he made, like, the largest mural he had ever made, he's like going for a Guinness World record (*laughter*), making this enormous Earth Day mural on top of stadium in San Diego in Long Beach, and, you know, her story was absolutely fantastic and without her, the rest of the world probably wouldn't have heard about it. But the other thing, the complete other side of the spectrum, you know, there's this (*inaudible*) who is, um, just, out of pure personal interest is taking a canoe trip down the Mississippi River and stopping along the way and trying to find out from small and large communities along the river how they are being affected by the economic downturn, and his stories are...they are completely fascinating, but they are also very personal. Then, there's this...there's a man who actually lost his job and chronicled his journey from the west coast back to his family on the east coast where he was gonna go live with his family so he could have a roof over his head. He lost his job and his home, and his iReports were not what you would typically as typical objective news reporting. It was a diary, essentially, of his personal experience, and I think they are all completely valid. Like, one of the real differences between news gathering in the traditional CNN sense and news gathering in iReport is that, iReport, very often, tends to be, very often, first person and very subjective, and that traditionally is seen as kind of a no-no, and um, you know, news gathering and reporting, when you can find out who the characters are and, like, add some context to their background and, like, why they...why they are who they are and why they do what they do, I think the subjectivity is enormously useful...it makes stories so much more interesting. People are incredibly passionate about the things they are reporting about because it affects the personally. It makes, just from a total consumer perspective, I much prefer watching those sorts of stories when somebody really cares through the storytelling, and what CNN adds is finding out who they are and why they think the way they do, and you know, if you can just say it, it's okay to be subjective.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Do you see any drawbacks or benefits from this process of allowing the public to have participation?

**RESPONDENT A:** Um, well, of course, I'm gonna say the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks, and the drawbacks are risk. You know,

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there's risk involved in inviting anyone to contribute to a process that is normally, sort of, closed, guarded. The risks are that you can be fooled, and CNN, um, makes...it lives on its integrity as a news organization. If we get something wrong, that's an enormous problem for the brand and for the business. That's the drawback. But, we're very fortunate and, frankly, very smart, thus far, there's been no iReport that's been on CNN that's gone through our vetting process that, you know, we've had to retract or correct in any way. But, the benefits are, of course, all the ones we've been talking about. It's like incredibly personal storytelling. It's a wealth of perspective that you would never see in mainstream news. It's stories that the world needs to know about and just, frankly, doesn't hear because there aren't reporters in every place in the world where something interesting might happen.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, if someone were to ask you, what is iReport, what is the definition?

**RESPONDENT A:** iReport is people participating in the news with CNN. It's a two-way conversation between CNN and its audience that ultimately results in richer, deeper, more personally relevant stories for all of us.

**INVESTIGATOR:** You might have already touched on this, but what do you see as being the value?

**RESPONDENT A:** The value for iReport, for everyone, for iReporters to contribute, for CNN as a news organization, and for CNN's audience who may or may not be iReporters is that the stories are better. News coverage is deeper; it's richer. News coverage is more interesting, and therefore, more important with iReport than without it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Here's another question you might have already touched on, but what is the different between the content found on iReport, as opposed to the traditionally gathered news on CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT A:** Um, I think the answer to that is the...is subjective versus objective. Because an iReport is almost invariably subjective, and because CNN is almost invariably objective, when you put them both together, you get the whole view of

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a story.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Very good. How is it determined if an iReport submission has news value?

**RESPONDENT A:** Uh...

**INVESTIGATOR:** I guess especially because of the evolution, because you started off saying squirrels and, sort of, kickers, and that...

**RESPONDENT A:** (*Laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** ...you know, like, time and lessons learned.

**RESPONDENT A:** Right. Um, there are a couple of ways that we measure that. One is, in the relaunch of 2008, we added in some algorithms that helped to track community activity over time. And, we used the activity and comments, rating, and all that kind of standard issue kind of stuff, to help elevate stories and help bubble things that have an algorithmical value based on the community and what it's telling us. Um, that...that's probably the first measure. The other is, you know, we know, because there are people at CNN whose job it is to look forward and plan and, you know, think about what might be coming up and where we wanna focus our resources, we also, because of that, we have the iReport team take advantage of the planning and offer projects and assignments to iReport contributors based on what we know is coming so we can give people an opportunity to take part in something before CNN covers it, so that they can be part of it when the story ultimately comes out.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Can you give me an example of that?

**RESPONDENT A:** Um, sure. So, we knew...you're gonna laugh at this example, but we knew, of course, that the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the summer of love was, you know, coming up, and we were planning months and months ago. And, we knew everyone in the world would be talking about, oh my God, it's been 40 years since Woodstock. It's been 40 years since the Manson murders. It's been 40 years since the landing on the moon. So, how far has we come and what does that mean? So, what we did was, a few months ago in that editorial planning, started to let the iReport community know,



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we're gonna be looking at this, like, let's start talking about it now. And ultimately, encountered some really fascinating stories that nobody had ever heard about before, like, this kid who is 10 years old and lives in Panama. His dad worked with NASA, and as the astronauts were coming back from the moon, NASA actually lost communication with them for a minute, and it was because, you know, some tube had come undone or whatever, and this engineer and 10-year-old son with a really tiny arm, and the son with the really tiny arm literally stuck his arm into the, like, engineering apparatus and connected these two pieces back together so NASA could talk to the astronauts, which is, like, a nutty, awesome story. And, Neil Armstrong ended up sending the kid a note and they met, and, you know, it's, like, this really sweet story, and he never talked about it, and that ended up being the centerpiece for the anniversary story, because ultimately, do you really wanna talk about what happened? No. You wanna talk about, like, what it means for us today, what is news we can uncover. And, through iReporters who cast a real wide net to the entire world, you can help to uncover some of those stories.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Very good. So, who decides if an iReport submission is used on CNN, CNN.com, makes air or is actually featured on the Web site?

**RESPONDENT A:** So, um, everybody (*laughter*). We...the way CNN is set up, the ultimate decisions about, like, what goes into a block of programming or a page on CNN.com is a decision left to a producer who is personally responsible for it. So, what the iReport team does is, we work with producers and correspondents around the company, we train about 600 people to learn how to, like, go through iReports and vet them and know the tools and the rules. But, ultimately, what we do is get...try to get the material that rises up to the top vetted and approved for use, and then we just pitch like crazy to the places where it's best...where it would make the most sense. So, we go directly to the Situation Room and say, we have something amazing for you; you should really consider this. And, we've developed strong relationships around the company, but ultimately, it's the decision of the producer who is responsible for the programming.

**INVESTIGATOR:** It's really an individual situation with every iReport, with

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every department, with every show, with every producer.

**RESPONDENT A:** Which is why there is relationships and there's, like, ah ha moments, where we are talking to a writer, which is so important.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a process for monitoring content on iReport?

**RESPONDENT A:** There is a process, but do you mean from, kind of, moderation?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, and how the Web site and how that plays into how the content is, I guess, gathered and monitored and vetted.

**RESPONDENT A:** Sure. So, we kind of divide the house into...like we have the moderation team, which is like...we've hired an outside company to look at every piece of content as it comes in, like, immediately as it comes in, and, um, look at it against the site's community guidelines. They do things...like, they make sure there isn't grossly offensive material, you know, kind of the basic moderation, and that's split off from editorial...the editorial side of the house, which is, you know, all inside CNN using journalistic standards. Um, there's no official process for reviewing every single piece of content. I don't know...I'm sorry to interrupt this...I don't know that...okay. Because, the question was about the vetting process, right?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Just about, is your process for monitoring content...

**RESPONDENT A:** Okay. I don't...I don't know how much we're supposed to go into the vetting process, right? Like, with the moderators (*laughter*)? I'm just making sure. Like, um, the (*inaudible*) making part of the whole thing. But, okay, go ahead. And, we've talked about just that role before, so, I mean, but that has nothing to do with vetting. That's just helping to make sure the community guidelines are, you know, followed and the community polices its own material and a flagging system, and you know, all that stuff.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Right.

**RESPONDENT A:** On that (*laughter*), you know, the vetting part of the house, we don't really look at every single piece of content that

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comes in as it comes in. Instead, we felt that, what we talked about a little while ago, was to help bubble up, like, and really listen to the community to tell us what's interesting and important, and what CNN really needs to pay attention to. And every day, that's what the iReport team does is, you know, you saw it...the stuff that hits the new news block, it's on top of the home page, you better believe everyone is looking at it and trying to make phone calls to vet that material.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what is the process used to make sure the information is accurate? You talked about the hopes and, you know, you want to make sure the brand is protected by only featuring content that is validated. Can you talk a little bit about...well, a big part of the traditional news gathering process is you have the reporter who fact checks and double checks, and that sort of thing.

**RESPONDENT A:** Right. And, I know this is a little bit of a non-answer, but the answer is it's exactly the same for iReport as it is for anything else you see on CNN, which is why...which is why we've trained 600 people across the networks, like, people from associate producers to reporters and correspondences to executive producers, it's like this incredible swatch of people who are tasked in gathering and vetting news from all over the world, and when it comes to CNN, you know, iReport is just, you know, one other avenue. You know, there are some things we've perfected over time, and we've learned, um, in our own iReports specific vetting process, the cardinal rule is part of the vetting must involve getting in touch with the iReporter, which is obvious, right? You get in touch and you have a conversation, and you ask the same questions you would ask if you were standing on the street with that person and you were an eyewitness to an event. And then, we talk. Some of the other things we do is, we talk internally with, if it's a weather photo or a weather video, you know, we go to CNN's weather unit and ask for their specific expertise in helping us determine the validity of a piece. That's the real benefit of having iReport tied to CNN. CNN has vast expertise in research for validating research, and that's what we do all day long, so we just, as part of our training process for iReport, we encourage and make sure everyone knows, like, who is available to help you, help you understand what you're looking at and whether it's real.

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**INVESTIGATOR:** And, how does technology sort of play into the whole development of the citizen journalism genre of news gathering, and is that a significant part of the whole operation as a technology piece of it?

**RESPONDENT A:** Um, oh yeah! I mean, it wouldn't happen without the technology, right? I mean, we were seeing, like...it's kind of interesting, someone was showing me this recently...when the tsunami happened the day after Christmas, um, gosh, was it 2004? A few years ago, um, CNN, of course, didn't have reporters on the beach waiting for that to happen. Like, all of the footage that came to CNN and every other news organization was from eyewitnesses and citizen reporters who happened to have video cameras. And, when CNN asked for that footage, what we got was video tapes. Like, people actually, physically mailed in video tapes of the footage. And, I will have to find this picture for you...it's amazing, like these huge bins full of, just, stacks of video tapes of, like, mailed packages, and that's how it's been happening for years and years and year. And, technology is, like, video encoding and HTTP uploading and cell phone cameras just make that process so much simpler. And, iReport makes so much sense to launch when it did because of the increased adoption of small digital cameras and the ability to support HTTP uploading and video encoding, and you know, technology makes it all possible. But, the fact is, citizen reporting, of course, has been happening for years and years and years. I mean, the (*inaudible*) film is an amazing example from, what was it now, 45 years ago?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a focus on developing a relationship...and I know you kind of spoke of this also, but, on developing relationships with iReport community members who submit content regularly and why is that important?

**RESPONDENT A:** Oh gosh. We , um...it's so absolutely critical. So much of what the iReport team does is develop and manage relationships with contributors. It's, I mean...what iReport does so differently from some other huge outlets, is that, people who are iReport contributors are not just sources of raw material; they are people. They are people who are part of the news and can help to tell that story. So, there are, you know, interviews on AC 360. It's not just, like, if you were an

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iReporter and you shot a video, like, it's not just your video that would be on AC 360, it would be you, talking to Anderson Cooper on air and describing what you saw and describing, you know, who you are and why you were in that position to begin with. It's people. And, when...and if we're serious about that, that iReport is people, and I believe it is, if it's so important that we actually develop relationships so we can understand one another better...there's so much more to what we're doing. Just talk to David, who is our community manager, and that's his entire focus every day.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Is there a downside to allowing the public to share their media?

**RESPONDENT A:** Um, yeah. I mean, the downside, like I said before, is the potential risk in, you know, false content, but I'm really proud that, so far, has been 100% solid. And, we've developed a model for encouraging people to share content and incorporating it with CNN. It allows CNN to maintain its integrity as a trusted news source.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what factors prevent iReport submissions from being used by CNN?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh, what factors prevent...um, well, I guess there would be the same factors that prevent them from getting through the editorial vetting process, and those would be, um, you know, a lack of specific detail or concrete context for information. Um, if CNN isn't able to get in touch with an iReporter that makes it a non-starter (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT A:** And they are the same limiting factors that would apply to material that came in from CNN's own correspondent in the field, you know? Like, if we hadn't collected...done enough solid reporting, CNN wouldn't run the package, whether it's from Jessica XXX or an iReporter. The same standards apply.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Cool. Does the public have a role in deciding what iReports make air?

**RESPONDENT A:** Uh...

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**INVESTIGATOR:** Or, what content is featured?

**RESPONDENT A:** Yeah. Well, see, the public has the primary role in deciding what iReports are featured. Um, everything that is up on the iReport home page is determined exclusively by community activity. So, it is the community that decides what floats to the top; and what floats to the top is what triggers CNN to, you know, go find out more. So, it's a, it's a really collaborative relationship. That's not to say...there are certain examples where a CNN producer is thinking, I'm working on a package about X topic; I'd like to see what iReport has. And, you know, they can search and find something, and it may not have bubbled up to the top, but may be really fascinating. And, you know, they'll call the person and incorporate their material into the package. And, it goes both ways, but as far as iReport.com is concerned, it's...everything that is featured, it's featured because the community thinks it's important.

**INVESTIGATOR:** And, that's to get the attention of...the fact that it can help with the vetting process through the main...

**RESPONDENT A:** Exactly. And it's, you know...it all gets a little fuzzy on both sides, you know, depending on the need of the story and the genre and all that. But, the intention is that the community...that iReport is build so the audience can help to tell CNN what CNN needs to pay attention to that it's not already paying attention to.

**INVESTIGATOR:** And it also, I mean, you mentioned, like, 600 staff who have been trained, but they all have access to go to iReport.com and search for content that may be relevant to their...

**RESPONDENT A:** Yeah, exactly.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, the last question. Does iReport represent a significant change in the way news is gathered?

**RESPONDENT A:** Yeah (*laughter*)! Of course it does. Um, iReport represents, I mean...it represents a change in the technology behind news gathering, but more than that, it represents a change in the people who can contribute to the news. iReport is the way to participate with CNN in the

Appendix B (Continued)

news, like, it's the open invitation to anyone who has something to say, who saw a story, to contribute it. And, that's the ultimate change. It's opened the doors wide for, um, for people to contribute.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Well, what haven't I asked you that you...

**RESPONDENT A:** Oh my gosh, you've asked me everything (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT A:** Um, let's see. You know, one thing we haven't talked about a lot, and we don't have to talk about it here, I'm sure you'll hear it from other people, is some of the really stellar examples of iReports that have made a difference in the way CNN has covered stories, and that may be something we can send to you and some other people will cover it. But, I think it's important to look at, the way the Iran story was completely different because of the iReport contributions, the way the recent bombings in Jakarta were completely because of because, you know, eyewitness photography and on the ground interviews the moment it happened on AC 360, and Virginia Tech and the California wild fires and the Minneapolis bridge collapse, and the list is so long. And, I think those examples really tell the story better than, like, my philosophy of it can (*laughter*). Like, it's so strong, and the iReports themselves personalize the news so much that the stories speak for themselves.

**INVESTIGATOR:** I don't know if this is even gonna be part of my paper, but iReporters aren't paid, so that is the difference between the traditional CNN staffers and the iReporters, I mean, they are, sort of, voluntarily sharing their content.

**RESPONDENT A:** It's true. Um, iReporters are not paid, however; it's probably been a year ago now, we've worked really hard to allow an integration between iReport and ImageSource, which is CNN's, um, CNN's licensing division, so that when ImageSource licenses content to the documentary film makers and basically anyone who is making video, which is...it gives an access to CNN's enormous library of material, we incorporated iReport...excuse me, the vetted iReports, into that library, and every time an iReport gets sold through ImageSource, CNN shares the revenue with the iReporter.

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So, there is a revenue model built in, and it's all based on CNN's licensing business, which is...

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, there's potential there for...

**RESPONDENT A:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Cool. I think that's it for me.

**RESPONDENT A:** Okay. Awesome.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Thank you for your time...

**RESPONDENT A:** Oh my gosh, it's, like, when (*inaudible*), I'm sorry, I just rattle on and on and on.

(*Muffled noise*).

(*AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY.*)

(*Inaudibles due to intermittent low volume, loud muffled noise or cell phone interference.*)

**END OF AUDIO.**



Appendix B (Continued)

**Respondent B**

**8-26-09**

Amani Channel:	Primary Investigator (“INVESTIGATOR”)
Respondent:	B (“RESPONDENT B”)

*(Muffled noise)*.

**INVESTIGATOR:** All right. So, we’re not really identifying any of the respondents for this study.

**RESPONDENT B:** Okay, that’s fine.

**INVESTIGATOR:** You’re RESPONDENT B, for the record.

**RESPONDENT B:** That’s cool.

**INVESTIGATOR:** I’m just going to run through this questionnaire with all the questions, whatever, we will just go through them. So, how long have you worked in news and what is your overall experience?

**RESPONDENT B:** I’ve been, um, in it for a little over 15 years. I started at Headline News as a VJ, um, a video journalist, um, which is sort of an entry level job. Um, I was there for five years, basically on the TV side as a writer. I produced shows, and um, then I came to CNN.com in 1999 and was working on the mobile thing, which was basically typing Twitter before there was Twitter (*laughter*). Um, 130, 140 character entries for, like, pagers and mobile phones because that was a huge job contract in the early days of CNN.com before. Now, it’s automated. Most of the jobs I did when I started out have been replaced by a, um, piece of technology. Um, but yeah, it’s automated, it’s part of something you add to the script. Now, you write a separate thing when you’re publishing a story. But, prior to them figuring that out, it was something, you know, you had to have someone do, so that became my job (*inaudible*) (*muffled noise*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what does that involve?

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**RESPONDENT B:** Basically you took, you would distill whatever the big stories were into a text message that was short enough to fit on either a pager at the time or, you know, mobile phone, Nokia phones, those were like 136 characters, I think. Like I said, it was like Twitter before, you know...if I'd only thought of that, you know (*laughter*)?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yes.

**RESPONDENT B:** I might be the Twitter guy, but you know, there's no chance of that ever happening. And then, I've worked pretty much all over the news room at this point. Um, I was a writer for the legal section, and after September 11, obviously, all hands went on that, so we went, um, started covering investigation with that and just general writing. Um, in the run-up to the Gulf War, I was part of the team. They assigned me to a producer, and we basically covered the run-up to the middle of the Iraq War 2003, so basically, we would know what the new developments were for the previous day so there would be continuity in the coverage. So, we wrote, um, you know, all the Iraq stuff, I mean, all of the U.N. stuff, we followed that every day. Then, they started shooting and it was like, wait...what (*laughter*)? So, it was like all that, we had to learn about the war stuff, so I did that for about a year and then, um, we took the same model and moved into election coverage, um, for the 2004 election. And then, I was in sections and sort of did a little bit of everything. Basically I was the fill-in producer, so whoever was on vacation, I would handle that on the side. And I've been at iReport for a year and a half, um, or a year and eight months, and was basically, initially the producer. Now, I've moved into more of community management, sort of an interface between the community and us, sort of the point person for that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what's your definition, then, of news?

**RESPONDENT B:** I think, and I'm not...again, this is something we usually think about. But, it is what's important right then, you know, because importance is a sliding scale, I mean, it can be very personal, and that's one of the things I think iReport has shown is that, you know, what's newsworthy and important to me is, like, irrelevant trivia to you (*laughter*). So, I think it's a very...I think it's, you know, there's not the, you know, the capital. I think it's what's important to you right now,

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basically.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Hmm. So, not the...I mean, you look at the scholarly or the academic definition of what news is: proximity, how many people affected...

**RESPONDENT B:** I mean, certainly, to that level there are some things that are more newsworthy, you know it's a bigger news story to more people, but if your house is getting torn down, I mean that's, you know, it's like...or, better example, there's a wildfire and it's affecting one house, it's like, in the news room, we would go, uh, big deal. But, if it's your house, it's a big deal (*laughter*). I mean, you know, I mean that's the way I see it is there are things like Ted Kennedy dying today, that's a bigger deal to more people than a car accident on I-75, but you know, again, it's still news, it's just the scope of how important, you know. And that's sort of the, I think, what you have to do is decide where the bar is. It's like, this is incredibly to, like, five people, but you know, or something that's sort of important to five million people. I think that's where the interesting parts come in.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, who determines what is newsworthy?

**RESPONDENT B:** I think in our area, I mean a little bit of...I mean certainly we have a role, a major component of that. You know, speaking specifically with iReport. I mean, we look at things and go, okay, this is really interesting either because it affects a lot of people or because it's just interesting, and we may promote it a little bit more. But, a lot of times the community has a good power to surface stuff, you know, by discussing it or sharing it. So, a lot of the stuff that winds up in the newsworthiest window on iReport.com isn't necessarily what I would have picked all the time, and you know, I mean, we set up the formulas that generate that, and I'm not gonna pretend how to understand how those formulas work. But then, the people who read the stories go, hey, that's interesting. I'm gonna pass this along. And that pushes their intrigue enough to, you know, click on the link. So in that sense, it's a combination, basically, of the, you know, with us, I don't think partnership is the right word, but there's...you know, we sort of put stuff out and try to highlight what we think is the best content. And then, we also can take the stuff that's important or we think is

## Appendix B (Continued)

interesting and newsworthy and turn it into CNN content where it gets a wider audience. That's done by us and our editorial team. Um, usually it gets very...you know, sometimes I get something I feel completely passionate about, that this is a great story that people will be really excited about. And usually we're like, let's do that story then. Or, you know, it's something that, you know, as a group we think, oh, this is something we wanna do, or this furthers, you know, some editorial goal, or we wanna show off this for whatever it's technical merit or, you know, whatever. Um, and then sometimes it's like, well, forget it, this is obvious, it's a no brainer. This is what's going on today. Here you go. So, it's, um...I'm not sure that's an answer (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*). (*Inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT B:** And basically, I mean...and it's, you know, it is collaboration to a certain extent, and then it's also, we have to...you know, we can go, this is awesome, let's go, let's make something out of this. And, you know, if we see something, you know, then we can push that forward. So, we don't cede control to, um, you know, it's what we, you know...we certainly respect what they, um, you know...sometimes we'll see stuff and go, huh, that's interesting, we're seeing a lot of talk about that, that's a conversation I hadn't heard of, you know, so that's...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Let's see, we're on four. So, what would you say in your current position you play in the decision making process of what is done with the content?

**RESPONDENT B:** Uh, I mean, I have a voice. I mean, I don't make the decisions usually. A lot of times, particularly since I'm not as much in the day to day editorials, I'm dealing more with the user community, um, you know, it's like, hey, you know, this is a good idea. And then, I'm a little push, pull myself back, because it's like, hey I wanna do something with that, because, you know, I don't wanna be that guy (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT B:** But, you know, or sort of, when we're talking about things, usually what we'll do, when we ask for an assignment, we try to pick out what we're gonna do when we have an idea. It

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may be that we chuck the idea when we think of a cooler idea. But, we don't wanna just go, hey, what do you think of Ted Kennedy? And then people send stuff in, and we go, what are we gonna do with all this stuff? I don't know, what do you wanna do with all this stuff? Uh, we wanna sort of go, okay, we can do this, we can make a slide show, we can write a story. And then, we may do something, oh my gosh, this is so cool! Let's do something. And then, we get excited about it, you know, or give a better idea. But we try to, at least, have a plan so that we're not...because we found that when we don't have a plan, at least a, you know, it might be a loose, like, written on a newspaper plan, then we sort of flail a little bit, and we get all this stuff, and it's like, when are we gonna do that? And, there's so many options you get paralyzed?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Right.

**RESPONDENT B:** So, I mean...and a lot of times we'll have those discussions, and we've had meetings where we all talk about it, so a lot of...my role in that is, sort of, what about this? Or we, you know, it's when we're brainstorming. Um, I do...one of the things I also do is, sort of, try to encourage...you know, people who have sent in cool stuff and we haven't heard from, it's like, hey, how you doing? Or, you know, a pat on the back to people who are doing good work to make sure that...to try to keep them involved and keep them...let them know we appreciate them so they will continue to, you know, share their stuff with us. And um, so, in that sense...and also, on the negative side of that coin, sort of discouraging, you know, when there's bad behavior, trying to weed that out so it's not a bad experience for people. So, it's not technically editorial stuff, but it adds to the (*inaudible*) bad behavior. Well, there's just people who are mean or racist or hate speech. You know, I mean, you can look on our site, and there's our terms of use and our community guidelines, and so I go through and make sure that they are, you know, getting stuff that isn't, you know, that's violating or, you know, it's, um, removed, and also sort of talk to our reporters to make sure they're following the rules. And sometimes, there's something that you just wanna, you know, that's just offensive, but it's not a...it's like, okay, you know, it's sort of one of those things that it's like, I would like to drive to their house and punch them in the head, but (*laughter*), you

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know, it's just, you know, that really makes me angry, but it's not a violation, and we have to let...and it's hard to really, you know, make sure they are on the same page. And, even though it's like the part of me that's a decent human being says, I shouldn't do that, but there's also other people, the part of them that says they're a decent human being, says that, oh, this absolutely should happen. And, you know, people...and, so you just can't...you know, everybody has a different idea of what...so we have to, sort of, make sure that, you know, we're on the rules and we're not enforcing my personal morality or an individual INVESTIGATOR. And, we're, sort of, trying to be fair, and I think that's a very important part of it, that we're not just going...oh, you know, so when people say, you're just pulling stuff because I'm a liberal. It's like, no. Or, a conservative. It's not about me or anybody else. So, in that sense, it's an editorial role.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** But, in his role, as the community manager, when he interacts (*inaudible*), to do it right, making sure that they stay within the terms...

