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The Shifting Sands of Authority in the Age of Digital Convergence

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THE SHIFTING SANDS OF AUTHORITY IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL CONVERGENCE

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Dedicated to Granny Bling, and Stephen Sasha Normand
who know why.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables ...................................................................................................................................................... vi
List of Figures ....................................................................................................................................................... vii
Abstract .................................................................................................................................................................................. viii

1. THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY AND DIGITAL CONVERGENCE ................................................................. 1

2. DEFINING THE MEDIA: HOW THE PRESS AS TECHNOLOGY AND THE LONG TAIL OF POWER LAW MAKE PROTO-AUTHORIZATION NECESSARY ............................................................................................................. 40

3. INTERBLOGGING SHIFTS AUTHORITY ON THE NETWORK: REUTERSGATE VS RATHERGATE AND THE TOOLS OF THE 20 PERCENT ........................................................................................................................................ 73

4. AUTHORIZING THE THIRD SPACE: HOW WIKILEAKS SHAPE-SHIFTS TO MEDIATE BETWEEN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH ESTATES ................................................................................................................. 100

5. WHEN AUTHORITY AND AUCTORITAS COLLIDE ......................................................................................... 143

APPENDICES ............................................................................................................................................................................. 160

A. THE CONSTITUTIONAL JOURNALISTS’ PLEDGE ........................................................................................................ 160
B. CFAPA MEMBER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF USE ......................................................................................... 162
C. CODING FOR CHAPTER 4 TABLES .......................................................................................................................... 170

References ...................................................................................................................................................................................... 191

Biographical Sketch ......................................................................................................................................................... 197
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. *The New York Times* Perspective from *Open Secrets: WikiLeaks, War and American Diplomacy* ..........................................................112

Table 2. *The Guardian* Perspective from *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrets* ........................................................................................................113

Table 3. *WikiLeaks’s* Perspective from *Inside WikiLeaks: My Time with Julian Assange at the World’s Most Dangerous Website* ..........................................................114
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Long Tail (in yellow) of The Power Law. (Kranen) ................................................31

Figure 2. “The Bowtie Structure of the Web” (Benkler 250) ........................................................36

Figure 3. Original cutline and credit line: “Smoke billows from burning buildings destroyed during an overnight Israeli air raid on Beirut’s suburbs August 5, 2006. Many buildings were flattened during the attack. REUTERS/Adnan Hajj” ...............................................................75

Figure 4. The original photo (before Hajj made changes) was released by Reuters. ..................77
ABSTRACT

Authority is a much contested concept and practice, often connected to notions of violence and control, and it emanates variably from class, institution, and now—as I argue—from digital convergence, which is the availability and shareability of information across multiple digital platforms at all times. This dissertation considers how digital convergence is responsible for taking what would otherwise be a difference of degree (simply more people sharing more information) and turning it into a difference of kind (people turning information sharing into knowledge making, previously the domain of institutions). Through the tools made available both online and on multiple technological platforms, individual users of the digitally converged network (though primarily users of the Internet) are building their own auctoritas. In the particular case of journalism, this threat primarily stems from individuals and groups of individuals sharing information online that both acts as news and critiques the mainstream media (MSM). Institutions are currently facing such a foundational threat through the platform-wide information availability and shareability of digital convergence and specifically through the topology and design of the network created by it (and which it simultaneously creates). This threat of digital convergence leads to a situation in which individuals and groups of individuals are empowered to create and maintain auctoritas outside the institutional structures that Western culture traditionally leans on for authority and knowledge creation. The individual auctoritas uniquely enabled through digital convergence acts as a valid challenge to the institution’s structure, causing it to respond with proto-authorization and other tactics designed to limit individual auctoritas and maintain institution per se. The Fifth Estate, considered and defined in this dissertation, is a porous border across which the needs of American journalism consumers are met both by journalists and by consumer subjects moving into the journalism role just-in-time. Poroousness of the border between production and consumption of cultural knowledge is a threat to an institution whose job traditionally has been considered to be cultural knowledge creation. In many ways, this movement across the porous border between news consumer and producer is neither a new concept nor a new practice. The difference is one of technology and performances. It is through the affordances of a globalized social structure and a global technological connection, as well as ubiquitous access to multiple platforms, that a Fifth Estate
can become influential enough to need defining—that is, influential enough to bring American journalism back to its roots in citizen *auctoritas*. I use three sub-case studies to look at ways the Fifth Estate makes use of tools of digital convergence to cross this porous border and challenge the institutional authority of the Fourth Estate.
CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY AND DIGITAL CONVERGENCE