**RESPONDENT B:** Right, that people, that...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** That's your primary, one of your primary...

**RESPONDENT B:** Yeah, that they understand, also just sort of letting people know, sort of, hey, this is why this happened and try to avoid, you know, dust ups. Like, why are you doing this? Well, because, I'm here. You know, don't call people, you know, don't be mean. Try to be respectful of each other...you know, because sometimes people get really passionate and they scrap, and it's like...everybody's, yeah, I mean, and they scrap and they, stuff...he said something six months, and it's like, I don't care. You know, it's like being the assistant principal sometimes, but we're really...that has really changed of late. Yeah, it is a community and it's not all...it's just, you know, people think that they're, you know, they're being passionate and the other person is being opposite. No, it's just different. Everybody be cool, and you don't have to be disagreeable to disagree, and just, sort of...we don't want someone to come in and say something and be driven off because people are so horrible to them. And then, their voice is, sort of, muffled. So, I mean, that's a lot of the negative behavior I'm talking about, and I've done

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for entirely too long (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, based on your past experience, explain the traditional selection process in a typical broadcast news room or network or whatever your experience lends itself to.

**RESPONDENT B:** I mean, in a certain...I mean, it's weird because it's been, when I was a news room producer, basically what you do is you have the packages that came in, you know, that the reporter has been working on, and those priorities would have been set earlier in the day, you know, within various meetings. I worked at Headline News, which was, at the time, you know, it was the wheel, basically the 15 minutes segments. So, you would get two or three packages and then you would, sort of, stack your show around those packages. By the time I left, it was two packages and a weather (*inaudible*). But, you would sort of go, well, my package is about Ted Kennedy dying so that's gonna be at the top, because that's the biggest story of the day. Um, you might have an interest sort of thing, and then depending...at one point, there was, you would try to have the stories flow, so you'd have the, you know...talk about the Kennedys, talk about something, you talk about healthcare reform because he was big in that, and then go on to something else after it, a sound bite or something. Then, they did something antiflow, because somebody doesn't care about Ted Kennedy, it might turn if there's three stories about that, so that was, in a way, particularly when I was doing four shows a day, you could just sort of go (*laughter*), you know what I mean, and you sort of mix it up with a little bit of international, with a little bit of national stuff to, sort of, keep people's, you know, attention, because you wouldn't allot a lot...the theory, I guess, was a lot of people wouldn't sit through, like, two minutes of international stuff on Headline News, so they tried to break some of that up. So, I mean, basically...so that was, sort of, the network would get on as far as here. I mean, we usually would go through, and we have a morning meeting and we say, okay, here's what's going on, here's what we've been working on. Um, you know, where should we put it? We'd, kind of, discuss what we're expecting, you know, how we're gonna treat it, and, you know, where it will fit in the day. Like, there might be something that's a big deal in the morning, and by afternoon it's, like, they sort of rotate through the main stories when it's

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been a day like today when it's sort of obvious, kind of. Um, but, it may be that it's like when Ted Kennedy died, people woke up this morning and go, oh, I didn't know he died, there would be that story, and then by afternoon, maybe like Ted Kennedy's legacy. You know, so, that roles into, um, you know, that sort of one of the things that goes into the thought process.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So generally, when you talk about the traditional selection process, does that mean it is very standardized in terms of how, on a day to day basis, news is selected? Or, is that the breaking news? With regard to the decision making, who decides what is newsworthy?

**RESPONDENT B:** There's a certain, I mean, there's...and again, I don't know if I can speak to the really broad, because some of that's just done outside of my...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Right.

**RESPONDENT B:** ...you know, scope of awareness, basically. But, there's a lot of things you know. NASA, you know, is trying to launch a space shuttle. (*Inaudible*). So, you know that they're planning to do a shuttle launch on, you know, the 25<sup>th</sup>. You know that Congress is going into recess. So, you know, there's some of this stuff that you just know is gonna happen. Do we wanna talk about it? You know, what do we wanna do about it? And then there's, well, here's what the big stories are, and we looked at...you know, there's some, you know, here's what people are talking about, things that are getting a lot of interest, we look at. And, there's things they look at, um, things that are getting interest online, sort of, you know, track some of that stuff to see if there's trends there. But then...so basically, then we come to the meeting and go, well, here's what we know is going on today, you know, and then figure out how we're gonna play it. So that...

**INVESTIGATOR:** How has the Internet or technology changed news gathering practices?

**RESPONDENT B:** I think, I mean, I remember not having the Internet in the news room, and things...and example, and this is so trivial it's not even funny, but I was doing a box office story at Headline News and it was, like, you know, Tim Allen's first



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movie, and (*inaudible*) was like, what is this, Tim Allen's first movie? I spent 20 minutes trying to prove it, you know, that it was probably his first starring role or whatever, I spent 20 minutes trying to find that information without the Internet, and finally rewrote the script because I just couldn't prove it. It was like, I know that's true, I think, but you know...so, there are things like that, and now you can just go, Imdb, and, you know. So, in some cases, things like that are instant. I think...and as far as having, you know, blogs and things like that, more stuff surfaces that you might not would have...a lot of times what would happen, you know, oh, it was in the New York Times, it must be important, kind of, mentality. Or, you sort of, you know, how people got something, and everybody is chasing us, or, you know, I mean, so there's more people to chase...you know, it's like, if there's something cool on Boing Boing, this might be good, as opposed to, sort of, spread out, sort of, where you find information. Or, I was reading something, you know, oh neat, somebody linked to a lady on Urban Gardener or something. That might be a cool story. You see a lot of this. I think it, sort of, spreads out, and, you know, it's not as, um...and I wasn't reporting when I, before having the Internet, so I don't know from that sense. We were just, you know, going through wire copy, but I think it does, even just finding how to get in touch with somebody or just getting basic information, is considerably easier, I think, in a lot of ways.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What is the most common way news is gathered by non-full-time teams and staffing. (*Inaudible*) to the iReporters than to freelancers?

**RESPONDENT B:** I think, well, with the iReport, there's a couple of different ways. People do things, there's either, you know, people who something happened and they're there, or they're close and they go out and shoot it with whatever they have available, whether it's a cell phone camera or, you know, a \$30,000 Beta rig, or, you know, maybe not that, but a high definition camera, it does happen. There's those sorts of folks. There's people who decide to go tell stories or they go out and, um, you know, do interviews or sort of mini-documentaries and submit those, whether they think of themselves and documentarians or they're just, sort of, telling a cool story about what's going on and sort of, either

## Appendix B (Continued)

because we said, hey, we'd like to hear about this, or because they just wanted to talk about this. Um, there are some people who are, sort of, pundits and just put their thoughts about what they think about something, either on a Web cam or something like that. And, there's some people that, sort of, comment on, you know, part of a discussion and kind of, either because they like to talk to people or they've made friends on this site and so they, sort of, keep up with each other. So that's sort of the main ways that people, um, you know, participate in the conversation, and it may be that we, you know, tell...it's like, well that's not...here's my experience kind of thing, as opposed to, you know...and sometimes it's like, yeah, that happened to me; I've been through a foreclosure, or that wasn't my experience; this is what happened sort of things. So, um...

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, are there benefits or drawbacks to this process?

**RESPONDENT B:** I mean, the benefits, yeah, there's huge...I mean, we get amazing stories that we wouldn't have gotten otherwise, um, because there's stuff that would just never occur to me or that I wouldn't have, even as big as CNN is, we can't be everywhere. If we doubled our staff in Africa, we could still triple, you know...anybody, and this isn't a...it's a big place. And, there's...if you double your staff in Atlanta, we could go out and we couldn't cover every cool story that's going on in Atlanta, so it's not just a...um, so having someone share something that we didn't think of, or...we had a guy last month, he, um, was an underwater photographer and he worked with Mel Fisher, the famous treasure hunter out in Florida, but, he's now working on a project in Lake Erie to raise...there's apparently a schooner from the War of 1812 that sunk, and they think, um...and they're, like, gonna put a big sling under it and lift it out of the water and put it into an aquarium-type tank as a tourist attraction in Buffalo. And, he's gonna video about this, and apparently the ship, after the War of 1812, it was like, um, you know, sort of connected cities along the coast, and apparently, they think it sank doing a, um, running slaves, escaped slaves to Canada and freedom during, you know, by abolitionists, because there wasn't...there wasn't any record of it sinking. So, they think it was off the books, you know, involved in the abolitionist movement. So, I mean, that's just...yeah, I'm gonna get...I mean, if you were reading the Albany paper, I think it was

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Albany or Buffalo, maybe you saw that story, but most people didn't, and it was, like, oh, that's cool. We had another story, we asked people...it was really just frivolous or something, it was like, do you cover your tattoos at work, it was a living story and completely frivolous. So, we asked people to send their iReports, and we got a bunch of ugly pictures of tattoos, you know, some bad ink (*laughter*). But, there was this one man, it...it was saying to people, like, tattoos, really? That's all that you know? CNN, good job. You know, (*inaudible*), what's on it. But, we got this one story that...of this woman who said, I'll never cover my tattoo, and she had taken the letter her, um, husband had written in case anything happened to him in Iraq, and had the words tattooed on her arm. And, it's one of those things that I saw that's still...it's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. It's, like, if anything ever happens to me, know that you were...you know, I loved you more than anyone has ever been loved, never forget that. And, it's one of those things, I saw that a year and a half ago, and that's an exact quote, and it's...you know, I mean, it's still one of those things that it's, like, oh my God, that's so...you know. And, we never would have gotten that story. I don't know what we did...you know, it's one of those things, I don't think we knew quite what to do with it at the time because we were still trying when we first launched. So...but, I mean, that's not something you get unless you just happen to see that in the grocery story and see it. And, you know, I mean, it's beautiful, and that happens all the time. I mean, we had a guy send pictures of his dolphin in Florida who lost its tail in an accident, and, you know, he had, like, worked at the aquarium and he would take pictures of it and, like, they sent it to kids, you know, with disabilities, you know, interact with this tail-less dolphin. And, you know, they would start saying, this dolphin can do it without a tail, I can get along with, you know, no arm or...there was a side story of a guy who was, like, making a rubber tail. He was, like, you know, an engineer, and, like...and, the reason this comes to mind is just because, um, somebody else wrote a children's book about this dolphin that I found in the discard bin yesterday, and I was, like, oh my God, we did an iReport on this! So, I mean, it, it...really, as far as the advantages, I mean, it's...there are many to me. It's a way of telling stories we didn't do...I mean, you get, instead of, oh, it's Swine Flu season, and, um, um, you know, getting, you know, sort of a

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book report story. Like, flu season, I don't like that. We get assigned these, and it's like, oh God (*whispering*). You'd find some expert and you'd find something that, you know, nobody had their heart set on, and that nobody really wondered where you (*inaudible*). Sort of where...had to do it. And, usually some were interesting stories, but they were really kind of dry. And, instead now, with Swine Flu, it's, like, you can get a person, you know, Mary Smith or, you know, stood at the bus stop for her first day of school, her backpack littered with crayons, glue sticks, folders, and four bottles of hand sanitizer. School officials are concerned, but, you know, you can put a person there right up front, and get a picture of little Mary at the bus stop, and her mom talking about, yeah, I'm worried about...you know, and that's something that we have...it's a lot easier to do, so we do it more, and we can, you know...I think it adds more life and personality to the stories, and it's a differentiator. Is that a word (*inaudible*)?

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT B:** But, I mean, you know, as opposed to just the dry, this happened, here's the facts, it's sort of, well, this is a unique story that we can include these facts, and then it enhances it and sets us apart from other story telling. So, I think that's the big advantage, it's just that it gives us access to people who we wouldn't have thought to talk to. See, everybody's got something interesting in their lives, and finding it is the hard part. And people will, you know, they might not even think it's particularly fascinating. It's, like, oh, you know, would you like a video of this? Yes, please (*laughter*). And, it's, like, you know, then they tell you the most amazing thing about themselves without...and it isn't even, you know, it's sort of not what they were even talking about. It's, like, oh, yeah, well I, well I was in the Bay of Pigs, so I really, you know...what?! It's like, that didn't happen, but, you know, I mean, you'll be talking about the Kennedy family or whatever and it's, like, you know, it's like...or something like that, or...and, offhand, it's like, the most fascinating thing ever, and they're like, you know...so I think that the advantage is that it just really gives us an opportunity to tell more interesting stories, or let people tell their own stories.

**INVESTIGATOR:** And, the drawbacks?

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**RESPONDENT B:** I mean, the quality is...you know, it's not sketchy, it's inconsistent is the word. I mean, it's just...you'll get somebody with an amazing story and an okay picture, like a grainy cell phone picture or something they pulled off the Internet with this amazing story. Or, you know, I mean, you don't have...we don't control it. Um, if we send a CNN crew to tell that story, it will be amazing, because you've got someone who has been doing it for 20 years and is the best or they wouldn't be here (*laughter*). So, I mean, it's...so then you get just, you know, me, you know, with a video camera, and it's gonna look like...you know, if I'm telling a story with a video camera, it's gonna look like they, you know, the David Letterman monkey cam with the rollerskating, because that's, you know, I mean, that's me not being very talented as a videographer. And so, that's a little...but, you can get the person, I mean, they're not insurmountable, but if someone's got a great story, you can, you know, ask when the...or, their pictures aren't great, you can say, hey, can you send some more? Or, um, interview them, and, you know, I mean, it's not a major drawback, but it's sometimes, um...you know, you sit there and go, oh, I wish this...you know, or you get this amazing picture and no details, and you can...well, we're working on that now because we're gonna, you know...trying to put more context into the notes. Like, when we edit, you know, or talk to someone, we say, hey, we talked to this person, and they said this. And, you know, it's, like, so it's not lost...or, like, you'll talk to them on the phone and you'll get these amazing details that aren't in the story that they wrote because it's just their life, and you don't think...nobody thinks their life's amazing (*laughter*), usually, when you're talking to them unless they're, you know, a narcissist or something...

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT B:** ...so, it's like, they'll be modestly going, you know, I mean, bla, bla, bla, bla, yeah, I was (*inaudible*) for a year, yeah, and then I was out here...wait, roll that back! You know, I mean...so, that's the main thing, that it's just the way that things are presented sometimes aren't as good as they could be. But, I think that's a, you know...and also, one of the things that's been refreshing, and, is, that if you see people start out...we had one guy, he sends, you know, a

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photo, and I don't even think it was his photo, but he wrote really well. And then, he sent, you know, a photo that he took, and then he did a video with his Web cam, and then he did some editing, and, you know, then he got a dream screen (*laughter*) to put in the background, you know, from Wal-Mart. You know, um, and he's a film editor, so once he, sort of, got his feet in there, it's, like, okay, this is kinda cool, so he started doing little...and then, he started, like, using his camera, because he'd been, oh, that works pretty good, just a digital camera. He shot a nine part adventure series, sort of like spy, comedy thing, uh, with a digital camera and edited it, you know, with, like, some actors that I'd sort of heard of, it's like, you know, that guy in that...it's like, oh, okay. Um, and you know, so you get people you see and it's, like, oh, that was cute, or hey, that got a lot better. And, so, you see people progressing as they're doing more and really upping the bar, and they'll talk to each other and go, you know, if you do this, it'll get...so, I mean, that's one of the things that's, you know, that's maybe a disadvantage, but it's...you see it. The positive is that you get to see these people grow, and when they do something amazing, it's, like, oh my God, look! You know, look what Ron did, that's awesome! So, I mean, and people on the team they go, look what you did! That is so cool! And, you know...so people appreciate that, so, I mean, that's, um...and I guess the other, I mean, as far as, you know, not having...you know, if somebody...it's harder, which I think a lot of people think that, oh, well, you're just letting people do your work for you and send in their pictures, and you don't have to cover the news. It's, like, not entirely true, but I mean, if Christiane Amanpour goes outside and says, there's 10,000 people running around doing something bad, it's true (*laughter*)! I mean, you know, we know this person, you know, we have...you know, if someone tells me it's raining in Decatur, I have to call...you know, it's like, did it rain in Decatur today? You know, it's sunny here. So, you don't...you know, you have to spend more time, you know...it's not, like, letting other people do your work because you have to sometimes, like, did this incident happen (*laughter*)? I mean, you have to, you know, I mean...which is, it's, you know, it's just one of those things. But, it's, it's worth it, you know, and it's not really a drawback, but it is kinda funny, people think that it's, you know, oh, we're just letting the audience do the work for us. Not really, but it...yeah, it

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definitely does, but...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Yeah, and, like, an instance, like, Iran, where you couldn't be there, like, or, the general had to get out, or they had to leave, then these people were having us tell the story (*inaudible*)...

**RESPONDENT B:** Yeah, and then, but we were still running it through our editorial. It wasn't like we just put stuff on air and not...it wasn't really, um, from our audience. You know, we would go, to our producers in Iran, and say, does this jive with what you know? Yeah, okay, cool. So, I mean, it's...you know, there are extra...just because we don't have the same...you know, it's not like I went out and shot the picture, it's like, you went out and shot the picture, and it's, like, okay, we have to build a relationship. So, I mean, it's not a disadvantage, but it's, it's a step. You know, it's just one of those things that you are having to, you know, take extra steps to make sure that the person, you know, is representing themselves properly.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay, cool. So, explain what iReport is (*laughter*).

**RESPONDENT B:** Explain what iReport is. Uh, well basically, I mean, it's, you know, our user gets...you know, it's a user generated content platform, which is, um, you know, well, it encourages people, um, to share their stories. And, one of the things is, you know, it's, it's...we describe it as, like, turning the news into a conversation versus a lecture or where CNN is telling you what's going on, and it's like, we're talking about what's going on. Or, here's what's important to me, check this out. Or, you know, here's my opinion on what's going on in the major news, that, you know...so it really...it's, um...and, basically, I mean, it's...as a tool, it's a platform for people to, you know, share their stories and opinions or views of the world. Um, it's also a community that's...I mean, we hoped for it to become a community, I mean, it wasn't an intended consequence, but I don't think we really, I didn't, know what, how that was gonna happen. And, it turned out...because, basically, people started using the comments, and sort of reaching out to each other...that one of the things I've learned since doing this is, people will figure out a way to connect with each other.

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**INVESTIGATOR:** Hmm.

**RESPONDENT B:** And, like, you know, like, they would use...they created things, like, they'd be talking about the issue, and it's like, hey, how you doing? Well, I gotta run my kid off to soccer practice, and then, you know...and then, you know...and then a couple, you know, yeah, they'd be talking about something else and it's, like, oh hey, good to hear from you. How's the game? Or, you know, and...so then, somebody created a post, like, you know, pointless conversation, because they got tired of, like, they felt bad about derailing the conversations that were on the thread, so it was just, like, and they just visited, and it went on for a year. This one post, they were just, sort of, congregating, and, how ya doing? And, like, 6,000, I mean, we were watching it just to see how big it would get and whether it would break the system (*laughter*). You know, but it was...and it was great, because it just gave...people connected with each other, and we've had cases...there was one woman...there was group early on, and basically they called themselves the Midnight Bunch, because it was a bunch of people who didn't sleep, or, you know, who were up at night, and a lady in Sri Lanka who, you know, with the time change, was up in the middle of the day, and they would, sort of, be on the site at the same times and notice each other and start talking. And, the woman in Sri Lanka...we did this story about collections, you know, what do you collect? And, we found out she collected Barbies. So, then we had, um, Jamie Lambert outside of Knoxville, Tennessee, he was, like, that's great! They got to be friends, and she sent her some Barbies that she got from Dollar General or whatever, Toys R Us in Knoxville. But, you know, you know, whatever, modest price, that you couldn't get for love or money in Sri Lanka, and she sent her these, you know, holiday Barbie or whatever, just because they were...and it was, like, look what Ren sent me! And, you know, so I mean, that's sort of, you know, a bond...we've had people, you know, sort of connect outside the community...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Are you gonna talk about the artist (*inaudible*) in New York?

**RESPONDENT B:** There's talk of that, and I don't know if it ever happened. It may have, and it may be that I just didn't hear it. There was, you know, some people were wanting to do some exhibits of



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their work for iReport. Um, we've also had people just, hey, I'm in town. Let's get coffee. Um, I've seen that, like, some people, some iReporters in Columbus had a barbecue (*laughter*). Um, you know, and we've had some meetup groups. There's one in Chicago that sort of started out, and it's had three or four meetings. And, one in Colorado that's more of a citizen-journalism thing, that I think it more separate, not iReport, but it was, you know, an iReporter who started it. And, we're, sort of, trying to encourage that sort of thing. People would be like...you know, we've had people get jobs because of, um, um, a person...like a photo job because someone saw her photography and said, hey, I'm trying to sell my house, and could you take pictures of it for the real estate. It's like, so, I mean, there's people...there's all these connections that are happening that I don't...like I said, I...we wanted that, but I don't think we fully understood how it was gonna happen and how it was gonna be, that we were gonna be cool. So, I mean...so it is...there's people who have no intention of ever getting their stories on...you know, they've gotten their stories on CNN by accident. They're intensely involved with what's going on with the site, and they're excited about it, and...but it's not because of they think they can get their story on; it's because they've made connections with people or just like to talk about or argue or, you know, whatever, what's going on in the news.

**INVESTIGATOR:** It's more of a community.

**RESPONDENT B:** It's, I mean, that's a large...that's a component of it that is, sort of, separate of, you know, I mean...it's...I guess, in a way, it's almost, you know, it's...you know, there's the news gathering thing and people talking, but then people talking about the news and making connections with each other, as well. So, talking with us and with each other.

**INVESTIGATOR:** This might have been answered in your previous response, but what is the value of iReport?

**RESPONDENT B:** Well, like I said, I think, in short, it makes news a conversation, instead of just a lecture, you know, us telling you what you should think is important. It's getting, well, what do you think is important? And sometimes, you get some really profound responses...or just, you know,

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powerful responses from them or things you wouldn't have thought of. And, I think, particularly...it's always a danger to have a group of like-minded people making the decisions, you know, because then you, sort of, all get a group-think kind of thing. So, you know, it's something news rooms have been aware of forever, and this just makes it, like, well, what about this? So, this, not fight each other, but, you know, fight the temptation to, sort of, move along from just your perspective, and this just opens up that perspective even farther.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what's the difference between content from iReporters as opposed to traditionally gathered news on CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT B:** I think a lot of times it's more, um, personal, which is good. I mean, it's something that somebody really cares about, as opposed to...I mean, not that the reporter doesn't care about doing the best job that they can, but, you know, again, it's the difference between, um...well, one of the things, um, just...there's a picture, and I don't have it on my computer or I could show it to you, but there was a slide we used in a lot of our PowerPoint presentations, it's like a map of California wildfires, and there's a map showing where all these people have sent in iReports of the California wildfires, and that's one picture in the slide. And, the other picture is a guy standing on his house with a hose. So, I think that's what iReport does, is it shows you that this affects this many people, you know, and this affects you. And, I think you can tell the story from the inside, because a lot of times, when we're in something like a hurricane or a wildfire, our reporters are at a safe distance because it's, you know, you know, yeah....we have to be...there are limits of where we can be. You know, and, like, so you get people who are on the inside, and have a person. We had a...in the Midwest flooding, we had a guy, you know, send a video of himself canoeing to his house and, I think through his house (*laughter*) that had been flooded. I don't know if he actually took the canoe in, but he could have. Um, and, I mean, you know, there wasn't an area that a reporter could access and would have known to access if they...you know, it just a different...you know your neighborhood better than, you know, even somebody from, you know, downtown Atlanta would, or, you know, that sort of thing. So, I mean, you get

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that sort of person, kind of, inside the story, and I think it adds details and color that you can't necessarily get otherwise.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, how do you determine if an iReport submission has news value?