Authority

Authority is a much contested concept and practice, often connected to notions of violence and control, and it emanates variably from class, institution, and now—as I argue—from digital convergence, which can be defined as the availability and shareability of information across multiple digital platforms at all times (Jenkins 2). In simple terms and from a mid-twentieth-century perspective, Hannah Arendt explains that due to a loss of understanding of authority, in the twentieth century, “authority is whatever makes people obey” (416); for the most part, Arendt appears to be referring to institutional authority, wronged or missing in her time. She sees a lack of true authority, and accuses ideological institutions of mislabeling violence as authority because it achieves the same outcome, namely obedience. As she points out in the beginning of the same paragraph, however, obedience stems not merely from violence or the threat thereof from a governmental control stance although each certainly can inspire people to obey what is required or asked of them. Rather, the very fact that people confuse violence for the fulfillment of the role of authority (i.e., making people obey) has led to totalitarian regimes being mistaken for authoritarian regimes. Arendt’s argument—that, while violence may fulfill the same function as authority, it nonetheless does not make them synonymous—is one of the more important concepts in her article about the death of authority in the twentieth century, an article written at the conclusion of 1956. Arendt believes that [institutional] authority is dying in the mid-twentieth century because, as she argues, the breakdown of the validity of authority transactions at every level, from familial to governmental, have caused a toppling of authority as a practice, and helped bring about a re-appropriation of authority as a concept by Fascism and other totalitarian regimes (Arendt 403). Louis Althusser, on the other hand, espouses that violence is the function of the repressive institutions of authority, whereas the ideological institutions of authority carry the weight of creating obedience by defining a culture’s ideology. The notion of authority is therefore about far more than the ability to make others obey against their will; it is about the ability to inspire agreement or consent in others, which is a willing obedience.
Authority as inspiring rather than dictating obedience, however, is not simply the outcome of the existence of an ideological (or repressive) institution. In Jean Goodwin’s terms, authority, or *auctoritas*, is the outcome of dignity, which she defines as “a person’s worthiness to be recognized in the most basic sense” (43); a definition she asserts is Roman origin. Institutional or personal in nature, authority is nonetheless the ability to inspire in others a willingness to participate in a transaction of trust. In a similar way, as it applies to authorship, authority is the ability to inspire in others a willingness to participate in the same transaction on the written page. Authority is very much a live concern regardless of whether one speaks of Aristotelian authority, which is institutional and state controlled in nature, Circeronian *auctoritas*, which is temporal and individual in nature, or authorship, conceived as written or verbal transactions, because the material practice and cultural understanding of it are under attack. The difference between the threat to institutional authority in 2015 and the threat posed at the time of Arendt’s 1956 article is one of degree, in origin, but it is one of a degree so great that it becomes one of kind. Digital convergence makes the vastness of degree of this challenge, and thus the difference of kind, possible. Yet it is the ongoing struggle with authority, which Arendt makes clear is neither new nor unique to the twentieth century, that makes twenty-first century digital convergence an important player in the destabilization of institutional authority through individual authorship and even personal *auctoritas*. By making information exchange available on a massive scale, and making participation affordable both in price for technology and in cost of effort, digital convergence lowers the barriers to participation that have maintained some of the institutional boundaries of authority for knowledge making. In this way, digital convergence allows *auctoritas* to emerge as a difference of kind of authority from a difference of degree of information exchange.

The question of authority is at the heart of rhetoric and composition as both discipline and performance. As Mikhail Bakhtin explains in *The Dialogic Imagination*, all words carry the multiple meanings they acquire through use and circulation, and, in fact, no speech or act of writing is created in a vacuum but only as reactions to or in anticipation of another such act (Kindle file). This reality of the weight and function of words holds no less true in the field of rhetoric than anywhere else, particularly regarding authority. Authority is used in discourse

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1 Althusser argues that those institutions need *not* be tied directly or hierarchically to a government to be state controlled. In fact, the majority of his institutions, as I discuss below, are non-governmental in our culture’s conception of them.
about power, authorship, writing, and rhetorical appeals, among other areas. When a practice as important as authority interactions in information exchange has changed in significant ways—particularly through a technologically driven phenomenon as widely engaged in as digital convergence—it warrants study.

**Problem**

As stated above, digital convergence is a technological manifestation propelling a tip in a complex system that changes the practice of authority in information exchange, a change that differs in kind, not just degree. Specifically, digital convergence magnifies the always already present challenges to institutional authority to such a level that the institution is forced to respond. While humans have always traded information in social networks, that is by sharing information with each other through the interactions they had within their respective social circles, digital convergence has changed several things about that exchange, which will be discussed in detail in the literature review. First, it has changed the immediacy with which that information is exchanged; text, audio, and video information are now instantaneously available for upload and download. Second, it has changed social circles; human actors are no longer limited by geography, social ties, socio-economic groups, or other social boundaries that might have been more absolute before digital convergence. While these boundaries have not disappeared, they have become extremely porous, and connecting with a person one has never met face to face (and likely never will) has been made a normal part of our social interaction through digital convergence. These two factors—and other factors that go into making digital convergence what it is—function within a complex system from which authority emerges in new forms. This complex system comprises many parts, including produsers (Bruns), whose contributions can be predicted by the Power Law (Shirky 125); it is emergent, and sometimes exhibits extreme and seemingly chaotic behavior (N. Johnson 32-35). These ideas and terms, explained in this chapter and explored in this dissertation, help explain how digital convergence is responsible for taking what would otherwise be a difference of degree (simply more people sharing more information) and turning it into a difference of kind (people turning information sharing into knowledge making, previously the domain of institutions, and forging their own auctoritas from this dynamic).

In “On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Althusser discusses the need for every social formation to both produce and reproduce its conditions of production. The
argument, based in Karl Marx’s *Capital*, is rooted in a critique of capitalism and delves into the importance of recognizing that all states not only function in a repressive manner (by way of the institution Marx named the Repressive State Apparatus [RSA]) but also through institutions of ideology, which function to create the cultural knowledge upon which a given state functions. Althusser calls these institutions Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), explaining that the ideological institutions carry the weight of creating desirable behavioral patterns by controlling cultural beliefs. Institutions are thus state-authorized knowledge-creation mechanisms, and Althusser makes clear that these institutions need not be tied directly or hierarchically to a government to nonetheless be ISAs. Among the institutions that Althusser names are religion, education, family, culture (entertainment), and communication, which includes journalism. Prior to the humanist movement, approximately half a millennium ago, the church and state were undifferentiated. Thus the institution of the church functioned both as an RSA and ISA. As governance changed during the Enlightenment, the church became primarily an ISA, in control of most of the ideological functions of the state. The use of cultural and governmental institutions to control behavior through ideology mirrors the use of a national religion to attain the same goals. In the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, a national education system and, even more so, the communication and cultural ISAs have absorbed much of the ideological functions of even the church (Althusser 1489). In the last half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, through mass media, cultural ISAs have taken on greater control of those tasks.

Because of their status as creators of cultural knowledge and because no culture is homogeneous—meaning that there are always counter-cultural movements in any given culture—by definition institutions are always already being challenged. For the most part, such challenges are relatively ineffectual and therefore do not require a response from the institution. As ideological extensions of the state, institutions do respond—when forced to by a viable threat—with as little change as possible. One response, as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno explain, is to turn the counter movement into style, thereby diffusing it (1234-35); Stuart Hall calls this strategy *appropriation*. But for more foundational threats, institutions are forced to respond via greater shifts internally. Institutions are currently facing such a foundational threat through the platform-wide information availability and shareability of digital convergence and specifically through the topology and design of the network created by it (and which it
simultaneously creates). This threat of digital convergence leads to a situation in which individuals and groups of individuals are empowered to create and maintain auctoritas outside the institutional structures that Western culture traditionally leans on for authority and knowledge creation. The individual auctoritas uniquely enabled through digital convergence acts as a valid challenge to the institution’s structure, causing it to respond with proto-authorization and other tactics designed to limit individual auctoritas and maintain institution per se.