**RESPONDENT B:** I think they all have to add news value, it's whether it meets the bar of whether we should chase it, I think is big. Because, I mean, anything...if someone...because usually almost everything, you know...someone will be starting a little conversation, it may be a small number, like four or five comments, ten. So, at least in that sense, it's successful because they got it off their chests, what they wanted to talk about, and people talked about it. You know, so...and that's one of the nice things about all the stories going to iReport.com, is it doesn't necessarily always matter if we think it's newsworthy. It's out there, people can see it, and they can decide if it's important to them or not. Um, so, before iReport.com launched, it would come to us, and we would go after the stuff we thought was important, and the other stuff was hidden. You know, it was in a server that no one could access, so some beautiful stuff didn't get seen, because we didn't have the resources or anything to, you know, I mean...and now, if something is really good, or even if...it goes on the site, and if people are interested in it, you know, great. You know, if few people are interested in it...you know, it's the whole long tail thing, I mean...so, it's definitely...when we decided what was newsworthy, a lot of times, we tried not to just approve stuff to approve it. We'd try to think of, you know, where can we use this? So, you know, this would be good on the travel page; this would be good on the living page, um, or whatever. Or, you know, TV...I know a producer who has been working on a story on this, or, you know, we can't use everything, obviously, even all the stuff we approve. But, um, we try to, you know, if we're working on a story about Ted Kennedy, we'll chase the, you know, the ones that are the most interesting. And, a lot of times, um, we'll look at it...there have been cases...like with the China earthquakes, we had pictures of broken glass and a puddle of blood, and, but, the story that was written with it was very good, it was very well written. So, I got in touch with the guy, and he's, like, I have more pictures, so he sent them, and they were great. And, um, it turned out he

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was a, um...his name is Ben Geisler, you wanna look up this later, but, um, it turned out he was an American living in China. He did English language broadcasts on the radio on the side, so he had a really good speaking voice when he did phone interviews, and he just decided he needed to know what was going on. So, he got on his motorcycle, drove out into the countryside and sent us these amazing pictures and stories.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Wow.

**RESPONDENT B:** And, I mean, you know, that...the picture didn't look like something...so, we almost killed the segment because the picture was kind of gory and didn't tell a lot of the story, and they didn't...well the producers were like, I don't know if I wanna use...and, like, we've got more, don't worry. It's good. Um, I mean, you know, we got stories from, um...so, I mean, in some cases, it's a little deceptive. You know, not always, but...one of the nicest, the best things you'll hear is, I've got more (*laughter*). You know, it's like, well great, okay. Um, but I mean we basically go through and, sort of, look at the stories to figure out, you know, does this match, you know, what ones go with what we're trying to do that day? You know, the stories we're working on, we usually have several...everybody uses it as a project in the works. You know, what would go with what we're covering today? And, also just, well, that's interesting, people will want to see that. So, those are, sort of, really primitive, you know, so it's just like...there's a certain amount of, hey, look here! This is cool! Let's go. And, so, we don't wanna...you know...the sense of wonder is, you know, very important in determining stuff, and when you see stuff like, you know, oh, that's really cool. If I think it's cool, hopefully other people will too, or it's worth, you know, looking at. Um, so...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Follow up question, then. Who decides an iReport submission is used on a CNN broadcast or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT B:** That's the individual show producers...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay.

**RESPONDENT B:** ...or reporters or, you know, um, .com producers. So, we do...in some cases, it depends. You know, there's

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producers that are really, like, you got anything? And, it's like...yes, we do! And, there's some that are used to lobbying a bit more, and then there's some people that are just going out and finding stuff. Um, CNNi has a whole show, the iReport for CNN, and their producers are just always...they also have a reporter who is, sort of, dedicated to doing a lot of Internet and iReport stuff, and the producers, you know...I'm not, you know...and, so they'll go out and just...I'm gonna get what, you know, see what's out there, and if I want it, I'm just gonna, you know, get it. And, other people...I mean, we're training a lot of people, but we're still...I mean, it's a big company, so we don't have everybody. Some people it's, you know, well here's this, and, you know, it's sort of...it's like, well, I haven't used that before, and, well, you know, there's a little bit of, you know, lobbying or, sort of, putting...making sure we get it seen so they can get excited about it. You know, because there have been cases where, you know, something...you go to me, you go, this is really good. And, I go, wow, that is really good, and it'll, you know...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT B:** ...and then sometimes, you have to work a harder. It's like, okay, this might work with what you're going with, and it's, you know...so, it's building relationships with us, and between, you know, the producers and some of, you know...but, I mean, it is...it's come a...I mean, CNN has really embraced what we're doing, which is cool, because it's scary what we're doing (*laughter*). So, I mean...you know, letting people just decide what's gonna go on CNN is a terrifying thought, but they've been really...I mean, the fact that did it at all, is brave, so now they're really going, oh yeah! I mean, particularly with the Iran stuff, it's like, I totally get...you know, the people that were, sort of, I'm not sure I get this iReport thing, or like, you got anything? And, it's, like, yes I do, but then other people are going, hey you got this, I approved it. So, it's like, that's the, sort of, evolution we're seeing, and it's really cool to see people just go, yeah, this is good. And, you know, admittedly, we get really excited about what we're doing because it's awesome (*laughter*). So, it's nice to see people are starting to get, you know...or, not starting to, but are getting, you know, that same passion, or like, yeah, this is great...this is a great

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iReport, do you have three more just like it...

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT B:** ...or, that are just as...you know, it's like...you know? So, that's really exciting (*inaudible*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, well 14. Is there a process for monitoring content on iReport and could you explain?

**RESPONDENT B:** Um, but, what do you mean by monitoring?

**INVESTIGATOR:** I guess, just checking with you what's coming in, what's being uploaded, what's being added to the site...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Maybe just talking about the day to day, like, how you guys go through, like, what's popped up, what's new, or how the news happens, like, every day.

**RESPONDENT B:** Yeah, we, um, we're staffed, pretty much, seven to eight-ish, and then there's also people on the CNN desk who carry, who are watching it. I mean, basically, we're monitoring it 24/7. Um, it's the short answer. You know, between the iReport people themselves, or there's some people at, you know, CNN on the super desk who are well trained and know what to look for and we go through...and basically, we just watch the site, I mean...everybody is, hey, did you see that? Or, somebody might have to head down on a project and, like, crash, and it's like, okay, Rachel is untouchable today, she is not there, she is working on her video, and the rest of us will, sort of, you know, go through and keep an eye on stuff. Some people will, hey, I sent something, send an e-mail occasionally. But, we're usually...whatever we're doing, we're keeping one eye on the site, basically, all the time. We're, sort of, jumping back and forth, um, so there's pretty much always...and if something happens, it's like, did we get any iReports on that? You know, and we'll go through and scan it. Um, so I mean, basically, that's just part of our job, it's just like if you were running for TV, you'd keep the wires going in the back, you know, in your consciousness so that, you know, if something happens, you sort of...you, you know what I'm talking about, right? I can't put it into words, but it's, like...

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**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT B:** ...yeah, even if it's not fully conscious...it's like, or the competition, or just watching the wires to make sure that nothing...so you know what's going on, even if you're not really consciously...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Right.

**RESPONDENT B:** ...I mean, it's the same thing, basically. It's, like, keeping ready, and we just do that (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT B:** It's a very nonscientific part of the job, I guess.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What is the process you use to ensure that iReport content used for broadcast on CNN or CNN.com is accurate, truthful or meets the news casting standards?

**RESPONDENT B:** Well, we go through and we have, and... we don't let anything on air until we have contact with the user and we've discussed it. Um, or...so basically, we have a series, and we go through and we do the same thing if you were...well, with any source, really. You know, who are you? Why do you have this, you know, why did you take this picture? You know, basically, journalistic, you know, that's generally why you go through the other things...we have the full resources of CNN at our disposal, so if it's a tornado picture, we can call the weather unit and say, hey, does this look right to you guys? And they're, like, really, you know, that...and there have been cases where there's stuff, like some...it's a great picture, we really wanted it, and it's sort of, does this look right? And, it's, like, it really happened, but it happened in Switzerland in 2004, kind of, and it's like, okay. I've got that on my Facebook...so, I mean, that doesn't...usually, that doesn't happen, but, I mean, it isn't just, um, so I mean, if it's a political..you know, we can talk to our affiliates desk and say, hey, do you know anything about this? You know, whatever it is...a tree falling on, um, a school bus in Alabama, you know. I'll check with the affiliates. I mean, you know, so, we can...it's not just, do we believe this iReporter. We can...you know, we'll check Google, you know, did this happen? I mean, you know, did the space

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shuttle launch, or, um...but, I mean, we go through, sort of, a checklist of questions to, sort of, you know, verify and get the basic information, um, in addition, and then, go on to, sort of, get color and, you know, and make...some people will use a picture they didn't take because we require an image, so then they get something off the Internet. Um, we have to have an amateur video file, or something. And, it's, like, well, no, I didn't take that picture. It's, like, oh, okay. Um, but it may be that they were there, but they just don't have a cam...you know, and you can, well, what's your story? So, we can put, don't use the picture. But, you know, you want to talk to this person if it all checks out. And, you know, it's...there's sort of a...some stories get more scrutiny than others. You know, if it's a, you know...here's a picture of a sunrise on my big trip to Hawaii. You know, we'll talk to them and make sure, get, sort of, the details, but it's different than, you know, here's a picture of somebody taking a kick back (*laughter*). You know, I mean...but, again, it's one of those deals where we interview them as a basic source, and then we can go to, you know, basically anybody at CNN, whether it's a reporter in the field, or...you know, and check at the international desks if they're plugged into what's going on in a region, like, you know, does this sound right to you? He says, yeah, that sounds right. And, or, yeah, I saw that picture in four different newspapers, you know. So, I mean...so, that's basically the thing, process, without, you know, going into too much boring detail.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, I kind of alluded to this, but is there a focus on helping relationships with iReport community members who submit content regularly and why?

**RESPONDENT B:** Yeah, definitely. And, we've done things, like, if someone is in town, we'll bring them by, and say, hey, come on in, you know, show them around, visit with them, get to know the people. Um, we have, um, our viewer content management people send gifts, you know, periodically, like a T-shirt or like a sling bag or something to people who have done something really above and beyond or consistently doing really good stuff. Um, you know, people know...my e-mail is on the site, so if they have questions, they can e-mail me, and I'll get back to them, so a lot of people know me, you know, my e-mail. My phone number is out there, and hopefully...but, you know, I'd prefer they not call, but some



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people...you know, we also do a weekly, you know, roundtable where we either talk about something we're getting ready to do or brainstorm, or we started it as, sort of, hey, are there any issues we need to talk about? You know, what's going on? What can we do to make things better? So, we have people come in, and so they get to talk to each other there and get to, you know, oh hey, how you doing? So we get, sort of, the same. So, yeah, the relationships are important, not just because it makes people...you know, it makes people feel like they're part of the experience, it's like a partnership. They're, you know, telling the story with CNN, and I think that with this, sort of...like, but, also, it also encourages them to come back because they've got...they know we're real people, it's not just the faceless monolith of CNN. Um, it makes us less intimidating, I think, because when people see someone do an iReport and it gets used on the air, they can go, oh, that's what they want, I can do that. Or, I can do better than that. As opposed to, you're talking to me, and I try to be a decent guy, you know, not scary, hopefully, as opposed to James Earl Jones going, this is CNN (*laughter*). I mean, you know, it's, it's...which is, you know, um, reassuring and authoritative, but it's, like, you know, I can't compete with Wolf Blitzer, and we wanna erase that. Well, you don't have to compete with Wolf Blitzer. Wolf is awesome. You can be awesome...it's a different kind of, you know, you know...so that's...you don't have to be a broadcast professional to be special and valued and that sort of thing. So, I think that building the relationship is very key.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a down side to allowing the public to share their media, to seeing it?

**RESPONDENT B:** Um, I don't think so. I mean, sometimes, there's stuff that's kind of, um...I mean, people, like...you know, people post things, their opinions, that are less than, um...like, you know, it's, like, yeah, really? I mean, you sort of (*brief silence*)...I'm trying to think if it's a down side, even. It's, like, it's, like, you look at somebody, really, does he have to say that? But, then, by the same token, they're having a conversation, so I'm sort of...there's gotta be (*inaudible*). Like, you see stuff, and you go...like, occasionally, someone will post something that's sort of cringe inducing, but then, it's also...you know, there's a value to that, because then, if somebody says something awful, and then, two other people

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go, dude, that's stupid, and then they have a discussion about why, you know, I mean, sometimes, that's valuable too. So, I mean, it's...I don't...I mean...I think there's potential down sides, but as far as the actual down sides, it's less than...I mean, it hasn't...we've been fairly blessed, even when things were a little bit...you know, it can get a little rough and tumble when people aren't always respectful of each other, which is disappointing, you know. But, I think...even, you know...there's some, you know value to that, because it does, you know, sort of drive a conversation, and that might not have happened otherwise. So...I'm not sure I answered that question. I'm not sure I wanna be answering that (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*). You did. What factors prevent iReport submissions from being used by CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT B:** It depends. I mean, some of it's time. I mean, it may be not...it's, like, oh, this is something that is really cool, but it came in three days late. You know, it's, like, not quite as timely. Um, there's all kinds of rights issues, um, and, like, music is always, kind of, difficult. You know, it's not insurmountable, but it's one of those...it can be a challenge. It's like, okay, you can run this silent, or we can run it by legal and see if we can use it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT B:** You know, we get some...we got some amazing, I don't know if amazing is the right word, but it was some really cool footage of the track and field things last weekend where (*inaudible*) was beating everyone, and there was all kinds of video from the event, I don't know if his race was on there. But, it was like, hey, that's really cool! Can't use it because of, you know, TV rights or whatever. You know, like, the Olympics, the entire China was copyrighted (*laughter*). I mean, that's a very immature way of putting it, but I mean there were all kinds of restrictions, like, the outsides of the buildings from the street were, um...

**INVESTIGATOR:** They couldn't show them?

**RESPONDENT B:** ...I mean, yeah. They basically were, you know...it's, like, anything, if you could see it...if you were inside the Olympic

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village and you could see it, we couldn't use it. I mean, it was very...so, that was really complicated, so that's the ultra extreme version of that. But, I mean, usually, frankly, most of the time, it's just that we get more stuff than we can fit into anything. I mean, because there's just, you know...it's just the abundance of riches kind of thing, you know, more money than you can spend, which is unfortunate in the sense that some people send in something really great, and it doesn't get used. But, it's also we had, like...they send in something amazing, but we had three things that were better. It's, like, great for us, but it's, you know, we could almost have an iReport network and just show cool iReport stuff all day, and there would still probably be stuff that's left out.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** You were saying that...you just said it's good that we have this stuff (*inaudible*). You know, one thing about iReporters is that they have a unique opportunity to (*loud movement in room*) their iReport questions like we use in several specials.

**RESPONDENT B:** Uh huh.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Right, I mean, have you seen that? Like, (*inaudible*), they had a your reaction special, like, for like the first black president in America. Or, like, iReporters would submit their questions that would be used in the Situation Room. And (*muffled noise*)...

**RESPONDENT B:** An example of that was, um, Obama, like, on the Friday after the election, um, I think it was Jordan (*inaudible*) that asked president-elect Obama, um, a question on the Situation Room. You know, like, Obama was pretty busy, so, you know, the fact that Wolf Blitzer got to talk to him on that Friday, I mean, was...but, then, just, you know, a recent graduate from Morehouse got to ask him a question and get an answer. That's, that is, yeah, I mean, that is really cool...I think it was Jordan...it might have been Travers Johnson...I'm getting all the election people mixed up in my brain, so I apologize. But yeah, it was a guy, he was a relatively recent college graduate, and he was a really talented kid, and that was the question they picked for president Obama. Or, you know, Michael Phelps, right after he won, all the records, people asked...you know, I mean,

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when he was the most in demand person ever, it's, like, you know, a couple of, three iReporters got to ask him questions. I mean, so I mean, that is another thing that, you know, we have got to do.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, does the public have a role in deciding what iReports make it?

**RESPONDENT B:** Not exactly...I mean, they...some get, because they can, by sharing it...I mean, but we have a, its the newsiest formula...if you click on, you know...and, it's an algorithm again, and it's basically a combination, and this isn't an exact, but of the most page views, whether we approved it or not, um, the number of comments, how many times it's been shared, and some other factors. I don't remember all of them off the top of my head...it's math, and they said there wouldn't be any (*laughter*). And, um, but, that all weights together in sort of a metric so the users can grab that from the top of iReport.com. And, we look at that, and our producers see...there's an e-mail that goes out with, sort of, here's some of the most popular stories on CNN.com right now; here's some of the most popular things on, you know, I mean, like, trends kind of information. So, people say, hey, this is getting a lot of buzz on iReport; let's check that out. I may use that on my show. So, I mean, in that sense, they do. Um, they don't, um, get...I mean, there are some cases where a user will say, hey, you need to check this out. This is cool. And, we'll go, okay, I'll check that out. That is cool. You know, but it's not a direct thing in the flow upon what gets on the air. That would be cool (*laughter*), but we're not...I mean, that would be a really cool function, but, um, it's not a direct, like, this many people thought this should be on there. Yeah, so...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Does iReport present a significant change in the way news is gathered?

**RESPONDENT B:** I think so. Um, in the sense that, instead of, you know, something, sort of...well, I don't know if it's...yes and no. Because, in a sense, it's the same, whether it's through a PR person or something that you see going on, something rises to our attention, and then you go out and cover it. Um, or you're curious and have a question about something so you go out and try to answer that question. You know, that's

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always been the, sort of, beginning stage of journalism since the flood. Um, so in that sense, it's the same. I mean, I think it democratizes it, because you don't have to wait for a PR person or a reporter to get on there. It can be just someone says, I had a question about something, and to tell the story, I'm going to read the healthcare bill, because everybody's been saying what's in it. I still don't get it. My husband printed it out at work, and I'm on page 140. I mean, we had an iReporter do that, and then several other people followed suit. She's started talking, like, here's what I've read so far. And, you know, she's been...they brought her, and she lives in Marietta, so she was on Tony Harris's show a couple of times, you know, he started talking about her thoughts as she goes through the bill. So, in that sense, it's basically opened up what we already do, to everyone. And then, so they're doing the same things, like, oh, I heard about this. I'm gonna, you know...a plane crashed, you know, in a parking lot yesterday, and I live nearby, and I'm gonna go see it. And, I got this video. And, that actually happened, and fortunately, it was a small plane, and I don't think anybody was hurt. Um, but, you know, um, that's what journalists have always done. You go, something happened, (*inaudible*) did the same thing (*laughter*). You know, but, um, but now, it's also...and then, by them doing that, it's more people bringing it to our attention, sort of taking it, whether we want...whether we say, hey, check out this cool thing that an iReporter did, or we use that to inform our reporting on some sort of show. In some ways, it's changed it dramatically as far as what do you think, as opposed to here's what we think.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Right.

**RESPONDENT B:** But, in other ways, it's...I mean, pretty much the same as we do polling for that. I mean, again, iReports is a very unscientific poll, but it, sort of, is a way to...you know, you spend a lot of money hiring pundits and pollsters to tell what the average person thinks, when you can get what the average person thinks. So, it, it...yeah, yes and no (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** What are the different kind of reports an iReports person can submit?

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**RESPONDENT B:** They can send photos, um, audio and video. They have to have a photo file, an audio file or a video. Um, but there's also...you could send a photo of your cat and a very long text piece, you know, if that's of interest and you wrote it, we could use that. And basically, we can take however they combine it...you know, take it and combine, like, a chunk of something someone wrote in an iReport, after we've edited it, of course. If they tell you something interesting, you can use what they tell you, or if they, you know, um, you know, if it's...oh my gosh, that's a huge tornado, an unidentified witness said and an iReporter submitted. So, it can even be in the audio you hear in a video, and we can combine...you know, basically, once we confirm, you know, verify, the information, we can, sort of, use it, um, in different ways, depending on what we're doing, whether it's a...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, you could quote somebody...

**RESPONDENT B:** Yeah, if someone says, I think the president's healthcare plan is great because of this, and you can transcribe that, or you could just edit those together into a video explaining it, or, you know, there's all kinds of different things you can do with that. So...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Great questions. Okay.

**RESPONDENT B:** Thank you very much.

**INVESTIGATOR:** No problem.

*(Muffled noise).*

***(AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY.)***

***(Inaudibles due to intermittent low volume, loud muffled noise or cell phone interference.)***

***END OF AUDIO.***

Appendix B (Continued)

**Respondent C**

**9-2-09**

Amani Channel:	Primary Investigator ("INVESTIGATOR")
Respondent:	C ("RESPONDENT C")

**(AUDIO STARTS ABRUPTLY.)**

**(Muffled noise).**

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Inaudible*) a thesis, so, it's all about (*inaudible*) and iReports, mainstream adoption and all of that.

**RESPONDENT C:** Okay.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, I'm really not going to define the participants, but I'll just ask some questions about what you're doing and that sort of thing.

**RESPONDENT C:** Okay.

**INVESTIGATOR:** It's more just to get your feedback. I'm not trying to put my own thoughts into this interview; it's more just to look at your own experience, in terms of what you've been doing at CNN.

**RESPONDENT C:** Okay.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, this is participant C, for the record. How long have you worked in news and what is your background and experience?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, let's see. Um, I've been involved in news since high school, really, and so, um, you know, in high school, I was living overseas on a military base, that's just my background, and I worked with, uh, AFN, which is an armed forces network, just to make things, I was a high school student. In college, I was a newspaper kid, like, managing editor, campus editor, college newspaper, and studied journalism there. I mean, I think if that counts, then I've been doing it since as far as that, at least having, sort of being involved in news production. Professionally, though, CNN was my first gig, and I've been here for 7 ½ years.

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**INVESTIGATOR:** What would be your definition of news?

**RESPONDENT C:** My definition of news, um, is, is, actually really kind of simple. I think news is just a good story, you know? And, that can be, um...it can be really anything, and, um, is that enough? Is that okay, a short answer like that?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, if you want to elaborate, that's fine.

**RESPONDENT C:** Um, yeah, I don't know that I need to necessarily elaborate, but I think news is, um, news is really subjective. And, I think what I've learned working with iReport is that my own...the things that I consider to be news aren't necessarily the same as the person sitting next to me. And, so, you know, my own interests, um...and I think from person to person there's so much that varies, in terms of what people find interesting. Ultimately, I think news can be anything that's really interesting, you know, whether it's about, um, whether it's about sports or, um, photography, or, you know, digital technology, and it has more to do with your personal interests and less to do with, like, what, what some producer is saying is news, right? Big news out of China. Don't give a shit about it...you know, not necessarily. I'm not saying me, but I'm saying like any...you know. Could be me. On certain days, it certainly is. I'm certainly more interested about...I might be more interested in, like, a story about an iPod that day, then I would be about, um, Swine Flu, you know? Even though Swine Flu probably is an important story, it isn't necessarily news, you know? Day, day six of Kennedy dead, you know? Maybe that's not news to me, but it's still an important story, at least in terms of, like, what producers are saying.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What roles have you served here at CNN before coming to iReport? How long have you been at iReport? What else have you done here at CNN?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, I started as a VJ, which is an entry level position for TV. And, so, I, I was also a writer at Headline News...a television writer. So, writing scripts for TV, 30 second, 45 second scripts. Um, teases and opens and things like that. And, I did a little bit of segment producing for television. Um, before I got involved with iReport, and I got involved a month



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before we launched it, so I've been here almost from the very, very beginning, um, on a very small editorial team. So, that's been three years...it's been around three years. We launched in August, uh, second, 2006.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what would you say your role is in the decision-making process of content in your current position?

**RESPONDENT C:** Oh, well, pretty big, actually. I'm the news manager, so, um, by title, by definition, I guess, I make a lot of the decision about what assignments we make. Um, you know, what iReport assignments, in other words, the things we're gonna ask people, and, um, I make those decisions based on a lot of different things, that, uh...one of the big things is just editorial priority. Is it a story we wanna tell? Is it a story that's gonna be a worthwhile experience for the user? Um, I work closely with the community manager and the rest of the team to make those decisions. I don't make those decisions alone, though, not at all. We actually make a lot of decisions by committee...by just getting together and talking and a lot of collaboration.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, based on your past experience, could you explain the traditional selection process and the typical network operation level, as that's your primary experience?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, I think, just in a very broad sense, that the traditional method has been very...has been very top down...not top down, but the relationship between the user and the news traditionally has been the producer are making the decisions, either on the stories, um, and especially in television, on the TV side, learning how to build a rundown, it was, you know, what's the top story, it's gonna go here. You know, with all the top stories, they're gonna go in the A block, and then the, you know, um, then here in the C block, we're gonna have the, sort of like, um, a general interest story here, and so forth. And, it seemed a little regimented, and it was always decided by the producers. When I made the switch to online, what I learned is that there are actually a lot of...there's a decision on what are the top stories and what stories did well...they are still being decided, and what stories are being put out there and where they're being put on the home page, those decisions are still being made by producers, but, um, because it's on the Web and because

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we have, like, up to date information that tells us how people are reacting to it, we have, you know, first of all we have page feeders, right? That's an instant thing that can tell us whether or not people are gravitating towards it. We also have comments, and people can give us instant feedback, like, whether they like this story, or whether they are engaged in this story. So, we have that, kind of, real time data that will give us indication whether something's doing well. And sometimes, not always, but sometimes, that information will decide what happens to that story next...whether it dies, goes off the page or whether it gets made, like, for T1, for instance. So, um, a lot more involvement on the Web. I mean, iReport, I feel like it takes me even a step further because we aren't...we are...we do have editorial influence, and a lot of it, we're deciding the kind of assignments we wanna tell and the kind of stories, and we're trying to encourage people to be a part of that, but there's an open indication on the table for, tell us, tell us an interesting story, something that's happening to you. And, these aren't, these aren't necessarily news producers, these are our own readers, our own viewers, and in some cases, they are freelance journalists, and in other cases, they are people that are involved in...they are trying to market something. But, it's a free invitation to share a story, and we are very reactionary to that. So, if we...so, in some ways, it's reversed, that kind of news flow. Somebody uploads something to iReport that's interesting, the producers now see it, and now we're saying, oh, that's really good. We didn't know about that. You know, now we know about this, what do we do with it? And, then it's our role to try to get that on the, you know, integrated into CNN's news coverage and that, and so, um...for instance, you could go out into wherever you live and tell a really interesting story. You could upload it to iReport, and a CNN producer could see that content, and you know what? That may have made it into the rundown of your show, or it may even go on the home page of CNN.com, depending on how good it is. And, um, that wasn't necessarily commissioned by a producer at all; it just came from our own viewers.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay, and that sort of falls into the next question. How has the Internet changed news gathering practices?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, I think, you know...that's a really humbling question

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because it's a real...that's a real big question. I don't wanna even pretend to try to know that answer, but, you know, from my own experience, just in the things that I've mentioned in that last question, it's, um, it's definitely, um, you know...some of the barriers that were out between producer and the user have gone away because of the Internet. I mean, there's a much closer connection now, and there can be. I think, we still, here at CNN in particular, there's still some, um, we're getting closer to that, and we're gonna take some steps hopefully in the future to even make it even a more intimate connection. You know, like, um, I think with the Internet, though, what's made it is it's...information can be shared, obviously, more readily and easier. People can participate, now, in the news gathering and the news sharing is a huge one. If you look at, I mean, if you look at social media, the explosion just in the last few years as an example, where, um, consumers not only, sort of...you want them not only just to, like, consume your product, and in this case, read your story, but you want them to also share it with a friend, put their own, add their own perspective to it. And, in the case with iReport, actually, (*inaudible*) in the news gathering. So, um, I think those are, those are some good ways that it's changed.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Fair enough. What is the most common way news is gathered? You know, this question is from non-full-time CNN staff, but, I think the question is, what is the most common way news is gathered from iReporters?

**RESPONDENT C:** I think the most common way it's gathered is through our assignments. Um, and that process is...it can be really obvious, and sometimes, it can be really not obvious and really ambitious. And, we're constantly struggling to find the right approach. We're trying...we try lots of different approaches. Um, it could be as obvious as, right now, there's wildfires in California. This is a very big story. It's a complex story. It's affecting a lot of people. How does CNN tell this big story? Well, you know, the traditional way would be we go, get out there, and we get our affiliates, and we, you know, get this perspective. And then, you know, because of things like iReport, it can be, oh, we were over in Burbank. We didn't realize that those people smelled smoke, or whatever. You know, I mean, the idea is that we can't, even a big media organization like CNN can't be

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everywhere at once, so, by inviting your viewers, inviting anybody to participate in that and share information, then, um, then hopefully, it helps give us something extra. It improves our own story telling, you know? And, the end result is a better, more interesting, more personal coverage. Everyone is, we're always...that's a big thing right now, it's like, how do we make this story personal? How do we make this story interesting? We need a real person in this story. Um, whereas traditionally, you might be working a beat and you would call up your sources and say, well, I'm looking for someone that is, um, has kids, and they're really worried about the Swine Flu, you know. Well, um, through an iReport assignment, we might just put it out there and say, okay, Swine Flu. These are the facts. Here's what we know. Are you worried about it? Or, that's probably not a good question at all, but that's what I mean. We're constantly trying to feel that out and see what is it? What is a good iReport assignment? What's not? Well, iReport is really obvious. It's, like, okay, that's a big thing that's affecting a lot of people. There's gonna be a lot of visuals. Let's get people involved. Something like Swine Flu doesn't have a story we wanna tell, it's not as easy, you know? How do you engage the audience around that? Those are all things that we try on iReport. They tend to be the...that tends to be the way that it happens most on the site, but not everything. Um, we have a lot of iReporters who, um, do their own enterprise journalism on their own, and they, they find stories on their own, and then they submit those stories, and we've developed a repertoire with them. We have several iReporters who will go so far as to let us know ahead of time what they're working on. It's like, hey, you know, I'm gonna head out to the docks and I'm gonna talk to these ship workers about this, and there is a story I wanna tell. And, we're almost in a, um...we've developed this kind of relationship where we're, we're available to help walk them through certain things and discuss with them, like, story angles and story ideas and hopefully make it better. So, that's a rarer example. I mean, we don't have that information with everybody. Um, there's only 300,000 registered users on the site now, but with a handful of really, sort of ambitious iReporters, we do have that relationship.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what are the benefits or drawbacks to the process of collecting, soliciting content?

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**RESPONDENT C:** Well, the benefits are, um, are huge, and there's many to name, so let's try to name some of those. One is, you can get a personal, you can get a personal, um, uh...you know...you could get someone...okay, an iReport can be many, many things. It can be an eyewitness to major breaking news. But, then it could also be, it could also be a fresh perspective on a news story. So, you know, um, if we're telling, um...particularly, like, political commentary, if we're telling this story about healthcare, right, which we are, and, um, everyone is asking the question, how is this going to affect me? Or, what does this mean to me? And, you know, in some cases, iReporters have offered up that kind of question, you know? Here's my situation. I wanna know specifically how this is gonna affect me. And, um, then, like the medical unit will actually use that as an example in a way to get into this conversation. And, if offered, sort of, a fresh, uh, look at this very big...you know, that personal touch that we like to use in news gathering. So, let's start with the obvious things, right? You know, it can offer, in some cases, never before seen images of a major breaking news event. Or, in the case of the Virginia Tech, uh, shooting, the only images of a major breaking news, you know? In that case, that video was the only video that exists of that was happening as the drama was unfolding, you know, the shoots, the shots. Um, and that's obviously...and obviously a really big example, but one that, from a news gathering standpoint, that's very valuable in terms of telling a story. The other benefits of iReports is that you can do fun, crowd sourcing projects, you know? You can ask a questions that affects a lot of people, and you can put it out there and say, we know that everyone in the country right now...especially last summer, when it was getting up to five dollars and everyone was just frustrated...that was one of our...that was a really great assignment, because we put it out there and said, go out and take pictures of what gas prices are where you live, but also, tell us how it's affecting you. And, what we got was all these incredible stories, like, well, we are, you know, someone in Iowa. Well, we started riding our bike to work. That's how crazy it's gotten. We saw a family, you know, in Denver...well, we're gonna sell our SUV and get a small compact car. Like, people's lives were changing, and through iReport, we were able to, in a relatively, um, quick time, able to get that kind of, get that kind of information

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back from our own viewers, that interesting perspective and stories. So, a lot of times through iReport, we will find individuals who have incredible stories that we didn't ask for. And, that would be the other benefit, I would say. For example, there is, um, a girl from UCLA. She's a student, and she's going through some intense physical therapy right now. She's really learning how to walk. The doctors found a cyst in her spinal area, and, um, they removed it successfully, but because of the surgery, she, um, basically, was paralyzed under, uh, for a while, and is now having to learn how to walk again, teach her body how to do that. And, she's documenting that on a blog, but she's also documenting on iReport...she's sending updates and photos of her working out. So, this is a really interesting story, one that we maybe wouldn't have thought to...we wouldn't have thought, oh, let's tell the story of this. You know, maybe, I mean, in a traditional sense, we may have heard about it. You know how stories sort of...somebody hears a good story and they can relay it, and all of a sudden, a sharp news producer can grab that, and...but, in this way, through iReport, we have producers who are constantly looking for those kind of gems where we can identify that and say, you know what, this is really interesting what this person is doing. We can turn that into a story and bring it to even a wider audience, and in some cases, bring attention to, um, an individual's story, or bring it to...basically share that with the world, potentially, you know, if it goes on, like, our television network.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Any drawbacks? Any perceived drawbacks? Any organizational drawbacks?

**RESPONDENT C:** Yeah, I mean, there's a...there's lots of challenges, I guess, with user generated content. I wouldn't necessarily call them drawbacks, I just think that they're...they're challenges. And, one of them is, like, uh, it's a community, right? So, I think, how do you, um, get a community to rally around something? How do you make everyone feel that their contribution is important? How do you make everyone...um, we are...the role that we play on the iReport editorial team is very much one of being an advocate between the news room and the iReporter. And, so, so...not a drawback, but again, the challenge is that, you develop this relationship with an iReporter, and then it's like, hey, how come they

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pulled, you know, getting the news here and here? So, you want to give them really good and honest advice, and that's not always easy. So, it's, like, hey, your story could have been better here, or sometimes you find yourself in a position where you're trying to convince other news room people, hey, this is really good. Seriously. If you believe in it, sometimes you have to go to bat for it. It's just like anybody else, like, you're writing a story for (*inaudible*) and you've written this really great story, well, you gotta come and sell it, at some point, to the people who are making the decision on the home page. And, it's a little different with iReport, except that we are in that position of being the sellers, so that's a real challenge. And, I think...I think the community is where our biggest challenges are right now. I think that, we want to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable and safe, and feels their contributions haven't...that there's a benefit, whether it's real or perceived, that it's worthwhile, that it's a good experience. Um, you know, and how do we...that's a constant struggle for us, to make that a significant, um, experience, user experience. If we ask for something...if we ask for something in an assignment, and a user follows those instructions and produces something, well then we damn well better make sure we do everything we can that that gets incorporated into our news coverage. And, what I think we're guilty of, sometimes, is doing, we're doing too many assignments, and people are, like, well, what's the point? But, I think that...I think that...we've learned that, in our three years. We've learned that, you know what, let's not do it unless it's really worth doing...that we're really gonna be able to give it attention. Otherwise, there's sometimes a way of just taking the approach of, well, let's just try it, you know? Well, I'm working on a story on this, or I don't have anybody. I really need someone that's this. Can we just use iReport and ask it that way? I mean, we used to say, well, yeah, let's try it. Let's see, you know? Let's see what will happen, see how the community responds. And, what we learned is that's just not a very good experience for the user, you know? Um, you asked me to share my personal story about how I dealt with, you know, I don't know, the mortgage crisis. Well, I did that, and then you didn't use my iReport, you know? Or, you used that person's iReport and you didn't use my report. Or, there were 20 submissions, and you only used one. And, that's because I only needed one for the

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story, right? So, that's not a good experience. We've learned that now and we're trying different approaches.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what is iReport?

**RESPONDENT C:** What is it?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah (*laughter*).

**RESPONDENT C:** iReport is CNN's, um, I mean, there's a formal definition, I think. iReport is CNN's user generated content platform. Right?

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT C:** Yeah. But, I mean, it's many things beyond that. Hopefully, it can be many things to many users, but hopefully, it's a place to share your story, directly with CNN producers and with the world, you know, with the community. Um, iReport is, um...you know, it's a conversation about the news and it's, not always, but hopefully, in an ideal world, iReport is, like, a place where news...you know, a place where you're able to share and talk about news that matters to you.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Right. Sure. And the values?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, there's a lot of values, but I think, from my perspective, it's, it's, um, it's a place...the value is that you are...I don't know. I'm having trouble with this one. I think that, uh, the value is being able to...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Whispering*). (*Inaudible*). (*Laughter*). That's a value, right?

**RESPONDENT C:** Yeah.

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, let's rephrase that question.

**INVESTIGATOR:** When I say what's the value...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** You mean a value to the network or like...

**INVESTIGATOR:** I mean, it's an open question. Yes, whatever it means to you.



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**RESPONDENT C:** Um, so, I mean, whether it's in context of the bigger news universe, or...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Inaudible*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** Or, what's the value to you as a news guy who now had this opportunity to share other people's stories with, you know...

**RESPONDENT C:** I mean, that's certainly a value...

**INVESTIGATOR:** I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, though (*inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT C:** I hear you. Um, I think it's, like, there...it's unique, personal stories that, um...I think we all, as producers here at CNN.com, we want to, just, tell...I guess any journalist, really...wants to tell a really good story, wants to...and I think that we find so many through, by just opening the doors and allowing people through iReports to be a part of that. And, I think that's the real value, just like, being able to, hopefully, trade that, like our direct connection. And then, also, I think it's important to make the news process and the news gathering process more transparent. Like, it doesn't necessarily...you know, if we really want to break down that wall between the news room and the reader, you know, the viewer, I think iReport is an important bridge. It's not the only one. It's not the answer. It's not like we invented...we didn't invent user generated content or anything like that. But, for CNN, it's an important bridge, I think, with connecting that audience and getting them involved, and I think that's a real value.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a difference between user generated content as opposed to citizen journalism?

**RESPONDENT C:** I think it's just a semantics thing, right? I mean, citizen journalism, I think can mean a lot of different...a lot of other things that isn't necessarily what iReport is, you know? Um, I think, uh, while there are people on iReport who are journalists, you know, I would call them journalists, because they're incredible. They go out, they know what a good story is, they can tell a good story. We have some users that can get up, get in front of a camera, and they're so natural and

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they can give you all the information and the facts like a real professional would. But, the vast majority of our users aren't to that level. They're just regular people. They're not necessarily trained journalists. Um, they can be eye witnesses to news, or they can just be people who care about the news. You know, they're doctors and teachers and plumbers. So, I think with citizen journalism, it can apply, like, I'm not going to be working for a professional organization, I'm gonna go out and tell these stories, and I can put that on my blog. I wanna create my own news media, you know. And, there's a lot of examples of that happening, and it's just, like, it's exploded, and it's great. And, I feel like that, when I think of citizen journalism, I think of, sort of, like the backpack journalist out there doing that. And, while we do have some people that post iReports like that, it's not like, um...that's not the entry level for iReport. We want it to be really inclusive to anybody. You know, you can be really...you can be, like, a grandma who has no interest in being a journalist, or you might have an opinion on news, or you might have something to share that's really interesting, you know. Right now, this week is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of World War II, so we are inviting people to share World War II stories, and we're having some really...we're having some really incredible people share some really incredible photos that I've never seen before, and it offers yet another fresh perspective. And, these aren't necessarily...these are first time users, you know. And, I wouldn't necessarily call them a citizen journalist. They're just a person that wants to experience.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what's the difference between content on iReport as opposed to traditionally gathered news on CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT C:** Um, wait, what's the...

**INVESTIGATOR:** I know we've kind of talked about it, but what's the difference between content on iReport as opposed to traditionally gathered news on the network or on broadcast or on CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, it...the main difference is that it hasn't gone through the normal process, and I think that the stuff you see on CNN.com, that is from a CNN person, it's gonna come from,

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in most cases, a professional journalist, and they're gonna have a certain amount of training, then it goes through a producer that, you know, assigned the story, and they've worked with a writing producer, then it goes through copy edit, and then it gets the full treatment from our full resources, you know, our design and video...you know, CNN is huge, and there are a lot of elements that can come into play. Which, iReport, it can be as simple as, like, here's a photo of something. Here's a photo of this fire outside my window, and that hasn't gone through any of that process. So, I mean, that's the main difference.

**INVESTIGATOR:** How do you determine if an iReport submission has news value?

**RESPONDENT C:** A couple ways. One is, um, one is just, like, I guess, just like, if you feel it in your gut as a news producer...I think, by rule of thumb, if it's interesting to us, then it might be interesting to other people. That's not the only filter, though. Often, we'll take a cue from the community, you know? If a lot of people are...say someone posts an iReport...you know, an example of one that happened a couple of weeks ago, there was someone that put up a video, and they were talking about this billboard, this PETA billboard, I think it was in California, and the layout, it was like, save a whale, eat vegetables. And, it had a really obese person was, like, on the billboard, and it was offensive to some people. Other people thought it was funny, and other people thought, oh, this is just PETA, whatever. But, someone posted an iReport about it. This is not a story that we were necessarily talking about. So, as a news producer, we were, like, whatever...that's kinda interesting. But, it generated so many comments...people were sharing it, talking about it. We took that as a cue that, you know what? There's something here. This is something that's, you know...so, in part, it's the community, and part it's the, what are the needs of the news room? I think we try to be, our team, we try to be connected in between that world a little bit...somewhere in the middle. It's, like, what's the news room going after? They're going for this. And, what's the community talking about? And, we try to come in there and say...often, we try to offer something that's a little fresh, a little different. Like, that whale thing was really great. We came and said, oh hey, have you guys heard about this? We got an iReporter

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talking about it. And they were, like, oh, okay. You know, let's have that be part of the conversation, and it was good alternate programming.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Where did the story get featured?

**RESPONDENT C:** I think it got featured on the home page, on CNN.com.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay.

**RESPONDENT C:** Yeah, and we just posted that video right up there. It was from an iReporter, and we had talked to her, and we knew her. We don't always put straight up opinions on the site, but we do sometimes. And, CNN.com is gonna have, like...they're gonna have more commentary, and we're gonna be looking for ways to include more of our readers in the process.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Who decides if an iReport submission is used on air or on CNN.com? What's the process?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, the process is, anybody at CNN, anybody that works here, whether you're working on a show or working on the front line or working for CNN International or what have you, if you see something on iReport.com that you think is good, that you think could be part of your rundown, part of the story you wanna tell, then that could be the threshold right there. Okay...that's something that I want, and we provide training for anybody who wants it here at CNN so they can get access to the tools, and there's a vetting process. And, we'll share that information with the CNN producer, and we'll say, okay, if you want that, here's how you go out there and get it. Um, the majority of stuff that gets on CNN, the stuff that's been vetted, the majority of stuff comes through our small editorial team, because we're the most active users in the news group looking at stuff, so often, we will...we don't need a producer to tell us, for instance, that this awesome video of a wildfire is gonna be wanted. We'll just go after that automatically. We'll go out there. We'll reach out to the submitter, we'll talk to them, and we'll gather some news. And then, we'll take that content and share it with CNN producers. We have an e-mail daily that anyone that works at CNN can sign up for, and we put out a note twice a day that's basically, here's the good stuff...here's the best stuff

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that we've seen. And, it's sort of, like, use it. Go out there, put it in your shows. And, that's...that's pretty much the process. If it's a story where...let's say you're a health producer and you come to us and say, I want do a story about Swine Flu. Well, we'll build the assignment for you, but then we're gonna give it to you and say, now, it's your responsibility to...to take care of this. When people start submitting to it, you need to make sure that you're...you're getting what you need out of this thing.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, are there any conversations with the producers about what kind of content they're looking for from iReport?

**RESPONDENT C:** Yeah, there's a lot of that, actually. Like, I spend a lot of my days...I spend a lot of my time in the day doing that very thing, working with TV producers, working with the producers from London and Hong Kong who want to use iReport as a vehicle to do something. And, I spend a lot of time trying to walk them through that process. We don't always hit a home run. We don't always ask the right questions, but we do have now three years of experience trying to...I see our role as one where we try to walk people, coach people, through that process...coach CNN producers through that. Here's how you can use user generated content, you know.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay.

**RESPONDENT C:** And, sometimes, it's, like, sometimes the advice is, well, this is not an iReport thing. You could use something else. You could use Twitter. You could use...you could just have someone send you an e-mail. The other day we had, we had a producer on the show on Dot.com Live, and they wanted to do a really, kind of a fun thing, not really news, but they wanted their audience to send them recipes, and they wanted to cook those recipes and talk about them, I mean, whatever. It's not a bad idea, but, like, I was, like, it's not right for iReport. There's a million ways you can get this, so here's some ways you can achieve that, and, that's sort of our role...sometimes, we need to talk people off the ledge a little bit.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Got you. So, is there...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Inaudible*).

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**RESPONDENT C:** Whatever.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a process for monitoring content on iReport?

**RESPONDENT C:** Yeah, we have a, um...I can tell him this, right?

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Um...

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT C:** CNN has hired a third party moderation team, and they monitor the site 24 hours a day. And, we pay people to...and their job is strictly to filter the stuff that violates our community guidelines. So, the stuff that we don't want on there, like porn and stuff like that...not that people do...people don't send us a lot of porn, you know, because there's so many places to do that...

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT C:** ...but, they monitor it. Now, that's, like, one filter. But, beyond that, there's our team, but we're primarily looking for...we're primarily looking for stuff that's gonna be good for news gathering purposes. We don't always catch stuff, though, which is why the third level is the community. You know, the community can flag content. They can comment on content. They can, um, they can help, sort of, elevate something that maybe would have slipped through the filter, you know. We get a lot of submissions a day, so sometimes, we don't always see stuff that maybe is worth a second or third look.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Out of all those submissions, how many would you say make it to the big stage, like CNN.com or get featured on air?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, I think...I don't know what the numbers are now, the most recent, but they used to be, like, nine or ten percent of all submissions would get on CNN. That doesn't necessarily mean that it's gonna be on the air, or even gonna be on a CNN.com article. It means that content has been vetted and approved by a CNN producer, and that we think that's good content. Now, a good deal of that content...a good deal of that ten percent will get used in some capacity. I mean, we

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put that...we, um...it can be used in a lot of different ways, you know? It can be a photo that's in a photo gallery of a CNN.com article. It can be directly linked from inside a story. It could be, um...it could wind up on the Tony Harris show, you know, part of a segment on CNN.com Live, Headline News, CNNi. I mean, iReports get used across all platforms, and we actually have a hard time keeping track of it.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Would you think that the numbers have increased over the years?

**RESPONDENT C:** Yeah, no...I think there are definitely more iReports being used, and there are definitely more being submitted, so I don't really know what the percentages are. I can tell you, though, that...I don't think we miss a lot, in terms of the good stuff. We really try to...if someone makes an effort to share something that's newsworthy, we really want to...it's very important to us that we reach out right away and, sort of, make that connection. We realize that's like our...that's, like, the reason that people come to iReport.com, because they want to, like, they want to share their news with CNN, so we want to take that seriously.

**INVESTIGATOR:** And, a follow up, can you describe the process to make sure the iReport content that is vetted is accurate, that it meets news standards?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, we apply the same standards to iReports as we do to any of our news gathering, so we hold that up to CNN's very high standards.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT C:** And, you know, the important thing that we want to establish is that its content is real, obviously, and that the content is, uh... that was submitted, that there was a connection to the person who submitted it. In other words, that person took that photo, or took that video. We don't want to put a video...we don't wanna showcase a video that isn't owned...that someone else took, you know? That's a very important thing as part of the vetting process is making that, um, um...but, beyond that, the vetting process, I think the real important thing is that we're able to...we're able to ask

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the kind of questions that weren't provided up front, you know? The kind of context that might help us use this content in a meaningful way, and I think that's really where the...that's where our role comes in as a journalist, you know? You submit a photo of a wildfire and you say, I took this photo today. Thank you. We call you back and we say, who are you and how long have you lived in LA and where did you take this photo and what kind of camera did you use, and why did you...why did you want to share this with us? And, is your home in danger? Are your neighbors okay? We'll ask a million questions, because it's...one, we wanna make sure we vet this person. We wanna make sure we're dealing with someone that's on the level. But, more importantly...well, maybe not more importantly, but just as important, we wanna news gather. We wanna get information. This is a valuable resource. This is somebody who is reaching out to us, and we owe it to them to get all the information we can, so when we in turn, take this content and share it with CNN producers, we can say something interesting. Oh, this person gave me a really interesting background, and here's a photo, but it's attached to a real human being who is being affected by this story, and here's a really interesting story that they shared, here's a (*inaudible*), here's a great quote, you know? And, oh, by the way, when I was talking to this person, I thought, this person could be...this person could get on the air and share some information. So, we offer that up too, that maybe you should do a beeper with this person. So, in a way, we play a role of...we also play the role of, like, um, I guess you call it bookings, guest bookings. I mean, iReporters often are and end up being people in the line talking to...you could send an iReport, and literally, within 10 minutes or less, you could be on the air talking to Wolf Blitzer about something that just happened. There's been many examples of that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah. There are books on developing relationships, and I think we may have covered this, but, with iReport community members who submit content regularly, why is that important to build relationships with?

**RESPONDENT C:** Uh, well, it's incredibly important. Um, I think...I think...what's important is that, for some people, not everyone, but for some people, they really wanna tell good stories, they really wanna...they, um, they...for some



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people, they wanna become better journalists. So, having that kind of relationship, we can offer up our own professional perspectives, you know? It's funny, because a lot of these iReporters, they're so polished and great, it's, like, I don't...you're incredible (*laughter*). You know, you...um, there's not like...like I could really offer up too much more advice. But, some people are seeking a little bit of feedback, and some people are seeking a lot of feedback. And, I think it's important to be able to share that kind of feedback so that they can be better. It's also, um, it's also important just from a, from a reporter standpoint, because, you know, you know, we don't...while we do that, they...like, while there is a revenue sharing plan built into iReport, it's nonexclusive content, and people aren't getting paid to send us iReports. So, that sort of connection, the thing they are craving is, like, that connection between the CNN process and the news gathering process. So, it's important for us to have that rapport with people to not only give them feedback, but for them to tell us what's going on so we can be in a better position to help showcase their content, you know, as best we can, you know, as their advocates.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Is there a down side to allowing the public to share their media with CNN?