Hence, the problem is that digital convergence is creating a very real, very valid challenge to institutions and to institutional authority that institutions cannot ignore and to which they must respond. Through the tools made available both online and on multiple technological platforms, individual users of the digitally converged network (though primarily users of the Internet) are building their own auctoritas and, thus, their own authority—their ability to will obedience—outside the imprimatur of institutions. In the particular case of journalism, this threat primarily stems from individuals and groups of individuals sharing information online that both acts as news and critiques the mainstream media (MSM). It is interesting to note that there is no definitive term for these persons or groups; they are known variously as produsers or the former audience, two terms I explain in detail in the footnote below. Additionally, I use (and define in this chapter) the terms participatory journalists, citizen journalists, just-in-time-reporters, and members of the Fifth Estate.²

In response to the challenge to institutional authority, American journalists are scrambling to define and understand the Fifth Estate. Indeed, centuries after Edmund Burke, one of the framers of the British constitution, dubbed journalists the Fourth Estate, the Fifth Estate still has multiple meanings. Thomas Carlyle quoted Burke in On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History.

² Axel Bruns, in Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond, discusses the people he calls “produsers,” defined as consumers who are “no longer just that, but active users and participants in the creation as well as the usage of media and culture” (16). Henry Jenkins, who coined the phrase “the former audience” in Convergence Culture, and Steven Johnson, in Interface Culture, talk about participatory journalism. In Watching the Watchdog, Cooper claims that bloggers, specifically, are the Fifth Estate. He uses the term very distinctly because he is defining the Fifth Estate as any person who critiques the media, just as journalism was defined by Edmund Burke as the Fourth Estate because of a journalist’s work primarily in critiquing the houses of parliament. However, there are arguments that this is too specific a definition. Roy Clark of Poynter Institute says in his piece on the Fifth Estate that limiting the Fifth Estate to bloggers leaves out media criticism done by the Fourth Estate. Dan Gillmor, in We the Media, argues for an open understanding of citizen journalism, which he defines in very much the same way as Clark defines the Fifth Estate. In this dissertation, I primarily use the following phrases and terms: Just-in-time reporter, blogger, produser, and member of the Fifth Estate. The first two, in my usage, are a subset of the last. Produser is a descriptive term. It is not definitive of a role, but rather of praxis. While there are, I am certain, many other subsets of the Fifth Estate, it is not in the purview of this dissertation to define them.
Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but in the Reporter’s Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important than they all [sic]. It is not a figure of speech, or witty saying; it is a literal fact—very momentous to us in these times. Literature is our Parliament too. Printing, which comes necessarily out of Writing, I say often, is equivalent to Democracy; invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable. (141)

When speaking of the first three estates, Burke was referring to members of Parliament—royalty, peers, and lower house members respectively—but the concept comes from the three estates of the pre-revolution France, known as the Estates General, which were the clergy, the nobility, and the rest of France. Today, the American press particularly sees itself as the Fourth Estate in balance with the government’s three branches—as an outside force for checks and balances (Meyer). As such, the American press sets itself up as the watchdog of government, another popular term among journalists. Although The Poynter Institute, the primary journalistic think tank in the United States, has attempted to define the Fifth Estate as a set of paraprofessionals and professionals practicing journalism, thereby including the professional journalists who are the Fourth Estate (Clark), a member of the Fifth Estate as understood for the purposes of this dissertation actually functions as a just-in-time journalist or critic (or both, as criticism of journalism often is newsworthy in and of itself) outside the institution of journalism. The just-in-time journalist has a camera phone and holds it up as the tsunami comes roaring at her hotel (e.g., iReport by CNN showed many of these photos after the tsunami in Thailand as well as the one in Japan). The just-in-time journalist points out an obviously forged memo, and, within a matter of weeks, the MSM admits to having erroneously reported about President Bush’s Air Force Reserve service (Cooper 57). The just-in-time journalist uses CNN’s iReport, a blog, Webpage, Twitter, Facebook, and any of the number of other digital convergence tools available to move (typically temporarily) from a news consumer subject position to news producer subject position. For example, as the events of May 1-2, 2011, illustrate, users of Facebook and Twitter became a first source for news—the voices of authority—at a time when institutional authorities attempted to maintain a news-controlled situation: While President Obama waited for aides to make phone calls so all the “authorized” members of congress and the intelligence community could be notified of Osama bin Laden’s killing before he announced it on the MSM, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media lit up with the information. In fact, one Tweeter actually live-
tweeted the event—though he did not know exactly what he was broadcasting at the time (Athar). The Fifth Estate, in this definition, is a porous boundary across which the needs of American journalism consumers are met both by journalists and by consumer subjects moving into the journalism role just-in-time. Porousness of the boundary between production and consumption of cultural knowledge is a threat to an institution whose job traditionally has been considered to be cultural knowledge creation, and it is a threat afforded by digital convergence.