**RESPONDENT C:** Is there a down side to...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a down side to allowing the public to share their media with CNN, or their content? Any down side?

**RESPONDENT C:** Uh, well, I mean, besides, like, you know, sort of the obvious examples where people have, like, posted erroneous content or, you know, um, people who are...people who are interested in, like, spamming, you know, those kind of things. I think generally, like, community type issues are really sort of the only...those are things we're still learning how to deal with, and I think we're getting a lot better with. But, you know, I think, um, again, I would use the word challenge, right? In my opinion, I think it's important to have this open forum and to allow just about everything to come in, because we don't...you know, our definition of news is not necessarily the one that's important, so we should allow people to weigh in on all kinds of subjects. But, as a result, because you're really opening that up, as a result, you do have people that

## Appendix B (Continued)

try to game the system. You do have people that try to, um, pass by, like, false, bogus reports, stuff like that. And, that's just where...that's why it's important that we have that, that filter, that production filter, where we're like, oh, okay, you know, there's a vetting process here. So, you know, I think that's kind of more obvious, sort of a hurdle for anyone that wants to do this sort of thing...for a major news organization to, like, open the flood gates like that, you know, I think we had to expect that as a real challenge.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What factors prevent iReport submissions from being used by CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT C:** Well, I think that, in general, it's...if...we don't put that a CNN stamp on something unless we can actually use it. Now, in some cases, we can't use it because we're not gonna...we're not telling that story or we've got too many, like we don't need another wildfire story, or something like that. I mean, there have been examples like that, where, I think, the flooding, actually, last year in the Midwest, we got so many that we, you know, we had...we had like 100 that were, like, approved, and we just...we didn't...we couldn't possibly showcase another one. So, you know, a lot of the same things that would prevent a story from being covered in general do apply also to user generated content, but that's the general rule. If we...if someone's gonna use it, then we're gonna (*inaudible*) on CNN. If we're not gonna use it, then we're not gonna put it on there, even if it's a good photo of a wildfire, if there's not gonna be that commitment to use it...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Two more questions. Does the public have a role in deciding what iReports make air?

**RESPONDENT C:** Uh, no. No, I don't think so. In the general sense, they do, because they're providing all this content. And, we have...we've dabbled a little bit in assignments that are generated by the community. Like, what are the stories you wanna tell, and we've had some good suggestions and we've gone with that. One example is the...and, it's not a hard news example, but the iReport photo club, we have a roundtable every week, and we were discussing what we wanna do, and there were some passionate photographers, and they were, like, we wanna do a photo club and we

## Appendix B (Continued)

wanna do a theme every week, and that idea actually turned into real content, and now we do a whole photo gallery every two weeks now, based on this thing. And, that's an example where the community actually ended up, sort of, dictating the content. Um, but, that's very rare. It's still, um...you know, the decisions are still being made by producers, which ones are being used.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT C:** But, I'd like to see...I'd like to see that change a little bit and I'd like to explore that. One thing that could be cool is this idea that, um, um, this idea that we're exploring to have more iReporters involved in that process, you know? Maybe giving iReporters community tools that will allow them to decide, you know, what stories should be part of something. In my mind, that would be really cool, you know?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay.

**RESPONDENT C:** You know, we're not there yet, but we're hopefully moving in that direction.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Does iReport represent a change in the way news is gathered?

**RESPONDENT C:** You know, I hope so. I'd like to think so. I'd like to think that we're making, um...I mean, certainly, on the surface level, iReport has had an impact on this network's news gathering. And, um, if you look at...if you look at just the last few years, and iReport isn't the only example, but, if you look at the past few years, major media...the ones that weren't doing iReports after Virginia Tech or before Virginia Tech were doing it, like, two weeks after, because it was, like, oh shit, yeah, that's really important. I think...I think that, again, we're not the only ones doing this, but I think what we're doing with iReport that's a little different than the other media is that we're really making that connection between the user and the producer. Obvious...we're trying to make it obvious and transparent, and I think we use it more than some. I think CNN has been pretty successful in, like, building that as a brand. It's, like, yes, you can, you know...and hopefully, when people, if they witness news or they wanna be a part of the news, hopefully they'll remember, okay, you

Appendix B (Continued)

know, CNN, I think, really wants this, and they're really gonna take it seriously and they're really gonna give me full credit, and they're gonna make a point in thanking me. Hopefully, they're gonna remember that and think that, and that's really important for us. So, but yeah, I think you see examples of it everywhere now, where, at least using user generated content, incorporating your audience into your news gathering has sort of exploded. I mean, I'm sure you've noticed.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh, oh yeah. And, anything else I haven't asked you (*laughter*)?

**RESPONDENT C:** (*Laughter*). (*Inaudible*).

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT C:** No. I can't think of anything...

(*Muffled noise*).

(*AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY.*)

(*Inaudibles due to intermittent low volume, loud muffled noise or cell phone interference.*)

**END OF AUDIO.**

Appendix B (Continued)

**Respondent D**  
**9-2-09**

Amani Channel:	Primary Investigator ("INVESTIGATOR")
Respondent:	D ("RESPONDENT D")

*(Muffled noise).*

**INVESTIGATOR:** *(Inaudible)* 20 questions.

**RESPONDENT D:** Okay.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, I might have some follow ups or I've got something to ask you. So, this is respondent D *(laughter)*. I'm not really identifying the participants. So, how long have you worked in news and what is your experience?

**RESPONDENT D:** Um, I've been working at CNN since I graduated from college, so only about a year. Before that, I had internships in news at NPR, but not any real, professional experience.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what would be your definition of news?

**RESPONDENT D:** I think, I mean at its most basic level, news is something that happens to someone, somewhere, and I think, you know, it depends on...I mean, if we're talking about what news is newsworthy to, like, tell on CNN or something, I think that depends on, you know, who it's happening to or where it's happening or the impact that it's gonna have on people's lives. Like, if it's a large number of people it's gonna affect, then it's more newsworthy than something that's just, you know, happening to one person and not really gonna affect anybody else.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh. Who determines what is newsworthy?

**RESPONDENT D:** I think that's an interesting question because that's kind of what we're all about at iReport, right? Um, so, I think, really, I mean, anybody can determine what's newsworthy, and that's kind of why we have iReport, because as much as we're trained and as long as we've been working in journalism, sometimes there's stuff that other people can

## Appendix B (Continued)

bring to our attention that they think is really important that we don't know about or haven't thought about, or haven't thought about it in a certain way. So, I really think...I think, um, at least for us at CNN, like, our goal is to have anybody be able to determine what is newsworthy.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What role would you say you play in the decision making process of content in your current position? And, if you could explain what your position is, that would be great.

**RESPONDENT D:** Uh, like content that makes it on CNN?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, the content that comes through iReport or the content that you're involved in.

**RESPONDENT D:** Yeah. Um, so I'm an associate producer, which for iReport is kind of the lowest on the totem pole, but that's what most of us are. So, um, but I feel that we have a lot of freedom, because at iReport, I guess, you know, our whole idea is to be more collaborative and more open, and so we have that on our team too, not just for iReport contributors. So, um, if there's something that, like, I think is really important or that I want to do a story on, as long as I can justify it, then I can do that and get it on CNN. So, I feel like we have a lot of freedom to, kind of, think of stuff and work with our iReporters. That's something we do...we get iReporters to suggest stories and stuff, like, um, what was the big one? Oh yeah, at the inauguration in January, the story about people who had tickets, but couldn't get in, that was generated, like...iReporters broke that story. Like, the iReporters were sending us these pictures, and we were, like, oh my God, like, nobody knows about this. So, we got to, um, we got to write a story for CNN.com, it got all over TV. And, that was something that, like, we totally controlled, because the TV producers and whoever, like, they didn't know about this. Um, so I feel that we have a pretty big role in determining what content goes out. Um, not for, like, the more obvious, like, breaking news stories, but, like, for the smaller stories that can, kind of, fill out the bigger stories, I feel like we really, kind of, tend to take the lead on that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, based on your experience, you've only been in the business about a year, but, could you explain the traditional news selection process or if you have any

## Appendix B (Continued)

experience with it? What happens in a traditional news room?

**RESPONDENT D:** Yeah, I think...in the news rooms that I've been in, you know, in the morning, you go to your budget meeting, and everybody talks about, oh, you know, this was on AP, I heard this, bla, bla, bla. And, you, kind of, have, you know, the editors or the senior producers, or whoever it is, kind of, come together and come up with a list of what that day's important stories and how important they are and, kind of, prioritize it. Um, so, I think it's...it's a lot different than the way iReport tends to work. It's much more of like a top down, kind of, system. And, at iReport, we try to be more from the ground up.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. How has the Internet changed the news gathering practices?

**RESPONDENT D:** It's had a huge effect on it. It's amazing. I think...it's made it so much, so much better for us, because if you wanna find someone who has thoughts on a particular issue or something, you don't like...you know, you're like man on the street and you go out and talk to people and find them. And, you can still do that, I mean, a lot of people still do that, but, you can, you know, with iReport and with Facebook and stuff like that, you can easily find people from all over the world, um, and it gives you so many different options to have different perspectives on different stories. So, I think it really helped us out, because it can make the stories much more full, much more well rounded, because it allows you to get in touch with people that have so many more, kind of, different perspectives. But, I also think it's brought a new challenge for us, because, if you're talking to someone on the phone or on the Internet, um, as opposed to, like, meeting them in person, it's harder to, kind of, figure out how legit their story is, or if they are who they say they are. So, I think you have to be a lot more careful with your vetting, with your sources, but I think that it's really, really helped us, despite that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What is the most common way news is gathered from...the question is non-full-time CNN staff, but from iReporters?

**RESPONDENT D:** From iReporters?

Appendix B (Continued)

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah.

**RESPONDENT D:** Um, the most common way they got their news?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, what's the most common way news is gathered?

**RESPONDENT D:** Oh, okay. Um, well, I mean (*laughter*), they see stuff going on and send it into iReport.com. And, our job is, kind of...we scan the site and see what they sent in. Um, we do have...like, there's a lot of iReporters who are, like, repeat submitters, so we have really close relationships. So, those people, they tend to have our contact info, so, like, they'll, like, call us and be, like, hey, I just saw this and I uploaded it to the site, or whatever. Or, they'll e-mail us and be, like, hey, I just sent you this photo, or whatever. Um, but, we do photos and video, like, that's our main, kind of, goal for the site. Um, that's what iReporters tend to have to contribute, rather than, like, text analysis and that sort of thing. Um, it's photos and videos, generally, that they submit. Um, and yeah, we tend to just look through the site for it and then we contact them, except in those cases where they know us personally.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh. So, what are the benefits of this process? Are there any challenges or drawbacks?

**RESPONDENT D:** I think, I mean...I think the really good thing is that it allows anybody to tell CNN, like, hey, this is happening and you should take a look at it. Because, I think, you know, before iReport, before Facebook, that kind of thing, it was totally, like, dependent on us knowing, like, what was happening in the world, just based on this small group of people in this news room. But now, with iReport and with other, you know, Internet resources, anybody, anywhere can tell us what's going on, and then we can look at it and say, like, wow, this is really important, or, like, oh, this is not so important. I think that, just the fact that anybody can tell us what they think is news is really, really important for broadening our coverage and for making sure that we touch on issues that are important. Um, but then, like I said, that does come with a challenge, because you have to be really, really careful when you're vetting these things and just, you know, make sure you're double and triple checking and using the



Appendix B (Continued)

resources that we have here to, kind of, consume everything that's coming in through iReport.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh. So, explain what iReport is.

**RESPONDENT D:** (*Laughter*). iReport, um...I think on its most basic level iReport is a way for people to participate in the news with CNN. I think it's a way to turn the news gathering process into more of a conversation. People can tell us what they think is newsworthy. People can show us something that's going on in their area. People can sound off on a particular issue. They can even send us, you know, random cool pictures, or whatever, and you know, sometimes we like to have fun stuff like that on our site, too. So, um, yeah...I think iReport is a way to turn what used to be a very one-sided process, that is us, like, spitting out news at people, into a two-way conversation where they can participate and tell us what they wanna hear more about, what's important, or...there's breaking news over here, you guys don't know about this, you need to cover this. Um, so I think that's the definition (*laughter*) of iReport.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What's the value?

**RESPONDENT D:** The value is, I think, it makes the news more relevant, more well rounded for everybody, I think. You know, for us, it makes it easier to include all different perspectives. It makes it easier for us to get great footage from breaking news situations. And, I think that only benefits the people who watch CNN or go to CNN.com, um, they know that they can get, you know, a much wider range of perspectives on issues. They know that, you know, with our resources with iReport, we can have a lot of photos from breaking news situations. We can have them first, or we can have them faster. So, I think it benefits everybody.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What is the difference between content found on iReport versus traditionally gathered news on CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT D:** Well, um, the, you know, the news that you would traditionally find on CNN or CNN.com is gathered by someone who is a professional journalist and has all that training, so they, you know, they know how to, kind of, judge what's important and where the holes in the story are and

## Appendix B (Continued)

what they need to fill in, um, and what kind of sources they need to backup their information. iReport, we do have some freelance journalists and journalism students who produce, you know, near professional quality content, but then there's also people, you know, who just wanna say their thoughts on something, or who will cover an event, but you know, maybe they don't quite get all the information they need. So, with the iReport stories, that's why I keep saying this, but it's so important to develop these relationships with people and that we carefully got all the stories. We talk to these people on the phone, we talk to them by e-mail so that we can use, kind of, our traditional journalism training or journalism expertise to help fill out their stories and help make their stories something that's really gonna, you know, help people or interest people if it runs on CNN.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. How do you determine that an iReport submission has good stuff?

**RESPONDENT D:** Let's see, well, that's a question we try to answer every day when we're looking at the site. Um, I think, you know, something that has news value is something that's going to affect someone, or hopefully affect a large group of people, um, in order to make it on CNN. And, by affect, I mean, you know, it might be a breaking news thing like wildfires, like, you know, we wanna let these people know if they're safe or their homes or safe or what's going on. But, it could even be on a smaller level. Like, every week we produce, uh, an offbeat images gallery, and we have an iReport photo club where we show off these cool pictures that they've done. You know, that's not traditional news, that's not, like, traditionally newsworthy, but it's something that has an impact on people. They send in a lot of page views on CNN.com, and people really enjoy, kind of, you know, if they're looking at the news on CNN they like to take a break and look at this other cool stuff. So, I think...I think, um, we try to think a lot about effect and impact when we try to determine, you know, the hierarchy of newsworthiness on iReport.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a process to monitoring content on iReport?

**RESPONDENT D:** Yeah. Um, we have a post moderation system, which means that everything that's submitted gets posted to the

## Appendix B (Continued)

site. And, then we have a group of third party moderators that go through all the content on the site, after it's already posted, all of the posts and all of the comments. And, if something violates our terms of use, if it's, you know, if it doesn't fall under freedom of speech, but if it's particularly obscene, or something like that, then they have the right to pull it off the site. But, usually what they do, before they pull something completely down off the site, they contact us, and they're like, hey, we just wanted to let you guys know, so that we can, kind of, put our editorial input on it. Um, but yeah, everything gets posted to the site. We think that's really important, because we don't wanna have any kind of censorship there. But, after it goes up, if it's something that we really think is inappropriate, then we do, occasionally, pull stuff down.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT D:** Actually, one more thing on that. Sorry (*laughter*). Um, another thing we try to do, instead of automatically pulling stuff off the site, is a lot of times we'll contact the iReporter. Like, people have, you know, like, they have a profile picture that they might not realize is considered obscene or something, or, if they have good content, but, you know, one of their iReports is just not appropriate for the site, we try to contact them and just, kind of, explain it, and be, like, hey, we really appreciate that you're contributing to the site, but this isn't, like, cool with our terms of use. And, a lot of times, they're, like, oh, I'm sorry, and they'll go ahead and change it. So, I think that reaching out to them is also a really important part of that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Who decides if an iReport submission is used on air or on CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT D:** Oh, that's a good question, because there are a lot of different ways that can happen. Um, I think, all and all, it tends to be, kind of, a group decision. We're a very collaborative team in the spirit of our collaborations with iReporters. So, I think all of us tend to have equal input. You know, all of us have the right to approve iReports to run on CNN. Um, and then, I think it's a conversation we have as a group and with the producers in the different sections at CNN.com, with the producers of the different shows on CNN.

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You know, we'll pitch stuff to them from iReport, or they'll come to us and say, we saw this iReport that we wanna use. And, it's just, uh, it's a constant conversation that we're all having, so I think, you know, everybody gets a little bit of input of what makes it on CNN. And, I think that's a really good, you know, way to do it, because, you know, two heads are better than one, I guess, and it kind of makes it a little bit of a checks and balances there. So, it works out really well.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, describe the process used to ensure that iReport content that is used on CNN or CNN.com is accurate.

**RESPONDENT D:** Yeah, um, we have a really, um, we have a really thorough vetting process that we use, and I know that when I first started working here I was, like, ah, oh my gosh, like, I'm gonna approve something that's not legit, or whatever. But, we actually haven't ever run into that problem because we do things so thoroughly. So, before we would ever consider using an iReport on air or on CNN.com, we call that person and have a conversation with them, and we ask them, you know, basic questions to, kind of, make sure they're telling the truth and that they're legit. I mean, almost never, I can think of maybe one time in our history where we've run into a problem with someone, like, legitimately, like, lying to us. But usually, people are really forthcoming. Like, if I call someone, I'm like, did you take this picture? They're like, oh no, I found it on the Internet. And, I'm like, okay, thanks, and we don't use the photo. But, um, we call them up and we ask, you know, did you take the picture? Did you take the video? Did you get permission from the people who were in it? You know, make sure they were in whatever situation it was, like, legitimately, that they didn't, like, break in somewhere. Um, you know, when and where it was taken. Um, and a lot of that information...like, we ask them what kind of camera they used and that sort of thing, and you can really easily verify that by opening the picture in PhotoShop. So, it's, it's very, like, easy to tell if someone didn't actually take the picture or video. And then, beyond that, we make use of the really amazing resources that we have here at CNN to verify the situation, and that what the person is saying about whatever they submitted is true. Um, so a good example is, um, with the Iran elections and protests that we had over the summer, um, we have, you know, we have our whole international news room, we have a whole

## Appendix B (Continued)

team of people, you know, geared toward the Middle East, geared toward Iran. So, like, if I was approving an iReport from Iran, I would ask the person all of my vetting questions. I would talk to them until I felt they were legit, and then, I would either have them talk to someone from the Middle East desk or, you know, e-mail all of my notes to the person from the Middle East desk, and like, hey, does this sound legit to you? You know, we have all these experts here, and they can easily tell what's legit and what's not, because that's, like, what they do for a living. Um, so, I think, you know, we start off the process by just making sure everything is...kind of, that everything is submitted and that everything seems accurate to us, and then, if it's something that we don't know that much about and we feel like we have to take that next level, then we'll get someone who works here at CNN to weigh in on it. So, like I said, we've never had a problem with approving anything that was inaccurate or that the person didn't know.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Thank you. Is there a focus on developing relationships with your iReport community members who submit content regularly and why?

**RESPONDENT D:** Yeah, that's really important to us. Um, we have a community manager. We have another producer now who is actually gonna be doing some more community management stuff. But, it's really, really important to us to build relationships with these people, because we feel like they're giving us something really valuable, and we wanna make sure that they feel valued in return. So, we know these people, like, really well. We're all, like, Facebook friends with them. We, like, follow them on Twitter, and they follow us, and like I said, they have our phone numbers and our e-mail addresses. And, so many of them, it's great, they just, like, feel comfortable e-mailing us and being like, hey, like, I sent in this new thing, or, like, hey, I saw my video, or whatever, on CNN. Thanks so much for using it, like, bla, bla, bla. So, um, yeah, we do have close, close relationships, but some iReporters come to visit, and that's been really, really fun. We had our most recent iReporter, like, she came in to, kind of, hang out with us, and ended up doing a live interview on the air. Um, so, people get really excited, not just our team, but people all across the network get all excited when iReporters come to visit, because, like,

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these people are really, you know, helping us out a lot, and they feel they're getting a lot out of it too, because it's fun to be on CNN and it's fun to participate in the news and tell people what you think is important. So, yeah, we do have good relationships with them, and it's really, really fun, and, I think, really important that we're doing that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a down side to allowing the public to share news with CNN?

**RESPONDENT D:** You know, I don't think so. I think, you know, some people that are more traditional in their approach to news gathering, might say, yeah, but, like, you have to wade through all this stuff that's not really news, like, why should we listen to these people, they're not experts on anything, or whatever. But, I think, you know, we have iReport, and it's not like we're, like, obligated to use everything that comes in on iReport; it's not like we're obligated to use even a certain percentage of the stuff that comes in on iReport. So, it can really only benefit us and really only benefit our viewers and really only benefit our iReporters, because it gives us...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** I'm just making sure, what time did you have the meeting?

**RESPONDENT D:** Uh, 11. I mean, I'd actually like to go to the meeting, but...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT D:** (*Inaudible*). (*Laughter*).

(*Muffled noise*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, the question was, is there a down side to allowing the public, and you were...

**RESPONDENT D:** Oh, right, right. Um, so...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Now you don't know exactly how you were answering it (*laughter*).

**RESPONDENT D:** Yeah, I think, um, I think I was saying iReport can only help us, because we don't have to use everything that's submitted, and it's really good for us because we can, you know, find stories that we might not have otherwise known

## Appendix B (Continued)

about, like I was saying about the inauguration with the people with the tickets who weren't being let in. Like, no news outlet knew about that because they were all too busy covering the inauguration, us included. So, when the people started sending iReports, we were like, oh my God, like, this is a huge story. So, that was amazing. They can actually, you know, break news on iReport. And, I think, you know, it's good for our viewers, because, like, I said, we're not gonna use everything on iReport. We're not gonna use anything that we haven't completely verified, that we haven't checked out and added our own reporting to. So, it's not like we're gonna grab any inaccurate information or anything.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Bye. I have to go somewhere else (*loud movement in room*) (*inaudible*)...

(*Muffled noise*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** We're picking up with letter D respondent. So, any other thoughts about the challenges or down side of allowing the public share their content?

**RESPONDENT D:** Oh, yeah. Okay, so I was saying, like, um, for CNN's...for us there's obviously not really a down side, because we use everything, but for CNN viewers, I think it can only benefit them, because it's not like we're gonna show, like, unvetted iReports or stuff that we haven't reported on. So, it's not like we're gonna be showing stuff that's untrue, so that means that they're only getting a lot, a variety of stories. And, for our iReporters, I think it can only benefit them too, because, you know, if it's something and we don't use it, it's not really, you know, a bad thing for them. And, if we do use it, it's awesome for them, because they love to be on CNN (*inaudible*), and a lot of them, even if we don't use their stuff, they really appreciate it, because, like a said, we're really involved in the community, and we are always giving people tips on how to improve their iReporting, you know, improve their picture taking or their video editing or their interviewing skills, or whatever it is, and they really, really appreciate that. They actually, they come back to use and are asking for more feedback, how can we do better? So, I think, you know, even if someone comes and doesn't make it on CNN, they still get a lot out of being in our community.

Appendix B (Continued)

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What factors prevent iReport submissions from being used by CNN?

**RESPONDENT D:** Prevent it from being used. Well, there's a lot of stuff. Obviously, if they don't own the stuff they're sending in, there's no way we're gonna use that. Um, if the stuff they're submitting...if it's not true, obviously, or if we can't...if the team is really questionable to us and we can't verify it, we're not gonna use it. Um, we always have to verify iReporting. Let's see what else. If it's, like, infringing someone else's copyright, if they don't own it, then we're not gonna use it. Um, and, what else prevents them from being used? There's, I think there's also, like, a certain level of, like, quality that they have to be in order to, like, be termed useful (*Loud movement in room*). Um, like, for example, if we get a video of, like, um, a video from the California wildfires, and if it's, like, so completely low end and so dark enough that you really can't see anything, that, like, it might be, from a news situation, it might otherwise be really valuable, but if it can't add anything to the coverage, because it's just not, then that's gonna prevent something from being used too. I mean, really, we try not to have, like, super high, like, you know, video editing or quality standards, because that's something that we can usually clean up, but if something is just really, like, unwatchable, then, unfortunately, we're not gonna probably use that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Does the public have a role in deciding what iReports make it?

**RESPONDENT D:** What iReports?

**INVESTIGATOR:** What iReports are used on CNN.com or CNN?

**RESPONDENT D:** Yeah, they definitely do. Um, you know, they don't have the final decision, obviously, but they play a huge factor, because, you know, on iReport.com, um, you know, you can comment on stories, you can share stories, and we see all the stuff. So, if there's a story that we would have otherwise not paid attention to that has, like, 100 comments on it, we're gonna go, whoa, what's this? And, we're gonna check it out. If it's something legit, if it's something interesting, then we're probably gonna put it on the air. So, you know, it sparks a really good discussion. But, they definitely have a role, and



## Appendix B (Continued)

you know, they can...we have a blog, which is a great way for them to communicate with us. We have roundtables on our blog every week, which is like a discussion and comments for our reports, and people always tell us, like, hey, this is something that you should make an assignment for, or, this is something that I wish you guys would cover, and this is something that's newsworthy. And, you know, we listen them. They're our viewers. They're our users. So, they have...they definitely play a huge role in, kind of, paring down all that content that we get and really telling us what they think is important.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Does iReport represent a significant change in the way news is gathered?