In many ways, this movement across the porous boundary between news consumer and producer is neither a new concept nor a new practice. The difference is one of technology and performance. It is through the affordances of a globalized social structure and a global technological connection, as well as ubiquitous access to multiple platforms, that a Fifth Estate can become influential enough to need defining—that is, influential enough to bring American journalism back to its roots in citizen auctoritas. Those roots include both America’s second newspaper, published by a postmaster named John Campbell, who printed private letters from Europe along with other news customers brought him (Burns 37), and its first newspaper, called Publick (sic) Occurrences both Foreign and Domestic, which not only published news from travelers and sailors but also had a fascinating format:

The first three pages contain two columns of news with a narrow margin between them; the fourth page was blank, so that readers could add items of their own and comment on the preceding items before sending the paper along to another reader. This made Publick Occurrences a source of interactive journalism a full three centuries before the Internet. (Burns 29)

These two papers show that the current challenge to the institutional authority of American journalism is an outcome of a change in technology rather than the appearance of new countercultural movements. This challenge is made valid by the change in technology that leads to digital convergence. Digital convergence does not make the institutional border porous; it simply makes it more so, effecting such a radical change of degree of authority that it culminates in a change of kind, the effects of this technological change are discussed in detail in chapter 2.

Research Questions

In the wake of Web 2.0, social media, and digital technologies, the phenomenon of the citizen-journalist requires a re-examination of the rhetorical meaning and practice of authority in writing: what it is, who has it, how it is deployed and protected, and how it is challenged. This
dissertation investigates the implications of “authoritative” writing in the wake of digital convergence particularly as manifested in emerging authority in the Fifth Estate of nonmainstream media and other outlier communicators. I explore that subject using the lens provided by journalism where the rise of the Fifth Estate has created a (r)evolution. To that end, I ask the following research questions:

1. In the face of digital convergence, how and why does institutional authority respond, reshape, or re-appropriate in response to said challenges?
2. How and why does the individual or group of individuals use digital convergence to design, generate, and position authority as agents in a networked system, allowing reinforcement, resistance, and change in institutional authority?
3. What are the effects of digital convergence regarding the creation and circulation of information as well as the transformation or manipulation of information into knowledge?

**Research Design**

Analysis of the ways institutional authority has responded to different challenges from users of digital convergence tools offers evidence of the validity of the threat these challenges present as well as evidence of the shape the new authority is taking. Because the institution is always already under challenge, as Horkeheimer and Adorno note, the only way to measure a threat’s validity is to analyze the level and kind of response from the institution. In this dissertation, these analyses are accomplished via a case study approach because case studies are a powerful way to explore the possibility of unauthorized voices creating a challenge to authority. This dissertation specifically examines journalism as a primary case in which digital convergence threatens a specific ISA’s institutional authority—the Fourth Estate—and it engages three sub-cases as examples to accomplish the overall analysis.

Although digital convergence also affects such institutions as education (e.g., through such free courses as those available on iTunes University, Khan Academy, and Coursera), entertainment media (e.g., through spoiler communities, YouTube, and Hulu), and even religion (e.g., through online religious services, religious social media communities, and even “text services”), journalism is a site especially rich with unauthorized and alternative voices both in the institutional press and beyond it. These challenges to institutional knowledge can be readily studied. Furthermore, as a print medium that has become Web-based with the digital age,
journalism provides a deep textual source of information open to a thorough rhetorical and multilayered analysis. This dissertation considers two specific examples of Fourth and Fifth Estate interactions in addition to an illustrative exploration of the overall challenge presented to institutional journalism by the massive technological shift that has brought about digital convergence; it further examines some of the institution’s generalized response.