**RESPONDENT D:** Yeah, I would say so. You know, not just iReport, but citizen journalism, in general. You know, using Twitter and Facebook and that sort of thing to complement iReport's work, because, you know, we can't...we can...well, I mean, obviously, in breaking news situations, we can get eyewitnesses, we can get people who were there through our camera crews or our reporters. Um, and it also, it also, um, like I said before, it really gives us a chance to get more diverse stories and more diverse perspectives on the stories that we're doing, because we don't have to go out and find them, or we don't have to go out and find all the people; they come to us. So, obviously, we still have to vet them and make everything's legit and stuff, but it allows them to directly communicate with CNN, because if someone goes to iReport, like, they know that people from CNN are gonna be looking at this. So, it really lets them almost, kind of, pitch stories to us, if they want to. It lets them tell us, you guys did a really good job on this story, or you guys didn't do a good job on this story, or you should be covering this, or this is what I think about this. Um, so, it really, it really has changed everything. I think it's made our news coverage much more well rounded, and it also makes it a lot more personal, I think, because we find, a lot of times, that the most valuable stuff we get on iReport is, like, personal stories that could really, really have an impact on us and really have an impact on our viewers. Um, for example, we were doing a story for the anniversary of Apollo 11, which sounds like, you know, um...it's like, you just get iReporters who just like, oh, I was watching this on TV, this is cool. But,

Appendix B (Continued)

I actually...I talked to this one guy who submitted an iReport, and he, like...his father worked for NASA and he was at the tracking station when Apollo 11 was coming back to Earth, and, like, he did this thing, like, he had to, like, repair this antenna that was, like, crucial for their communications with NASA, I mean, he was the only one who could do it. And, he was, like, 12 years old, and it was this amazing story that he sent into iReport. And, at first, I was like, skeptical. I was, like, okay, I called him, and like, verified everything with NASA, and it ended up being a lead story on CNN.com for the anniversary. And, it was, like, cool! And, if it wasn't for iReport, there was, like, no way that we would have gotten that personal story, that really interesting story on Apollo 11 that nobody would have thought to tell. So, I think it really helps us get more personal stories that our readers tend to really connect with.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Anything else I haven't asked you? You blew through those questions (*laughter*).

**RESPONDENT D:** Sorry (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*). No, that's good.

**RESPONDENT D:** (*Laughter*).

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Inaudible*) means that you're using your...you know, you have, like, you know, you've got your iReport knowledge (*inaudible*) (*laughter*).

**RESPONDENT D:** I mean, I'm like, oh, you suggested me for an interview (*inaudible*) (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, good time. We can wrap up?

**RESPONDENT D:** Um, I think that's pretty much all I thought of to tell you.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay, cool. Thank you so much.

**RESPONDENT D:** Thank you.

**INVESTIGATOR:** I appreciate your time.

**(AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY.)**

Appendix B (Continued)

**(*Inaudibles* due to intermittent low volume, loud muffled noise or cell phone interference.)**

***END OF AUDIO.***

Appendix B (Continued)

**Respondent E**

**9-2-09**

Amani Channel:	Primary Investigator ("INVESTIGATOR")
Respondent:	E ("RESPONDENT E")

*(Muffled noise).*

*(Inaudible).*

**INVESTIGATOR:** I'm not going to identify participants, so I will just call you "Participant E," but, I will be asking you questions about what your responsibilities are and your job title and that sort of thing. All right? And, I just want to share...I mean I'm not going to really try to prompt you at all, I just want your thoughts

**RESPONDENT E:** Okay.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay? So, how long have you worked in news and what's your experience?

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, I...I've been working at CNN for three years (*inaudible*) my professional journalism career, so I came right out of college and had a job after that. I had a couple jobs doing odd things, but, you know, three years.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Three years. Where did you start? Have you been working at CNN.com the whole time?

**RESPONDENT E:** Yes, I started out at CNN.com as an associate producer and now I'm here.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What's your definition of news?

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, news is a low-end term. I...I think news is what's important to people, you know, news is just something you know, it's something that, uh, you just gotta (*inaudible*). Yeah, that's what people are talking about, it's something that's relevant, that resonates with me right now.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, who determines what is newsworthy?

Appendix B (Continued)

**RESPONDENT E:** Um (*laughter*), it's usually a pretty big thing. It's really hard to get anybody to agree on that. So, the loudest voice wins on some occasions, or, you know, consensus, persuasion...there's all kinds of things that go into determining what makes news (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** What role would you say you play in the decision making process of content in your current position?

**RESPONDENT E:** I mean, I...my role...I kinda try to...I think we all together make decisions, and that's what makes our team really neat is that we all, you know, pitch in and help with the decision making process. I...I don't have anymore sway than anybody else does, I don't think, but I do try to offer my opinion when it's needed, and when it's not, I step back, because I also want to (*laughter*), you know, produce some of my own things, I don't wanna be, like, dominating everybody, so...

**INVESTIGATOR:** What's your title?

**RESPONDENT E:** I'm a senior associate producer.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Based on your experience or past experience, could you explain the traditional news selection in a typical broadcast operation?

**RESPONDENT E:** I mean, a typical broadcast operation...I've never worked in broadcast, I started with print journalism, so I'm kinda feeling my way through broadcast, um, but I think, you know, the typical scenario...an editor who has ideas and you have staffers who prompt their own ideas on the editors...okay. Um, and I think it's the same way here, but, you know, we are community oriented...we're accountable to the community, so we're thinking about, you know, what is really gonna get people engaged? What is gonna make one talk? And, I think that's good, because a lot of the stories that, you know, you would normally covered to be covered, we're thinking what really matters to people.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. How did the Internet change news gathering practices?

**RESPONDENT E:** There's just a lot more information, and...it's...you know,

## Appendix B (Continued)

everybody has a bigger stake in everything. People are more informed, and things travel faster. You know, it's not, like, Walter Cronkite speaking to you on TV at night, you know? Wow...it's all kinds of things.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What are the most common ways news is gathering from non-full-time CNN staff here at the network, in that this pertains more to the iReporters.

**RESPONDENT E:** I mean, it's...I mean, it's...you know, traditional...work in a traditional news outlet, you know, there's a lot of fact checking, and we do that too, and there's a lot of, you know, chasing down leads...this is hot, this is what the police scanner says, chase that ambulance, uh oh...earthquake, you know (*laughter*). Whatever is the issue du jour, we're on it. And so, there's a lot of...a lot of that. And, I mean, we're doing that too. I mean, iReporters are usually hot on the tail of that, and whatever people are interested in...if it's the earthquake, if it's the ambulance, we're gonna get a lot of that too.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh. How is it gathered? What's the process of gathering that content?

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, as far as user content?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, a lot of times, they're sending it to us, you know, we don't even have to ask for it, but we do try to get that request out there and get in front of the people's eyes, you know, get the assignment posted, get it visible...Twitter it, Facebook it, get it to where people actually see it. So, CNN obviously is one way they come to us, but we gotta...we gotta have that out there and let people know we're looking for it, and they've gotta know to send it to us.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Gotcha. So, what are the benefits or drawbacks of the process?

**RESPONDENT E:** Uh...the benefit is that people are sending us stuff that, you know, that we're able to, kind of, gather information and allow a community to paint the picture together and tell the story together. Um, I guess the drawback, or maybe the

## Appendix B (Continued)

caveat, is that we need to, um, people have to send it to us. I mean, there's no control, I mean, there's good and bad. So, you know, we're relying on people to send us stuff, you know, so we're...you know, it's a bit of a leap of faith whenever you put an assignment out there, but you know what people are gonna do, and we have a general idea of behavior, and so, you know, we do our best to postulate what's going to happen.

**INVESTIGATOR:** How do they send in their reports, generally?

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, usually they send them in on iReport.com. They'll upload it there, a video or photo, they can e-mail it from their cell phones, as well,

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, okay. So, explain what iReport is.

**RESPONDENT E:** iReport or iReport.com?

**INVESTIGATOR:** iReport...well, no...is there a difference?

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Well, iReport being the initiative, and iReport.com being the site for the community, but I think he's looking for what it means to you...what is iReport, period?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh, yeah.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT E:** Uh huh. Yeah, so, iReport is a medium by which we get initiatives to get citizens to share their stories, um, for CNN and, uh, citizens to tell stories together, you know, sort of personal...on a personal level.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What's the difference between the content found on iReport, as opposed to traditionally gathered news on CNN or CNN.com?

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** The content that you see on iReport, at least initially, is unvetted, it's whatever they wanna send. You know, it could be anything. Um, we've had content, and some of it gets a CNN stamp or gets approved for use, but whatever you see there, is something that somebody sent us.

Appendix B (Continued)

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** On iReport.com...

**RESPONDENT E:** ...on iReport.com.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Right, right.

**RESPONDENT E:** Uh huh.

**INVESTIGATOR:** In terms of the production process, would there be any differences that you would know?

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, well, I mean...it becomes, you know...when something is approved, it can be used on CNN. So, this to me...it kind of reminded my of, you know, using a site like Flickr, and also using those sites where you download images, like, (*inaudible*). It's sort of a hybrid of those two. So, people upload stuff, and it's also a vehicle for us to download it and use it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. How do you determine an iReport submission has news value?

**RESPONDENT E:** It's so subjective. I mean, I...a lot of it depends on what I'm looking for at that moment, you know? Um, you know, if I'm kinda looking for ideas about what we like would and what we need. And, with iReport, anybody...any producer can go on there, and whatever project they're working on, they can look for content that appeals to them or that they need. Um, and I'm looking for content I can use for a purpose, you know? And, that's why I may look at something, and I may go, oh, that's really cool, and I wasn't expecting that, you know? Or, you know, I may see something and, hey, that's really neat. It has great production value. It tells a story. It tells a human story. I think what really the whole thing that, sort of, draws me into a particular story is that it resonates...it has human value. You know, the big question we're always asking whenever we get any project is, what's the story here? What are we trying to tell? Right? And, that's the same thing I think that, like...I think iReport is something that speaks to some level of humanity...or shows us something cool.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Who decides if an iReport submission is used on air or on CNN.com?



## Appendix B (Continued)

**RESPONDENT E:** I don't know if there's any one person that does. Um, it's a community effort, and we're trying to make it that as much as possible. Um, I mean, personally for use, for example, and then shop it around and whether other people around the networks see it. I encourage them to look at it. We all have our favorite iReports, and we'll let people know about them, and they can decide whether they wanna use it or not. And, I can decide if I'm gonna use something in whatever, you know, my sphere of influences that I control.

**INVESTIGATOR:** And, who is "they?"

**RESPONDENT E:** "They" is anyone around the network. It's producers. It's TV shows. Um, other producers. It's CNN.com. You know, I can use it...if I'm working on a project, I may use it for what I'm doing. You know, whoever wants to use it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a process for monitoring the content in iReport.com? And, what is the process?

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, we do have, um...it's a post-monitored system, so content is, um, moderated on a minimalist level to make sure it's not super offensive and disgusting, and if so, it's removed. But, I mean, for the most part, it's whatever people wanna say, you know? We're not monitoring it. We're not, you know...you know, playing scary monster there, you know? We just wanna keep a vibrant conversation going on the site.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. And, what's the process you use to assure that iReport content that's used either on CNN.com or broadcast is accurate?

**RESPONDENT E:** Well, it's just like any other content. I mean, you know, if we get a lot, be it a feed or whatever, or if we get a wire from anything, we're gonna need to verify it. Any source that we talk to, we have to verify. So, we treat this like we would any other source material. That's all it is. We need to check on it. We need to verify it. We need to use it, and we need to triangulate it with things other people are saying. So, if an iReporter sends an eyewitness account, that's an eyewitness account. We would treat that just like I had talked to an eyewitness. You know, we treat that as exactly

## Appendix B (Continued)

what it is. It's somebody who sent a picture who had a story. So, we check to see that their story matches what other reports are saying or what other people are saying, and what we know about that area. And, it's just, you know, another way of talking to people.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Is there a focus on developing relationships with your community members of regular content contributors, and if so, why is that so important?

**RESPONDENT E:** It's very important because, I mean, a lot of the reasons... a lot of what keeps people contributing is because we have a personal relationship. I have people, like, who know... they know if they send me something, I'm going to, at least, take a look at it and give them feedback or pass it onto somebody else if I'm too busy. But, they know if, like, by communicating with me, they're gonna have a better chance of having their content seen, so they communicate with me. And, I communicate with them because they're gonna send me good content, so it's a good relationship that we develop. But, we do have David out there doing full time community management, and he deals with some of the larger issues that the community is facing and that they are able to use another conduit to talk about the issues that they have that are going on. We try to do what we can to address them. And, we have a roundtable each week where they can talk to us, and we try to take action. We make a conscious effort to listen to what they say and implement their ideas. Um, the iReport photo club was an idea they suggested. (*Inaudible*) suggested it, so we started it, you know? They give us an idea, and we try to carry it out as best as we can.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Is there a downside to allowing the public to share media with CNN?

**RESPONDENT E:** Is there a downside to what?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a downside to allowing the public to share content or media with CNN?

**RESPONDENT E:** I can't see how it would be. I don't really... I mean, why not, you know? People are gonna do it anyway. Why don't we get in on it? Why don't we communicate with people? Why would we want to close ourselves off from more information?

## Appendix B (Continued)

It seems counterintuitive to a news organization wanting to do that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What factors prevent iReport submissions from being used by CNN?

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, I mean...it's just like any other material. I mean, we're gonna look at a content piece and go, is the production value okay for us to use? Is it accurate? Does it match, you know, the information we have about this? To me, it's no different than anything else. We're gonna vet it, and we're gonna go, does this jive and is it something that's gonna add to the story? I mean, how is this going to enhance storytelling? It's kinda a back and forth, um, relationship that we have with the community.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Does the public have any role in deciding what iReports are or (***cell phone interference***) will be used by CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT E:** Does the iReport community?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, does the public...

**RESPONDENT E:** The public?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, does the public have any role so that...I mean, that could be the iReport community, but what role do non-CNN employees have in, you know, getting content on the broadcast network or on the Internet?

**RESPONDENT E:** Well, it's interesting. We have, um, on the site itself, we have different ways to surface content. We have, you know, a filter for on CNN, but we also have a most viewed, most common filter. So, we are using...the amount of views that stuff that gets and the amount of conversation is, a lot of times, the main, or one of the main factors we use in determining, um, whether something is used. I mean, for me, seeing the number of views, seeing the amount of community engagement is essential in choosing what we use and what we decide to promote. If something is not getting a lot of clicks and not getting a lot of comments, or it's not just very interesting, we're definitely gonna think twice about something. So, I think, you know, community

## Appendix B (Continued)

engagement is important...it's probably the main thing, because the community is the audience. Like, I don't necessarily see the audience and the community as being something that separate. I mean, they are a little separate, but, you know, people are people.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh. Does iReport present a significant change in the way news is gathered?

**RESPONDENT E:** (*Heavy sigh*). That's kind of an interesting question. I...don't always feel like that. One on hand, we...I think it is a revolutionary idea for a news organization to open up a Web site and ask people to share content. I don't see any other news network doing that, and certainly none of them are doing it quite as well as us, and that's just reality. But, um, I (*cell phone interference*). Interestingly, I think it's just another way to get, um, viewpoints and ideas, you know? I just don't see it being...news has always been about conversation in community. You know, like how a paper, you know, you try to be the reporters to the editor, you know. We try...it's just a way of doing better. That's how I see it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Anything else you'd like to add? Any other questions that...

**RESPONDENT E:** I think that was pretty thorough analysis. Is there anything else?

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** What I would like you to talk about or like her to talk to you about is her experience in talking about the Iran desk, because, Nicole actually sat on the Iran desk during the breaking news, and just talked to iReporters from there. You're from Tehran, is that right?

**RESPONDENT E:** Um, my dad is, from (*inaudible*). Yeah, I was, um...that was an interesting experience, something I probably won't forget. What was interesting with that scenario is, we had...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Well, first, let's (*inaudible*), you know about the Iran desk, right, when you're watching the news coverage during then? They actually had a separate desk set up in the news room.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** So, during the shows on daytime, they would have people

## Appendix B (Continued)

who were just...usually what you were doing, they were like...

**RESPONDENT E:** Yeah, so they had, um...so, just for a little background, so when stuff started happening in Iran, they decide, okay, let's make a desk, let's bring people from all over the company and put them in this one area together so they can all communicate. So, they had people from international, some people from all over different places, people that spoke Farsi, um, I was surprised with how many people there are...and then, they brought me in from iReport. They decided, let's have a full time person doing iReport. They had some people who were scanning YouTube, some people who were scanning, you know, whatever. So, I was the iReport person, and it was my job to monitor the iReports that were coming in. So, I sat up there. I had a desk and I...my job was to look through it all day. All day was looking through them, and I was following up on everything that looked good to me, and you know, I was making a lot of phone calls. And, as you know, it was very difficult to get information out. There were no media really in there, and nothing coming out. Communication was being hampered and limited, so it was very challenging. I would send e-mails to people, that were a bit at risk sometimes, to share this information, um, and try to call them on the phone and e-mail, and sometimes it was hard to get in touch with them. And, you know, it was hard to verify things, what they send, because there was no...there wasn't like a standard of information, so a triangulation came into play. That was, again, using what we know, using what other people are saying, what our experts know, people that are there, people who have been there, um, just using a variety of information, and using that gut instinct, that sort of journalistic sense, like, what...does this make sense? Does this jive?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh. In that situation, did the procedures for vetting content change at all, being that it was hard to confirm certain things?

**RESPONDENT E:** I think I was definitely putting out some extra caution flags for certain things. You know, the same process, but just taking a little extra time to run this by various people who have experience with that. And, being very careful about names. I mean, even if the iReporter wanted their name

Appendix B (Continued)

used, we wouldn't use it. Um, just making sure we didn't put people at risk, and advising people of the risks they were undertaking.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** And, then, I think what she's saying is that, as far as what was used on television, if it was (*inaudible*) (*loud movement in room*), day, then it was not...

**RESPONDENT E:** Although...well what's important, actually with the YouTube stuff, they were saying it was unverified, but with the CNN stuff, we actually made an effort to verify, and that's what was unique about it. You know, this was an opportunity to actually verify content that we had, and that was unique.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT E:** But, with a lot of the YouTube stuff, it was, um, unverified. But, they did (*inaudible*). CNN's big about that, like...if we come in here having done it, they will say, then that came from YouTube, or this is unverified. Or (*laughter*)...

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** (*Laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** It (*inaudible*) giving in. It's specifically referenced, if it would have went through the vetting process, the CNN standard of vetting.

**RESPONDENT E:** Yeah, I mean, they were trying to make transparent, like the, you know, you know, we're not sure about everything, but to the best of our ability.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Very good. Thank you so much.

**RESPONDENT E:** Thank you.

(*Muffled noise*).

(*AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY.*)

(*Inaudibles due to intermittent low volume, loud muffled noise or cell phone interference.*)

**END OF AUDIO.**

Appendix B (Continued)

**Respondent F**  
**9-2-09**

Amani Channel:	Primary Investigator ("INVESTIGATOR")
Respondent:	F ("RESPONDENT F")

*(Muffled noise).*

*(Inaudible).*

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, how long have you worked in news and what's your experience?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, I've worked in news...throughout college? I need a respondent number or whatever.

**INVESTIGATOR:** This is F. Okay. Respondent F.

**RESPONDENT F:** Okay. So, um, CNN was actually my first job after college. I had an internship here, but I worked on newspapers all throughout college. So, I'd say, all together, about seven years.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what's your definition of news?

**RESPONDENT F:** My definition of news? Um, whatever is happening in the world that, um...that's a tough question. Um, whatever is happening in the world that's affecting people, and that people might be interested in.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Who determines what is newsworthy?

**RESPONDENT F:** Who determines? Um, hmm...I guess people do. I'm realizing that more and more working here, um, on the iReport team. I mean, obviously, like, people who work in the news, um, you know, say this is news or whatever, but, it's really what everyday people living their lives...what affects them. That determines what news is.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Who determines what is news? Uh...I just asked that one. What role would you say you play in the decision making in your current position?

## Appendix B (Continued)

**RESPONDENT F:** The decision making of what?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Of content. What role would you say you play in the decision making process of the content? What happens to content in your current position?

**RESPONDENT F:** So, um, so you mean, like, what role do I play in the iReport content making that comes to air and stuff like that?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, and just, what's your role, yeah?

**RESPONDENT F:** I play a pretty big role, in terms of the question, what is news? Basically, I come in every morning and look through the iReports we receive, and then I go to an editorial meeting where we talk what each section has to talk about what's news and what's not. And, I bring the perspective from iReporters, here's what people are talking about. Here's what people are experiencing and sending pictures of. Um, and then, of course, based on that, and based on what CNN is interested in, I help get things to air on CNN or CNN.com.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What's your title?

**RESPONDENT F:** Uh, associate producer.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what are your daily functions, aside from the morning meeting?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, one thing I do is, uh, every morning I come in, I decide what is our T-2 on CNN.com, and that's one of the links on the right hand side. That pretty much generates a lot of our side traffic. Also, if I see really interesting iReports, I'll go out and vet, um, I don't do that as much as some of the other team members. I tend to work on longer term projects and also, kind of, help guide the team on what everyone else is working on.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Based on your past experience, could you explain the traditional news selection process? The question is in a typical broadcast room, but just based on your experience, what would that be?

**RESPONDENT F:** Can you repeat that again?



## Appendix B (Continued)

**INVESTIGATOR:** Based on your past experience, can you explain the traditional news selection process or how news is selected in a traditional...

**RESPONDENT F:** Yeah, okay. I guess, I mean, I don't have much experience outside of iReport, but in working at a school newspaper and then also when I interned here, I worked in the sidetrack department, and it seemed I would begin my day looking at what other news outlets were reporting on, and seeing, like, what around the world what was newsworthy, and then, our coverage would go from there. But this, it's more what people are talking about, what people are seeing, is what determines how our day is gonna go, in terms of news coverage.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. How has the Internet changed news gathering?

**RESPONDENT F:** Well, it's changed it significantly. News is around the clock now. Like, there's no...there's no...people in the news never sleep. You have to have around the clock coverage. People expect it to be up to the minute with news stories. And then, in terms of citizen journalism, it enables people to report on news so much quicker, like immediately after it happens to them.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What are the most common ways news is gathered from non-full-time CNN staff?

**RESPONDENT F:** So, from iReporters? Okay. The most common way? Well, obviously when people see news, they either take a photo or video of what they see and then they send it to iReport.com, and usually, with, kind of, a text blurb explaining what they've seen. And, at that point, that's when we keep an eye on the site. And, if we see some breaking news or something really interesting...it doesn't have to be breaking news, it could be a flood piece, or like a human interest story...we reach out to them and call them. At that time, we go through a vetting process where we ask them all sorts of details and, basically, interview them like you would interview anyone else in the news, any other expert, um, and talk about what they've experienced. And from there, we can put their photos or videos on CNN.com or on CNN TV and, basically, that's how a regular person makes it onto the

## Appendix B (Continued)

news.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What are the benefits or drawbacks to that process?

**RESPONDENT F:** It can be a little time consuming from the moment of when the person experiences the news until when we contact news, depending on what time of day it is. Our team is not staffed around the clock, which is why we try so hard to get CNN as a whole really interested in iReports, and we train all the time to reach out, because obviously, just the eight of us can't always be contacting all the people we hear from. And then, of course, if it's a big news event, we got thousands and thousands of iReports, and we couldn't reach out to everyone. So, um, some of that stuff came in, like, got buried, and it's just, like, you know, some of the biggest news and it's hard to, like, figure out what the really, really great stuff is, because people are sending in so much.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Do you have any specific examples?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, the inauguration (*laughter*) is a big one. Like, um, basically, with the inauguration, you know, there are millions of people that are...the first things we got were cell phone photos that were kind of blurry of the crowd. And then, people will spend a really long time and put together a brilliant piece of all this video footage and they would get it to us a day later, and so, the cell phone piece made it on air, while the video piece necessarily didn't.

**WOMAN'S VOICE:** Maybe, um, with the death of Michael Jackson?

**RESPONDENT F:** That's another thing, when people die, we often ask if people have met them and whatever, and we get some amazing stories, and some of the stories when people die, including Michael Jackson, come a little later. You get the immediate reaction from people you know, like, oh my gosh, I can't believe he's dead. But, it was literally days later we got stories about this girl who rode next to him on the Jumbo ride at Disney World, and she sent a photo of that. So, fortunately, that story went on for such a long time, that we were able to get those stories in the news, as well.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay, cool. Explain what iReport is.