The case study is a useful research method for understanding these challenges to authority and the changes that may result, enabling me to explore the discourse surrounding the Fifth Estate and the activities of the Fourth Estate in response to specific Fifth Estate activities. By analyzing multiple Fourth and Fifth Estate interactions, this dissertation delves into resources that show the workings of an ongoing phenomenon. As Robert K. Yin explains in *Case Study Research*, although a case study may not create statistically generalizable results for the researcher, it can act as ground for both exploration and explanation (13). Indeed, the case study is best suited for research of ongoing activities in which a researcher is unable to create a laboratory setting to control the behavior being studied and therefore to measure it quantitatively (13). By approaching the challenges to authority with journalism as the primary case, this dissertation “investigate[s] a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context” (13). Yin explains that the importance of the case study in exploration and explanation of an ongoing phenomenon is increased when “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (13). In the case of the digital age’s challenges to institutional authority, those boundaries are particularly permeable and therefore unclear in that both institutional and unauthorized voices make use of the medium. Additionally, they are unclear because ideological authority is not a force that can be essentially pointed to or that “resides” in any given location; furthermore, the institutional response to unauthorized sharing of information (in the case of journalism) is an intentional blurring of those boundaries, as discussed in detail in chapter 2. Because case studies are best for “how and why” questions in ongoing phenomena (Yin 5-6), the case study approach is well suited to this research goal, which involves asking how the challenges to authority occur and what drives them (that is, why they occur) as well as how the institution responds and why it chooses the responses it does.

Because this dissertation explores the how and why of challenges to institutional authority, it helps to explain the interactions of the Fourth and Fifth Estates within the critical framework of authority (as posited by Althusser, Arendt, and Goodwin—described in detail in
the literature review that follows) and digitally converged produsage (as posited by Dan Gillmor, Axel Bruns, Clay Shirky, Henry Jenkins, Yochai Benkler, John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid, Albert-László Barabási, and Tim O’Reilly—also discussed in the literature review). This research project engages three sub-cases as examples that explore the challenges to journalistic institutional authority, providing a way to describe the challenge. Specifically, this dissertation addresses the research questions through the following three analyses, which are explored in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

1. In the face of digital convergence, how and why does institutional authority respond, reshape, or re-appropriate in response to said challenges?

This first question aims both to analyze the validity of the threat to institutional journalism’s authority posed by digital convergence and to inspect some of the avenues of response from journalism. This analysis considers how legal precedent affects seeing “the press” as it is delineated in the Constitution of the United States of America as a technology rather than as an industry. Such a definition does not bar the conception of journalism as an institution; rather it extends the protections afforded journalists to any users of the technology. These protections vary by state, but they include libel law and journalistic freedom from licensure—an important factor in the question of authority especially. Thus, to provide a foundational understanding of the nature of the challenge to journalism brought about by digital convergence, I analyze Eugene Volokh’s (an attorney, law professor, and founder and co-author of a blog called The Volokh Conspiracy) argument regarding this stare decis in reference to a blogger, Crystal Cox, charged with libel. Similarly, I analyze the 9th Circuit Court decision regarding Cox’s online actions.³ I also consider the New York Times’s columnist David Carr’s response to the case. In addition, to provide a view of proto-authorization, one of the tools with which the MSM responds, I analyze MSM/Fifth Estate hybrid spaces, including The Volokh Conspiracy, which has moved from a non-institutional Website to The Washington Post online, CNN’s iReport, and The Guardian’s GuardianWitness. I chose these hybrid spaces particularly because CNN is a very well known broadcast MSM, and its iReport is among the largest projects of its kind. The produsers iReport draws are interested in identifying as members of a Fifth Estate but not necessarily in primarily identifying as such. While GuardianWitness is a similar proto-authorizing site, its rules are different because of both legal and journalistic considerations in the

³ Volokh was the defense attorney arguing the appeal.
UK, where its publication is housed, making it an interesting example to set alongside CNN’s iReport. The produsers who publish on CNN’s iReport and Guardian Witness choose proto-authorization.

Proto-authorization (literally “primordial authorization,” which reflects the sense of movement toward authorization) consists of ways by which the MSM can provide some MSM-approved authorization to unauthorized texts or unauthorized produsers, while maintaining a separation between the institution and the non-institutional voices. Proto-authorization can therefore be provisional and limited. By providing such authorization on a provisional basis, an institution (in this case the MSM) maintains control of the right to authorize and can even build its own authority by creating a way for unauthorized voices to gain broader readership through MSM involvement—thus developing their individual auctoritas. Responses to such proto-authorization can be seen at the site of the Constitutional First Amendment Press Association (CFAPA) as well as through the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). CFAPA.org provides press credentials to institutionally uncredentialed reporters, creating a limited proto-institutionalization as response to proto-authorization. Here, again, the term proto provides the sense of stepping toward, rather than of being, so proto-institutionalization allows for a non-institutional position—but also a toward institution movement—for unauthorized voices. This move toward institutionalization enacts a further challenge to the institution by suggesting the possibility of a parallel institutional space. In this way, the question of institutional response can be answered specifically in regard to ways the institution respond(s), reshape(s), and reappropriate(s) the unauthorized knowledge created outside its authorized space. The ACLU provides free access to smart technologies that allow for just-in-time reporters to upload video in real-time if they believe their right to film may be infringed.

For this analysis, the work of Gillmor on the Fifth Estate and its practices, along with Jenkins’s definition of participatory culture, and Shirky’s work on peer-production provide a theoretical lens through which this dissertation analyzes authoritative (whether authorized or unauthorized), proto-authorizing, and proto-institutional practices of the Fourth and Fifth Estates and their interactions. This combination of approaches to proto-authorization, proto-institutionalization, and auctoritas all point back to how strongly press is tied to technology, the core of Volokh’s argument and the Ninth Circuit District Court’s decision in the Cox case. That dependence on technology highlights the difference of kind made possible by digital
convergence and magnifies the porousness of the boundaries between individuals and the institutions that structure society.

2. How and why does the individual or group of individuals use digital convergence to design, generate, and position authority as agents in a networked system, allowing reinforcement, resistance, and change in institutional authority?

As a sub-case that responds to this second question, I consider the case of “Reutersgate,” in which a blogger and his community successfully critiqued the MSM, forcing a response within fewer than four days both from the MSM member it was critiquing and, equally important for analyzing the emergence of auctoritas effected by digital convergence, from The New York Times, the United States paper of record (Martin and Hansen 7). For this analysis, Barabási’s network theory, Benkler’s theorizing of the networked economy, and Bruns’s work on produsage inform an analysis of how a group of bloggers formed a hub through a practice I term interblogging, which is a practice that creates a single node of many on the Internet, allowing small nodes the linking capacity of larger, more popular nodes. Additionally, Stephen Cooper’s analysis of bloggers as press critics helps to inform this examination of blogging’s role in relation to institutional journalism and its authority. This analysis shows the generation of authority among bloggers, but it also includes the “SportsShooter” forum in which the critique was discussed and that forms the bridge from unauthorized voices to institutional authority through a space for professionals acting in their non-professional roles. An analysis of the interplay among the bloggers, the photographers, and the MSM leads to an understanding of how individuals, alone or in groups, exercise emergent auctoritas in direct relation to institutions, creating a viable challenge and thus forcing a response. I came across ReutersGate while doing research on Cooper’s book about bloggers, in which he covers RatherGate in detail. In contrast, the two scandals immediately struck me as a very specific example of the design of tools, as a response to my question regarding design. Charles Johnson, in response to an experience with the MSM designed a tool to critique the MSM. Employing this tool, he was able to position his group of nodes in such a manner that they could enact that critique at the critical moment.

3. What are the effects of the multiple avenues created by digital convergence for the creation and circulation of information as well as the transformation or manipulation of information into knowledge by individuals and groups of individuals?
The third sub-case is that of WikiLeaks, which enables analysis of the ways individuals or groups of individuals use digital convergence tools to create and circulate information as well as to transform or manipulate information to create knowledge. Using this case, I explore how agents in a complex networked information system can shape-shift as necessary to both manipulate institutional authority and stretch it to engage emerging auctoritas. The interactions among WikiLeaks, The New York Times, and The Guardian were reported through books written by actors within each group. These books provide a text for rhetorical analysis of the shaping and use of institutional authority and individual auctoritas within a set of authority interactions centered on information in digital space. In this final sub-case, the “third position” created by WikiLeaks, in which an agent is not fully a member of the Fifth Estate nor a member of the MSM, but becomes a mediator between the two, is analyzed for the advantages and disadvantages such a position can create as well as for the ways in which such a third position can act as its own form of proto-institutionalization, in particular for the capacity to transform information into knowledge.