## Appendix B (Continued)

**RESPONDENT F:** iReport is a news gathering site that enables CNN to reach everyday people for everyday people to have a voice through CNN.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What is the difference between content found on iReport compared to traditionally gathered news that's featured on CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, basically, content on iReport is sent to us by people, and they are, um...they are sending their own original content, their own original stories. The difference between that and, like, finding a source for a story and interviewing them is that, if we're interviewing somebody, we're, like, doing the work. We're asking them for the information. On iReport, it's, um...people are sending their stories to us and sending their stories to us, and telling us what's newsworthy, versus us searching for a story we think is newsworthy.

**INVESTIGATOR:** How do you determine if a submission has value?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, let me think. I don't know...I'm feeling really...I mean, there's obviously, um, breaking news that, you, um...there's some big event that we know is going on in the news room, and we're always keeping an eye out for that. If there's ever severe weather or an explosion somewhere, we're always looking for iReports. But then, the sides of life stories are a little more difficult to determine if they're newsworthy or not. Really, we look for really solid content, like, stories that are really well edited and told, and just interesting in general and something we haven't seen. If it's a story that we've seen and we have no idea what's going on, then, probably, your average person doesn't know it's going on either.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Who decides if an iReport submission is used on air or on CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, we do as a team. Um, basically, when we go out and vet something, we're giving an iReport the possibility to be used on air or on TV, and then it's usually up to a CNN producer whether they're interested in that content. So, once it's been vetted and has the green light to be used on any show, and individual show producers look at that content, and if they think they wanna put it on TV, they're totally welcome to. Um, also we, on the iReport team, get to

## Appendix B (Continued)

determine what goes on CNN.com because we can put those links up on the page and put in the stories.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what is the process of pitching a story to a producer? Is it a challenge?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, not really. We on the iReport team have the benefit of being really creative, and a lot of times, stories start with an assignment on iReport.com, or we'll ask people to share their stories about a certain topic, and those topics usually turn into, um, stories that we write for CNN.com. Basically, when we have an idea for that, it usually winds up being discussed during a brainstorming session with the iReport team, and we all talk about whether it's a good idea or not. And, after that, we, you know...one of us writes the story or produces the video piece or whatever, and then, just like any other story, it would be pitched to the section producers to CNN.com. We'd say, we've got this great story about whatever, and it makes it to the site.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What about broadcast?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, we don't produce material for broadcast, but once we've approved an iReport for TV, um, we send it out through this mailing list and say, you can use this, and generally from there, the TV producers may turn it into a package or something bigger. I don't work on the TV side so I don't know all of the details.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Okay. Is there a process to monitoring content on iReport?

**RESPONDENT F:** To monitoring...what do you mean?

**INVESTIGATOR:** To monitoring...

**RESPONDENT F:** Like...

**INVESTIGATOR:** I mean (*inaudible*), with the...I mean, you guys are obviously watching the content...

**RESPONDENT F:** Uh huh.

**INVESTIGATOR:** ...I mean, is there certain content that is rejected? What's

## Appendix B (Continued)

the...

**RESPONDENT F:** Uh huh. So, everything that's sent to the site automatically goes straight onto the site. We do have tools for the community to be able to flag an item if it's, you know, profane or whatever. And, uh, you know, we keep a close eye on it, but it's hands off from our end, and it's worked really well having the community being in charge of letting us know if something's wrong, or whatever.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Describe the process that's used to ensure that iReport submissions, used for either broadcast or on the Web site, CNN.com, that the content is accurate.

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, so to ensure the content is accurate, once we see an iReport that we're interested in on the site, I mentioned that we call the submitter, and when we call them, we go through a certain number of questions where we ask them their name, and just basic details, when it was taken, what it was like. Um, the number one thing we want to ensure is that the content belongs to them, and usually, just by talking to them and getting the details and their descriptions of what the experience was like we can tell if they're legit. We also have some other tools where we can bring a photo into PhotoShop and see when a photo got taken or what kind of camera it was taken with, so we can add those extra details. Um, and, if it's...for some...usually we have pretty good judgment. If there's a weather story or an international story that we're a little unsure about, we'll send that along to the international team and the weather team for their expertise, and that's been really helpful, especially in situations where people say they see a tornado or whatever, the weather team will say, this is actually...there wasn't a tornado in that area or whatever. So...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Is there a focus on developing relationships with the iReport community, those who submit content regularly, why is that important, and is that the case?

**RESPONDENT F:** Yeah, there's definitely a focus. I know we have a community manager, a member on our team, who is really focused on the community and resolving any conflicts in the community. He's also a big part of reaching out to members of the community and encouraging people to submit iReports

## Appendix B (Continued)

again. Um, something that we do on a regular basis is that we have assignments that are lighthearted and fun for the community because people aren't always gonna be experiencing breaking news, so the way to keep people active on the site is by having these fun assignments they can participate in and share their stories in or whatever. That way, when they do experience breaking news, they'll be right in as a part of the community and very familiar with the process.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Do you have an example of one of the fun, kind of...

**RESPONDENT F:** Yeah, um, we, um...let's see...well, we have an assignment called Photo Club, it's a biweekly assignment, and we come up with a new topic every week. Um, last week was horizons, and we did before and after shots, and those always turn into a fun, interactive of all these great photos that we receive. And, people really like it...we have so many photographers on the site. Um, we've also had...our fun assignments have been some of our most successful. We had a creative cubicles assignment, and I think that was our biggest traffic day. People loved that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Hmm. Okay. Are there downsides to allowing the public to share their media? Is there a downside?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, I guess if there's a downside, it's that there are people out there who are trying to trick CNN or whatever. We've been really lucky for the most part, and I think the few downsides that there are really benefits, outweighs, like...every day you get people thanking you for being able to tell their story and whatever, so...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What factors prevent an iReport submission from being used by CNN.com or on air?

**RESPONDENT F:** What prevents it?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, if it's been approved for use?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh, that's not part of the question (*laughter*).

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**RESPONDENT F:** (*Laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** What would prevent an iReport submission from...

**RESPONDENT F:** Well, obviously, some things just might not be newsworthy, and are put in, like, whether, um, whether it's, you know, a story about their kid going to school, that's not really, you know, I mean, kind of the big assignment we're doing. Or, um if the content is not original, it will never make it onto CNN. Um, very...well, most everything that is approved for CNN makes it onto CNN.com or CNN TV in some way. Um, but yeah, just the...not everything makes it to TV.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Does the public have a role in deciding what iReports make air?

**RESPONDENT F:** Um, to an extent. We definitely...if an iReport is really popular on the site, it definitely gets out attention, so it has a much greater chance being vetted and being approved for CNN. Um, people also have done some really creative things where they've, kind of, mimicked the assignments we've done on the site and have come up with their own assignments. Um, there was one, um, our promotions team used to hand out iReport for CNN shirts, and so, one of our iReporters said, anybody who has one of these shirts, I want you to go stand in front of a landmark where you live and then send in your picture. And, he compiled them all together into a photo gallery, so it's almost, like, he's doing our...you know, something we would do. We would send out an assignment and produce it into content. So, that typically gets our attention for going that far, so we, um...what he's done...we've been paying attention and are probably gonna turn that into a blog post or something fun for CNN.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Does iReport represent a significant change in the way news is gathered?

**RESPONDENT F:** I think so, it, um, it makes, um...I think we've changed a lot of perceptions among people who work at CNN, and we're also getting the attention of people, um, in other news outlets, and just teaching them that, um, regular people do have very interesting stories and can be journalists on their own. Just because they may not be a professional journalist

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doesn't mean that they can't take great pictures and can't tell amazing stories. And, I think in addition, um...citizen journalism, when it first started, was just focused on breaking news, and by us, like, having different kind of assignments out there that are more creative, it kind of proves that everyday people in just their regular lives can be interesting too.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Very good. Is there anything else I haven't asked you?

**RESPONDENT F:** I don't think so (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** All right.

**RESPONDENT F:** Thank you for taking the time.

*(Muffled noise)*.

***(AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY.)***

***(Inaudibles due to intermittent low volume, loud muffled noise or cell phone interference.)***

***END OF AUDIO.***



Appendix B (Continued)

**Respondent G**  
**9-18-09**

Amani Channel:	Primary Investigator ("INVESTIGATOR")
Respondent:	G ("RESPONDENT G")

**(AUDIO STARTS ABRUPTLY.)**

**(Muffled noise).**

**(Inaudible).**

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, we're talking to Participant G , and I just want to have you open any questions so you can just elaborate or expound or share your thoughts, just whatever you think. So, to start off with, how long have you worked in news and what's your experience?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, I've been here for 4 ½ years, at CNN. I started off as the **(inaudible)**, which is like the entry level **(loud movement in room) (inaudible)**, and ended up on the editorial side, eventually, up in the main news room, TV and then .com Live down here, and then, iReport after that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, how long have you been at iReport?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, iReport, just over a year.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what is your definition of news?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, anything that affects people, anything that's going on that's, um, like out of the ordinary, too. Um, it has a big effect on the world, both national and international, you know, there's different versions of it **(laughter)**.

**INVESTIGATOR:** **(Laughter)**. Yeah. So, who determines what is newsworthy?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, in general or here?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Just, yeah. What are your thoughts on it?

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**RESPONDENT G:** Well, um, it's any number of people, but you're talking about what it is that determines it?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yes, who determines what is newsworthy?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, well, in some cases, the viewer will determine it, because, you know, you want to interest them. And, viewers are iReporters too, so it kind of works hand-in-hand, the fact that iReporters are suggesting what they want to be news, you know, in their iReporters. And, of course, there are lots of people here at CNN and at other news organizations that, you know, are looking at what stories they're gonna run every day, and of course, how many people and how it's gonna affect people. Of course, they always take that into consideration.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What role would you say you play in the decision-making process of content here in composition?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, well, I'm vetting a lot of iReports, so sort of offering them up to our colleagues at TV, so I'm putting it out there for them to use. And, to the extent we can tell people on CNN.com, um what we would like to see on the site, especially as the (*inaudible*) site. Um, and, so, the other day, I offered it up to people, but they can take it or leave it (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** You're offering up, what is that process?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, I'm vetting iReports and, um, so, what is approved for use, I let everyone know. And, of course, I'm floating in the back of my head can CNN use this? Can CNN.com use this? You know, does this seem like something, from what I've seen, they would wanna do, wanna run, you know, put stuff on their site or on TV? So (*cell phone interference*) (*inaudible*), once I approve it, I tell them, you know, the people at TV, the people at CNN.com, around the organization, like, here's this great story, this great video, you know, you should be using this for your purposes, whatever it is, TV or on the Web.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What would you say is, I don't know, the percentage rate or success rate of actually pitching? What does it seem like producers or those who have control over CNN.com or CNN

Appendix B (Continued)

broadcast are interested in? What kind of content are they looking for? Or, what do they end up accepting from you or the team you're on?

**RESPONDENT G:** Well, um, anything that's really reflecting what their news story or their news angle for the day is, if you wanna...like today, um they're talking a little bit about the G20 protest; they're talking about Iran nuclear stuff. So, anything that's big, you know, any of those stories. And, as long as we...as long as it's good content, you know, that would be something they would probably go for. But then, we are looking for stories that iReporters are giving us that may not be out there, that may not be on the radar of CNN, and hopefully, we'll get them to the store. You know, if it's good content, if it's quality stuff and a really good story, we'll push for it and try to get it on *(cell phone interference)*. I would say when we really, you know, get people, uh, get people's attention about something, we're usually able to get it on, at least on CNN.com and CNN TV. If we believe in the story, you know, if we really push for it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, it's like pitching, then?

**RESPONDENT G:** Right, right.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, based on your past experience, I guess prior to working in the news department, explain the traditional news process in a traditional broadcast operation or news room.

**RESPONDENT G:** So, explain how traditionally it works?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Uh huh.

**RESPONDENT G:** Just, uh, *(inaudible)*.com?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, just based on your experience. Can you explain how, I guess in a traditional broadcast operation or .com, whatever, your experiences, how is the news chosen or selected?

**RESPONDENT G:** Well, a big part of it is every morning they have meetings, and they have a meeting that is for, uh, just for U.S. TV, and they have one for international TV, and they have one up here for .com, and it goes over, like, towards the day, and

## Appendix B (Continued)

various people will come up...the various parts of .com, and say, here's what we're following today. Then, it's also presented up, and you know, here's what we have and here are the top stories people are following, you know, within the organization. You can offer it up. And so, at that point, they, sort of, say okay, here's something that's possible. And, in the case with CNN.com, it's a T-1, you know? And, there are several of those during the day. I think unless there's, like, one overriding story, then that's usually the one story, but, it's several things. So, they put, like, a dozen or so if possible stories that could tell a story on CNN.com, and of course, there's T-2's other stories out there. But, as far as, like, what the top stories are gonna be (**cell phone interference**), they put them out as the day goes on, they see, okay, this story might be just in this, you know, so...they change out what the top story will be quite a bit.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, how has the Internet changed news gathering practices?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, how has it changed? Um, it definitely...with people being able to interact with CNN.com...just prior to iReport, you know, people would send e-mails, comments, you know. For a while, they were posting people's e-mail responses to things on the site, like, reaction articles, and it sort of evolved into iReport, I guess. And, I think at one point they had iReport and e-mails side-by-side, and it was getting more and more to iReport, but there obviously are viewer, um, reader comments. So, before that, um, it was pretty rare...I guess maybe, like, people could call like a call-in show, they would have that, but that's pretty much the only outlet I can think of where, um, viewers could respond and give their thoughts on things, and sort of, the viewer response to a story for them to comment on another part of the story. A lot of times, when there's something really controversial in the news, people want to give their opinion. That is a new part of the whole, um, storyline, I guess you'd call it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What about just the technology being able to allow users to share their content? Has (**inaudible**) played a role in that, as well?

**RESPONDENT G:** Oh yeah. Anybody can pickup a camera, um, you know, send some pictures, send some video, and anyone who is in

## Appendix B (Continued)

there when the news is happening can do that. Of course, you probably heard already, one of the best examples, the shooting a couple years ago where, you know, the guy had the camera and he didn't know what he was taking at the time, but he heard gunshots, you know. And so, um, that became a huge part of that story. So, as I say, anybody has the technology to upload a video or upload a picture. Anyone can potentially be making news or reporting the news.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what is the most common way news is gathered from non-full-time CNN staff?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, sorry...

**INVESTIGATOR:** What is the most common way news is gathered from non-full-time CNN staff?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, you mean, like, iReports or (*inaudible*) (*laughter*). Okay. All right. Well, the most common way, through iReport, is they will upload their story on the site. And, we go through the site every day and we see, like, what is better, sort of go along with what people wanna hear, what the news is that's, sort of, of the day, and being what news is not of the day. It may be they're telling us we should be getting out there. So, um, that's...they post it up on the site. We call them, e-mail them, we verify it, we get the whole story, we get as much information as we can. Um, if it seems to be verified and everyone's satisfied, then an iReport goes up on CNN.com, and we try to get more attention on CNN TV or CNN.com with that story, um, on a case-by-case basis, but, yeah.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what are the benefits or the drawbacks of the whole process?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, it's definitely a lot, as far as really getting to report things that you probably never would have gotten to our attention, you know, through iReport. Um, viewpoints on things that may not have been able to get out there, you know? Um, different angles, things that, there may not be a CNN camera crew out there to report or, you know? Um, I just thought of another one...there was this fire in Australia that took place, a bunch of wildfires and brush fires, I think it

Appendix B (Continued)

was back in the winter, and, um (*cell phone interference*), this man was going through this devastated neighborhood, and he was there in his house filming this, you know? I don't think there's any way that would have been documented at all. This guy was in that neighborhood and he lives there. So, you know, people seeing these things actually happening through them. I don't think we could have really had that before all this technology, so...and, um, you know, that's a good example.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Any drawbacks or any challenges?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, I mean, um...I would say a drawback or challenge to iReport, and it continues every day, it seems like there's more and more people realizing the value of iReport, the value of citizen journalism. So, it's less of a challenge every day. Starting out, you know, it's hard to convince people of the average guy or woman out there who is sending this video or sending this picture is newsworthy, it's real journalism, and we know it's an uphill battle since we started, you know, getting people to understand that. And every day, it gets easier, I guess, to let people understand that. But, I don't know, the process isn't, I wouldn't say...I wouldn't call it a drawback (*laughter*). I can't think of anything right now.

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*). So, explain what iReport is. What's your definition? What would be your explanation?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, the definition is just, um, the news follows people who...I mean, the CNN viewer, and in most cases, I mean, it (*inaudible*) for CNN (*laughter*). So, it's...the viewer is, um sending their news, news that happens to them, and sharing their views on what happens in the news, as well. And, um, you know, seeing somewhere that no one would know to find news, then their news is there. Um, it's great to see a lot of iReporters that, sort of, see, okay, something doesn't have to be the biggest story in the world for me to document it and share it on CNN and maybe get some mention and attention somewhere on CNN, you know? There are things happening all the time that could be considered interesting, newsworthy, a video.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What's the value of iReport?

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**RESPONDENT G:** Um, to me, the value is (*laughter*)...we've mentioned a lot of stuff.

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT G:** The value is, um, getting out that story that you don't have a chance always to get, or getting a different angle or a different take on a story that maybe we are talking about live that we may have not talked about that aspect of it. Um, and the fact that there are all these cameras and people out there, documenting it and adding to the story...just the number of them out there. Um, the G20 protest, just yesterday, we got so many pictures and videos of, um, the protests and everything that we would have gotten, like, one or two camera crews worth of images, but we wouldn't have gotten all the images...you can't get all the images. Now, we have a chance to get more aspects and more, you know, sides of the story.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, what's the difference between content found on iReport, as opposed to traditionally gathered news on CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT G:** So, what's the approach to news gathering?

**INVESTIGATOR:** Well, what's the difference? Like, if you went to the CNN Web site or broadcast and then go to iReport, how is the content different?

**RESPONDENT G:** Like, how you see it? Or, how the viewer just...

**INVESTIGATOR:** How it's presented or how it's, I don't know.

**RESPONDENT G:** Well, I know...well, I mean, if you go on CNN, um...if you go on CNN.com or CNN TV, you're gonna see this polished story or, you know, a video package, and just the raw...I mean, the iReport are edited into CNN content, so, but you just, sort of, get the raw iReports, you know? It's the raw stuff, in a lot of cases. And, some iReporters come out and do, like, full packages, just like if they were doing, you know, a TV package. So, um, but, so a lot of it is, you know, straight video, um, sound bites, they call it a net package, you know, where it's just people drawing their own story. So, it's a little more...it's a little more, just, getting the raw

## Appendix B (Continued)

stuff, you know? Yeah. Getting more, in some cases, you know...getting more information about a certain story. If there's some kind of natural disaster happening, or whatever it is, you might see a lot more detail on what it is. And, if you go to an assignment that has a lot of iReports, you're gonna see so many different, um, things that you wouldn't see...or, there's definitely not time to see or show, you know, on CNN or CNN.com, you know? There's not space for it...it's unlimited space with iReport (*laughter*). That's one part of the deal.

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*). So, how do you determine an iReport submission has news value?

**RESPONDENT G:** Uh, again, it's...it's partially where things are going that day; it's partially what we think is exciting or just being something that, you know, wow. Sometimes, it's just a visceral instant reaction. Sometimes, it's looking at it closer. So, it can depend, um, iReport or video to video or photo to photo. Um, but, um, you know, usually it's gotta be something that grabs you. A lot of times, you know, it's something that has that reaction. Um, something you can see, just from working here, from news experience, you know, sort of what you've seen being a big story in the past, you can, kind of, see it fitting in that role, I guess. But, it doesn't have to fit into a mold necessarily, either.

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT G:** You know what I mean.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Explain that, though. Explain how it might not necessarily fit into a mold.

**RESPONDENT G:** Yeah, I mean, um...gosh, here's one from yesterday I can think of. Some guys were washing windows on what was gonna be the world's biggest building. And it said, how do you wash the windows on that huge building? So, it showed, you know, the guys coming down, and they're, sort of, on lines and they were...and you could see it from a distance. And you know, maybe in a circus, you wouldn't think that would be exciting or great, but it was just a really well done video, just really good. And, it was, kind of, just a little slice of life angle on something, and it's gonna be a record



## Appendix B (Continued)

breaking thing. It's just, kind of, a small story about that big story, and maybe that wouldn't always be something that would immediately hit someone as being a CNN.com story, or whatever.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Hmm. I think we may have hit this one earlier. But, who decides if an iReport submission gets used on air or on CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT G:** Yeah, any number of different people. So, um, you know, we go to the editors of CNN.com. We go to the CNN TV people. We go to producers, you know. There are producers for different shows and for different sections of the site, too, you know, show biz and tech and all that. So, it's...lots of different people decide to put something on, and that's kind of a good thing. You're able to get your iReports to lots of different people and get lots of people's attention about something. And, if it seems like a story that really would, you know, connect with the tech audience or the living audience or anything like that, we'll go right to that specific person, you know. So, again, like, uh, I probably said, like iReports, case by case, it depends who you go to and who decides where it goes and everything.

**INVESTIGATOR:** I gotcha. So, is there a process for monitoring the content on iReport and what is it?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, I don't know...I mean, it's...day by day, you know, it's every morning or evening, depending on what your shift is, to go in and looking at what's on the site. If there's a really big assignment that we're really interested in or wanting to really push or it's in the news that day, then we'll really focus in on that assignment. But, uh, myself, I go on the site every day whenever I...unless I can't, I'll go on and look at everything, um, pretty much all the way back to what I left from the day before, and just give it a walk through, um, for monitoring the content, of course, and picking out things that would be worth going after, calling the person and getting more information.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, explain how...I haven't asked this question (*inaudible*)...so, when you go through the assignments, how does that work? How does the community know about the assignments? How do you share the assignments with the

## Appendix B (Continued)

community?

**RESPONDENT G:** There is an assignment desk page that has all of them. And then, there's the five top assignments, which are sort of, like, the newsiest or the projects that we're working on. They have this long-term project that's called "What If" that's, like, a seven-part series. So, it's different things that were doing. But, it may not be, like, breaking news, but it's a good project, sort of. So, um, one, there was a "What If" you went without driving, so people documented their day without taking their car and maybe taking the train or whatever, and they would take their camera and document it. So, things like that, you know? And, how we let people know, we'll put it on our Twitter updates book; we'll try to e-mail people directly. Anyone we...sometimes we'll say, like this day without driving, that sounds really like something so-and-so would be really interested in. So, I call him and say, hey, check this out, you know, it seems like something you would really like to do. And, myself and David Williams, we really keep tabs on the community and we've really gotten to know them and, you know, what their likes are, and what kind of stuff they like to do, and stuff. So, we try to keep in touch with them, um, encourage them to keep doing more and stuff.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, describe the process used to ensure iReport content used for broadcast and by CNN.com is accurate and meets news standards.

**RESPONDENT G:** Yeah, well, it's kinda a case-by-case thing. Um, so a really big story or really something that really requires a lot of careful deliberation, you know, we talk to the standards and practices people up here, if we have to. And so, we'll go by, not just us, we'll go through other people in the company, and they'll take a look at it. Um, and then there might be just a story on some guy sharing his opinion or, again, somebody biking to work or, you know, whatever, and, you know...you just wanna get the story and make sure everything is, you know, verified. But, it's, you know, you may not need to go through a fine toothed comb like you would for, I don't know, say, a crime occurring, something like that, something with more serious views. So, it's just a case-by-case thing.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, the case of maybe a more feature type of story versus

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hard news, is the vetting process a little different? Or, is it the same? Are you more diligent on breaking news, or how does that work?

**RESPONDENT G:** Yeah, yeah. Breaking news, we have to, um, really verify what's happening, and let's say...I'm trying to think of an example. The, um, something that happened, some kind of news story happening in Florida. Our southeast desk is up there, and we can see if the affiliates are aware of this story happening, or whatever. I guess that would be, um...so yeah, we verify with a lot of other people, depending on the, sort of, seriousness of it and how important it is for right now, like, it's happening right now, or, so yeah. And yes, you'll take that, versus, you know, someone just speaking on camera about something. You'll wanna know about the person. You'll wanna find out about them, but you know, you'll have to verify that it happened, if they're just saying something (*laughter*), you know?

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*). So, is there a focus on developing relationships with the community members who submit content regularly, and if so, why?

**RESPONDENT G:** (*Cell phone interference*). A focus on reaching out to...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah, and building relationships.

**RESPONDENT G:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. And, Dave Williams, like I said, and I try to focus...we're more community focused. I mean, everyone does reach out to the community, but yeah, we wanna, um, build relationships, we encourage them, they get, like, free iReport T-shirts and stuff like that, too. One of the things...we have some iReporters doing meet ups where they meet up with other iReporters in their community. They've pretty much done this on their own, and we just say, this is great. We're encouraging that. What's really a great thing is seeing iReporters give each other advice and help each other out. That's really cool. We have someone right now trying to ask for questions from the rest of the community to interview someone else. And, so much of the stuff we see completely just the iReporters came up with the idea and went out and did it. There are some collaboration ideas that iReporters have had, um...I'm trying to remember. There was, you know, something was just a photo

## Appendix B (Continued)

project...we have a lot of photographers that like to do stuff, focus in on a theme. And, there's one in Los Angeles, one in New York and one in Paris, France. And these three will do, like, a similar photo project together and, kind of, see photos from where they are. And, the great thing is seeing some of the different perspectives from different parts of the world that are coming out on maybe a similar story.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Do you see any downside to allowing the public to share their media with CNN?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, we monitor content really closely, so anything that would be a downside, we're careful not to put it up there. Other than that, you know, there's way more positives to it. You know, a lot of people share their stories, you know, so...

**INVESTIGATOR:** What factors prevent iReport submissions from being used by CNN?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, any number of things. You know, if the content may not be a newsworthy thing that day or may not be good quality. And, people will look for that potential...maybe it wasn't the best iReport this time, but next time, you can do something memorable. You can contact them and say, hey, this might be better if you made it shorter next time or...so, that's part of reaching out to the community. People have said, this person would do such a great iReport if they just changed this one thing. So, we'll contact them and say, great job, you know, um, it might reach CNN next time if you, maybe, shot it this way or with this angle, or things like that.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, does the public have a role in deciding what reports make air?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um, obviously there are iReporters and there is the public. But, um, there's a really good example just recently of t his guy, a group of guys, who shot...who sent up a balloon, not to space, but like to the edge of space? And, had a camera up there and shot some pictures of the earth from above. It was a couple hundred dollars or something it cost them. Um, that story got linked up outside of CNN and got something, like, 50,000 page views, just from that. And we...it just, kind of, slipped under our radar. We saw how many people were responding to this, and we went after it,

Appendix B (Continued)

and it became a story on CNN.com the next week, and that was completely the public, the Internet community saying, hey, this is really interesting, telling us we should do it (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*). How did it slip under your radar?

**RESPONDENT G:** You know, it's one of those things that can happen. It's hard to say. It could have come in at 3 in the morning. We could have been really busy that day. There's so much stuff that comes in. I really try hard to make sure I don't miss anything, but it happens (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, in that case, how did it finally get brought to your attention?

**RESPONDENT G:** We have different things, like, most viewed, most shared, most commented, and it was up there in most viewed.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So that algorithm brought it to your attention?

**RESPONDENT G:** Yeah, and, yeah, we're constantly working on algorithms, and we have the top iReporters of the week, I think it is. And, um, so there are different ways to highlight. I automatically just highlight them on the site, right there. And, of course, we work to use CNN to highlight stuff too.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Does iReport represent a significant change in the way news is gathered?

**RESPONDENT G:** Um...a significant change. I don't think so. Really, just taking citizen journalism, and so much of it was...it's not like iReport created it; it was already there. So, it's just giving more of a spotlight on it, you know? A bigger place for citizen journalists to have their say and tell their story.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Anything else I haven't asked you or that I haven't covered?

**RESPONDENT G:** (*Laughter*). I think we have covered...

**INVESTIGATOR:** All right, cool. Thanks so much.

**RESPONDENT G:** Yeah, thank you.

Appendix B (Continued)

*(Muffled noise).*

*(AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY.)*

*(Inaudibles due to intermittent low volume, loud muffled noise or cell phone interference.)*

*END OF AUDIO.*

Appendix B (Continued)

**Respondent H**  
**9-25-09**

Amani Channel:	Primary Investigator ("INVESTIGATOR")
Respondent:	H ("RESPONDENT H")

**(AUDIO STARTS ABRUPTLY.)**

**(Muffled noise).**

**(Inaudible).**

**INVESTIGATOR:** Participant I (*mistaken, should be Participant H*), we're not really identifying the people. So, how long have you worked in news and what is your experience?

**RESPONDENT H:** Okay, well, this is actually my first full-time job. I've been here about 10 months at CNN.com, and I've had internships and freelanced for a while, so anything from, like, working in a radio station, a TV station, a couple Web sites, magazines, a newspaper and freelance writing.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Gotcha. And, what would you say your experience...you know, how would you typify your experience working in news?

**RESPONDENT H:** Um, I guess it's been...well everywhere that I've, kind of, been has been experiencing a lot of change, so it's nothing that's been standard that every single news room has been going through. A reorganization of some sort, or they're rethinking how they're gonna attack the news, so it's never been static.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Yeah. What's your definition of news?

**RESPONDENT H:** Um, news. News is basically what's going on in the world. It's something that's going on around you and I, and it can be anything from events and things people are doing to slice of life, just, kind of, a day in the life of person X.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Who determines what is newsworthy?

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**RESPONDENT H:** Um, well, if you ask a journalism professor, he'll tell you there are some facets of newsworthy events, and you look at those sides of things.

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Inaudible*).

**RESPONDENT H:** Uh, gosh (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** (*Laughter*).

**RESPONDENT H:** Well, part of it is, like, um, prominence, if it has to deal with a certain person and how big are they. Timeliness is a huge, important thing. We don't necessarily want to report on things that are old, unless they are really important. Um, people also like to see conflict and some sort of story on that. Those are some examples of things that we look for when we're determining what's newsworthy.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, if it were an academic sort of definition, what's newsworthy?

**RESPONDENT H:** Sure. Well, part of it is the people, um, because, you know, if they're partaking of something that's big and we find out about it, then obviously, it gets blown up all over newspaper pages and on TV. And, obviously, journalists are also part of who determine what's news, cuz that's kind of their job.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What role would you say you play in the decision-making process of content in your current position?

**RESPONDENT H:** Okay, well, I'd say I have a pretty large role because I'm the only one here at night, so it's just me looking through the site and trying to come up with material, and then, pitching that to .com. So, if there's no headline up, well, that's, kind of, I'm bad. But basically, the biggest part of my job is to make sure we have representation on CNN.com in the evenings and also on weekends.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What's your title?

**RESPONDENT H:** Um, I'm an associate producer. There are four or so of us, but we all do similar tasks, and if you're the only person on the shift, you kinda do everything.



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**INVESTIGATOR:** So, based on your past experience, I know you had some internships and that sort of thing, can you explain the traditional news selection process? And, the question is in a broadcast news room, so whatever your background is. How does the process work from your understanding?

**RESPONDENT H:** Yeah, well part of it is, I get is, um, this is kind of silly, but paying attention to the news wires and seeing what's going on in other parts of the nation, because you can't be everywhere all the time. So, that's part of seeing what's going on, and, um, you know, some things are big enough that, obviously, you're gonna chase it down and try to localize it. And other times, you have...like, if you're a local paper, or (*inaudible*) paper, which is more of my background, then you have reporters out there who are scoping everything out being reporters, and they know what's going on in that specific scene. So partially, they're determining what gets selected. Like, somebody goes down to City Hall, and the mayor is taking a shower in this really luxurious place, and it's like, ooh, is this where all the city money is going (*laughter*)? That's, uh, the reporting is the big part of it, as well.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, how did the Internet change news gathering practices?

**RESPONDENT H:** I'd say a lot goes back in the day, but a...you basically had to just keep calling around to find various information, but now, so many municipalities and also government bodies have made information available online, so if I wanna go get a court document from the state of Washington, I can do that more easily online, instead of having to go, physically, to the court house. There are some places you have to do that, like, in Champagne, IL, where I went to school. You have to go to the court house and still know how to compute records, but a lot of places have made things available online. And also, I would say Google...it's kind of scary, cuz now, if you don't know something, someone will say, oh, just Google it. You know, not that that's reportable or anything, but it at least gives you a flavor for what you're getting yourself into and maybe some possible actions for how to chase a story down.

**INVESTIGATOR:** What is the most common way news is gathered from non-full-time CNN staff?

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**RESPONDENT H:** Okay. Um...do you mean from, like, freelancers or iReporters?

**INVESTIGATOR:** iReporters.

**RESPONDENT H:** iReporters, all right, because that would be two different things. Basically, on the iReport, we have a site where anybody can talk about any story, basically. And, they file their video and photo and text, and it hits the site. It's not filtered, although we do have several moderation mechanisms too. And basically, that's it. The site is the receptacle for that person's story. So, in terms of gathering, it's pretty simple.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What are the benefits or drawbacks to that process?

**RESPONDENT H:** Um, well...not everything is gonna be Uber-newsworthy, like, someone is sending in a photo of their dog. I mean, they're more than welcome to do that, but that's not gonna make, um, you know, CNN TV or anything, unless it's like a five-legged dog, which that totally was a story...not from iReport (*laughter*).

**INVESTIGATOR:** I heard of that one.

**RESPONDENT H:** (*Laughter*). And, I guess, you have things that are, kind of, just plain old, not newsworthy, and other times, you have things that are just, kind of, out there and obscene, sometimes, so we have to be careful. Obviously, in our vetting process, we're not gonna post videos of somebody having something chopped off or anything. Um, but, yeah, sometimes, we just get a whole variety of things. You never know what you're gonna get. It's not predicable. You can't bank on user generated content all the time, because you don't know what the public is gonna give you.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Explain that. What do you mean you can't bank on it?

**RESPONDENT H:** Well, okay. The classic editor moment...so I want a reaction piece on X from iReporters. We may put up an assignment; iReporters don't feel it or just maybe the discussion is kind of dry or nothing...it just gets a little argument, but nothing you can really write about. And the editor says, hey, where's that

## Appendix B (Continued)

story? Well, the community wasn't receptive t that topic. You just can't bank of them giving you a good response every time, because if they don't feel it's newsworthy, or if they don't feel like it's something they wanna discuss, they won't.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Did we talk about any drawbacks? I guess we kinda did about the (*inaudible*). Explain what iReport is.

**RESPONDENT H:** iReport is the user generated site. It's a user generated site for news. So, part of what it is, people writing in or sending us videos telling us, hey, this is going on in my community; you guys need to know about it. So, part of it is, people telling us the news. Another facet would be people weighing in on the news and giving perspectives and opinions that you would see on, like, Situation Room or some of the shows. It's commentary. And then other times, it's a big...it's a place for discussion about the news, too. So, somebody posts something, just like, hey, what do you guys think about the G20 summit? They may not have went there and have pictures of anything, but they may have a certain view and want other people to weigh in, and this robust discussion, kind of, grows out of that little post.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Gotcha. What's the value of iReport?

**RESPONDENT H:** The value. Well, um, it's kinda funny because I think people at CNN are seeing the value more and more, especially in, um, certain stories. For example, the Atlanta flooding that's going on, because it's people in their neck of the woods telling you what's going on, and CNN can't have reporters everywhere all the time, so these iReporters are almost becoming kind of like...what's the word? Not affiliates, but these people are embedded in their own community. They have a really good sense for what is going on. So, they're almost like semi-reporters...they're reporting what's going on and giving us a more personal view, instead of something expert oriented. So, I think faces and personal stories have really increased iReport's value, at least in the CNN news gathering process.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What is the difference between content found on iReport, as opposed to traditionally gathered news on CNN or CNN.com?

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**RESPONDENT H:** Uh, well, as I said previously, it's not all gonna be newsworthy on iReport, so pretty much, you can say what you wanna say. Yeah, but in the sense of, like, news gathering in the traditional sense, like, if I'm a reporter, I have to go seek out all these experts and people and call them together for some sort of story. With iReport, the people and their personal experiences are coming to you. So, I guess that's a different way. Sometimes, it makes it a little easier, um, with news gathering, because instead of you having to go call a doctor and find a patient who is experiencing symptoms of Swine Flu, you have someone writing in saying, my cousin had Swine Flu, and you can call that person right away. So, it makes it a little easier, at times, to find anecdotes and personal examples.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Can you compare that to what's on CNN and CNN.com, just sort of the content and how it is different from what's on iReport?

**RESPONDENT H:** Well, I mean, CNN is like any other news organization trying to tell a story about what's going on someplace in the world. I guess the biggest difference with iReport is the personal angle, and that's usually what we're adding to the mix, because you'll have...like, maybe you'll have weather reports, going back to the floods, and the Doppler radar, and you'll have how many people are out of power, and you'll have all the statistics, and maybe a couple people. But, with iReport, you'll have people, like, literally walking around their house with a camera showing you exactly what they're going through, as opposed to having a writer write it. Like, this is in a person's voice...it's in their own voice, instead of having it come through the filter of a reporter, it's the person just speaking about their experience.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. How do you determine if an iReport submission has news value?

**RESPONDENT H:** Well, part of it depends on what's going on in the news that day. So, right now, we're looking at a lot of the G20 protest photos, and obviously, there have been some incidents already with tear gas and all sorts of stuff. So, we're kind of expecting, hey, there's gotta be a whole bunch of people in Pittsburgh, so we already are looking out for that and just...I

## Appendix B (Continued)

mean, how do you determine if anything is news? It's the same thing...we're all journalists looking at these stories. It's the exact same thing. We're trying to determine is it timely? Is there conflict? Is, um, you know, is there human interest, which really, is what we excel at every day, but we also tap into the hard news just as well.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Who decides if an iReport submission is used on air or on CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT H:** Okay, well, we go through a vetting process, like anything else when you're trying to figure out whether something is real or not. And basically, what happens in the vetting process, which is mostly our team, but there are other people in the company will see an iReport they like or a video that just seems...oh, great, a protest video, we don't have this yet. And, they'll call the person up and ask them some basic information, like, when did you shoot this? What's your name? What kind of camera did you use? Hmm. You say you're from here, did you go to that, specifically? And, if something seems a little fishy, like any good journalist, you keep them on the phone and keep asking questions to feel this person out, basically. So, you ask all these questions and try to figure out the story, and if everything checks out...sometimes, we reference, like, if it's an event overseas, we'll call the international desk and say, hey, you guys are more tapped into this. Do these pictures, kind of, go along with the content you've been getting from this protest in Germany, or whatever? So, we do all the measures of making sure something is accurate. So, once it passes the vetting process, it gets this "on CNN" stamp, which tells the public, hey, someone from CNN contacted this person. This is golden, it checks out. And, when that happens, there's kind of a split. If it's gonna be on .com, we talk as a team about the piece of content. Is it something that's adding to the other content that's on the site or giving just a little bit of a different angle? Um, and one of us goes and pitches that headline. If it's on TV, then it's up to a TV producer. So, I don't do that. But, we let them know about it, and they're free to choose the content that goes on air, and we hope they do.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a process for monitoring content on iReport? I think you already kind of talked about that, but what is it?

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**RESPONDENT H:** Yeah, um...well, the site...well, we're all on the site all the time for the job, and sometimes, these discussions get a little overviewed, so we have to watch out, you know, if there are personal attacks, then we, kind of, warn people not to do that. In a worst case scenario, those people could be banned, I guess, if they were really egregious and, just, like, giving blatant person attacks or saying things that are just ridiculously obscene. Um, so there's that level of monitoring what happens. And then, also, when the material first comes onto the site, um, as I previously said, if it violates our community guidelines, there are moderators that pull it in 15 minutes.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Describe the process used to ensure...I think you've already talked about this...that iReport content used for broadcast for CNN or CNN.com is accurate.

**RESPONDENT H:** Yeah, um...

**INVESTIGATOR:** Or, the criteria...

**RESPONDENT H:** Yeah, we...we have, besides being good journalists and asking what the story is and the background and the 5 Ws and all that good stuff, we also have a few questions that we ask to make sure we don't get into trouble. Like, for example, you know, did you shoot this video? Oh no...you didn't? Okay. Who did? Can we talk to that person? So, we make sure we talk to the author of that content and we get their expressed permission...do you give CNN permission to use this? So that's part of it. Another part is, usually, we want people to be over 18 years old because, you know, you're an adult, basically, and you can give your permission to use it or not. But, if we have people who are 13-18 who submit an iReport, which we get...we get some kids who go out there with video cameras, and we wanna make sure their parents are aware it's been sent in, so we get parental consent, as well. If they're under 13, we generally don't use the content, unless the parent sent it in...oh, look at my nine year old, where the parent sent it in. So, you know, we deal with...we have a couple of legal questions that we ask, just to be safe.

**INVESTIGATOR:** You said with the vetting process, you do your due diligence.

## Appendix B (Continued)

Can you give some examples of how you make sure the information is reported by the person who says they're reporting it, or they were there and they haven't gotten it from the Internet?

**RESPONDENT H:** Okay. Um, one of the best examples is the elections in Iran. I was working the day after the election, and our site was flooded, absolutely flooded with content, because the Iranian government had shut down. Like, YouTube and MySpace and all these social networking sites. So, they were all going to iReport, which was really exciting. I actually was the only person on the desk. I would e-mail or call these people, because you can list an e-mail or a phone number, or both...at least an e-mail. And, right away I would say, oh, did you shoot this video or where did you get this from? And, people would say, oh, I got this from my friend on Facebook. Can I get this friend? And, in one instance out of 10... like I remember it as clear as day...in one instance, I actually got a hold of the person's friend who e-mailed me the original files. And the vetting...like, you can look in PhotoShop to see what kind of camera it was shot with and does the ratio look accurate, you know, was there anything doctored about it. Some of it is, I guess, just knowing photography and knowing when something in PhotoShop looks like. But, in that case, they were the original files, and he was able to give me additional information. And, I talked to the international desk, and they said, yeah, the protest did just happen, and yeah, actually, some of this looks really similar to the photos we got from one of our embedded people out there. Yes, we have no doubt this is real. So, that was really... , in that case, we gave the iReporter anonymity (*inaudible*). But, all the other videos I got were, just...you could look on YouTube or Facebook and find them everywhere, and I'm, like, no...yeah...I'm not gonna be able to find the source of this.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, what's more important, is it confirming the content that's sent to you is accurate, or is it the actual person who has produced the content?

**RESPONDENT H:** Well, I don't know if I would say either is more important, cuz you're not gonna air something necessarily, or at least, we won't, if you don't know who shot it. Because, part of that is, like...part of being an iReporter is you are sending

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something into CNN, essentially. And, if we don't know where it's coming from, that's just bad...bad journalism. It's just bad practice, because you can't verify the source. But also, the content, you wanna make sure a photo isn't doctored, obviously, and we're not being duped. From time to time, you do get someone who says something that's suspect, and we all weigh in on it and have a conversation. And sometimes, if things sound too good to be true...and they're usually too good to be true, and every once in a blue moon, there are cases you get something that's extraordinary and it's gotta be fake, and you find out it is real from, like, an affiliate who happened to be in the area. Like, an example of that was after one of the hurricanes...I don't remember which one; I wasn't working here...but in Galveston, Texas, there was one house left standing in the community. It's gotta be fake. There's no way...it's gotta be fake. How did just one house survive this? And the photo just doesn't look real. But, the story did check out and ended up being a huge iReport success and a part of that hurricane coverage that really wasn't covered. We really added to it...at least added to the visual.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a focus on developing relationships with iReport community members who submit content regularly?

**RESPONDENT H:** Definitely. It was a little weird when I first came here, I was like, how does everyone know all these people's names? That's weird. But, in working here, you really do foster a relationship with these people you talk to a lot. Like, one of them, Chris Morrow, who has been all over the place, she shoots videos of celebrities and all sorts of neat stuff in San Diego, and you know, she e-mails when she gets content, which is fine with me, when she's produced it. I'm not weighing in on it...she's just sending me a link. But, we definitely do talk to some of these people, and with some of the regulars, we've started giving them tips, like, hey, maybe you should add a microphone so your audio comes out a little bit better. Or, um...what's another one? Maybe with these photos you should try to not use the flash...try to just crank up the iris so you'll get better photos. So, we end up, kind of, teaching them a thing or two, just about the practice of journalism and, in turn, getting better content out of it. So, that's been interesting.



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**INVESTIGATOR:** Is there a down side to allowing the public to share their content with iReport?

**RESPONDENT H:** Um, I mean, I could always go with the old, oh, diversity is such a great thing. We get all these opinions out there and we get a better discussion, and it's just out of this world. And, uh, so I mean, that's definitely, I would say, true, with iReport. Um...is there a down side? I don't know that there is, because people end up being really proud of what they produce, and it becomes a hobby. And, some of these people wind up in journalism or just find something they really enjoy doing, or they enjoy interacting with the community. So, I'm not sure there's a down side to being on iReport. I guess the only thing would be if you are a really, really opinionated, I hope you have a thick skin, because there's gonna be someone who has an opposite political view of you, and there are people on the site who do videos back and forth on the healthcare debate. They didn't get angry at all, but they were civil about it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** That's nice.

**RESPONDENT H:** Yeah. Thick skinned, and you know, you're probably gonna get a lot of comments, so it's usually a good thing to be in line for it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. What factors prevent iReport submissions from being used by CNN or CNN.com?

**RESPONDENT H:** Well, beside it being just not newsworthy, in that case, we won't look at it or not, like, feature it...because we have a lot of featured content...one, if we can't verify where the content came from. Two, if the person is younger than 13 and the parents just so no, if they're not of age, that will not be used, even if it's a great iReport, because it's up to the parent. Um, if it's obscene and violates community guidelines, then obviously we wouldn't even be dealing with getting that approved. Um, what else? If something...like the person's story just doesn't check out. Breaking news situations, usually, um, we get a lot of people excited to send us content, but every once in a while, there's someone who tries to slip one past us. And, like I said, if the story sounds too good to be true...and this happened once. There was a plane crash, um...I think it was the one in Buffalo, New York,

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earlier, and the person said the news channel told them to go film. I'm like, what news affiliate would tell you to do that? Why did a 16 year old have a \$3,000 camera? Things like that. You got close enough to the plane? Really? Really? You're not in the hospital for smoke inhalation? You saw charred bodies? No, this doesn't absolutely, like...common sense things, and the more flags that go off, you just keep talking and say, all right, well, thank you for your story. And, there are, just, so many holes that things did not make sense. So, that's an example where we'll try to vet it and the story does not check out, and it won't go anywhere, and we'll put a big, fat note on it saying, Not Approved. Don't Use This.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. Does the public have a role in deciding what iReports make air?

**RESPONDENT H:** Well, they do have a mechanism of telling what they think is important. Part of it is, there are certain stories that generate a lot of comments in the community. So, if people are commenting on it a lot and talking about it a lot, it's certainly something that's discussion worthy, and usually, it's something that's really newsworthy too, so we'll look at that iReport and usually reach out to that person. Um, other times, there are iReports that just get a lot of hits, but we haven't reached out to this person. Oh, how does this have 5,000 hits? Is it being linked somewhere? And, you look at it and you go, oh, this story is also good. So, the community, if they're viewing it a lot or if they're sharing it a lot, like Facebooking or Tweeting it a lot, that's usually something we'll also go after.

**INVESTIGATOR:** By Facebooking or Tweeting, like a link to iReport content?

**RESPONDENT H:** We have a metric on our site where it says how many times an iReport has been viewed and how many times it's been shared. So, if it's been shared 100 times, that's quite a bit for an iReport. Then we'll be, like, oh, this is pretty neat.

**INVESTIGATOR:** So, it's shared outside iReport to the social networks?

**RESPONDENT H:** Yes.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Okay. So, does iReport represent a significant change in the way news is gathered?

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**RESPONDENT H:** Yes, basically (*laughter*). Um, some people are a little scared of it, obviously my team isn't. But, it's a way of getting to people who, you know, wanna tell their stories. These people are always saying, hey, something is going on by me or I'm experiencing this, and they're literally opening up and telling you this story on the site. And, you know, whenever we're looking for real people going through real things, it's...a lot of times, it's easiest just to go on the site and you can find what you're looking for in a lot of cases. So, instead of having to, um, go out and search for these examples of, like a person suffering from a disease, you might have something like that on the site. Someone who is clearly comfortable with talking about it, already, in a public forum, so we just reach out to the person and get a little more background on that story. So yeah, I definitely would say it's changing the way part of the news is gathered.

**INVESTIGATOR:** How does it change it?

**RESPONDENT H:** Well, you still always gonna need those experts weighing in, because they are the preeminent folks in their field, and you are still gonna need to comb through documents and, you know, gather information that way, use wires to find out the quick breaking news. But, in terms of finding people that are going through things, iReport is usually a pretty good way to gather that information, and sometimes, breaking news too. Sometimes, news manifests itself...not manifests, but comes to us by iReport. Like, there was an explosion in Bozeman, Montana, and we saw a couple of iReports about it, and it wasn't being reported very much, and from that, like, we started a story on .com, we had images, and it started trending on Twitter, and it just, like, we found out about it because an iReporter sent it in.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Any things I haven't asked you?

**RESPONDENT H:** Um...well, I'll tell you what my favorite iReport was. Since we get such a motley of content, and it's never...I mean it's breaking news, but it's also commentary, but it's also kind of offbeat. We had a woman called...I can't remember her name...but she was 85 years old, and her neighbor helped her out to make a rap song. So, it's an 85-year-old woman with a German accent singing, I like to move my lips and nod

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my hips. I think that was my favorite...favorite offbeat iReport sent in and being circulated around the company. So, it's not always hard news all the time; it's good to see that feature content.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Anything else?

**RESPONDENT H:** Nope.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Thanks very much.

*(Muffled noise).*

***(AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY.)***

***(Inaudibles due to intermittent low volume, loud muffled noise or cell phone interference.)***

***END OF AUDIO.***