In this sub-case, Seely Brown and Duguid’s work on information, publication, and knowledge creation is particularly important, as is Goodwin’s analytic approach to authority interactions. In addition, Gillmor furnishes a lens for understanding Fifth Estate positioning and Benkler a lens for examination of the power of networks in such interactions. These theorists provide the ground on which a rhetorical analysis of the authority transactions of the three major players, WikiLeaks, The New York Times, and The Guardian can be explored, particularly in relation to the tools of digital convergence and the outcomes of network-based individual auctoritas. I chose WikiLeaks because it is the first major leak of U.S. state secrets since the Pentagon Papers and had as much of an affect on how we perceive such leaks. Because of WikiLeaks, Snowden’s NSA leaks were made more possible—and the MSM were made more available to Snowden as a source—and the U.S. government response to such leaks has also changed because of this particular occurrence.

**Literature Review**

In this dissertation, I argue that by making information exchange on a mass scale far more readily available to most people, digital convergence has brought about the creation of a complex information system that brings Aristotelian and Ciceronian conceptions of authority into conflict with each other. As this tension is played out in information exchange, it can be
seen particularly in the field of journalism. Moreover, it affects the rhetorical understanding of *auctoritas*, moving it—though not wholly—from a primarily Aristotelian space within Western Culture to a more Ciceronian one. To understand how this movement happens, one needs to look first at the conceptions of authority at the heart of this argument. After discussing Aristotelian conceptions of authority and Cicero’s use of *auctoritas* in his defense of Sulla, as explained by Goodwin, in order to address how the two differ and can conflict with each other, I look at how Goodwin and Yameng Liu try to situate authority in a twentieth-century context. This discussion provides the groundwork for understanding the Aristotelian foundations of rhetorical use of authority. With that understanding, I then review what Seely Brown and Duguid present about the differences between information and knowledge, tying it to advances in Web technology that brought about what became known as Web 2.0, a term I explain. With this information, I am able to explain the importance of understanding Jenkins’s conception of participatory culture and Bruns’s term *produsage* as they apply to this project, tying them back to *auctoritas*. Having shown these connections, I discuss how network and complex systems theories work to help explain *auctoritas* as a necessary part of online interactions and participation. These pieces show that, when situated in the problem of digital convergence, this conflict between Aristotelian and Ciceronian understandings of *auctoritas* is an outcome of the network itself. In effect, this review of the literature surrounding authority and digital convergence demonstrates a need for a study of how this technological advance is a difference of degree that brings about a difference of kind.

From the time of Aristotle, authority has stood as a significant construct within rhetoric, politics, and philosophy and was more specifically called a *god-term* by Kenneth Burke (121-23). In *Ars Rhetorica*, Aristotle indicates that authority is used as an ethical appeal, a place from which to make an argument. Ethos is practiced by the rhetor when, while making an argument, she presents her authority as part of the reason the auditor should “agree” or “concur” or, at the very least, “act” as if he does; it is also used by a rhetor when she grounds her own argument in the authority of another, recognized, rhetor. Aristotelian’s construction of *auctoritas*, the ground from which contemporary Western rhetoric has worked from at least since the beginning of humanism almost half a millennium ago, is based in his conceptions of authority in political realms. While most rhetoricians address the concept through his work in *Ars Rhetorica* regarding

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4 Following Goodwin’s example, I use *she* for rhetor and *he* for auditor throughout to indicate not only the openness of gender but also to term any person mobilizing the tools of rhetoric in *any* medium and any audience member interacting with that rhetoric regardless of the medium or mode.
the three appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos, to fully understand how Aristotelian auctoritas functions in contemporary Western settings, one needs to understand Aristotle’s political conceptions of authority and power. These conceptions are based deeply in his instructor Plato’s earlier works, although with some differences.

In The Politics, Aristotle considers four different forms of governance: monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, and aristocracy. Although he regards some aspects of democracy as necessary to keeping the citizenry happy and therefore keeping them from revolt, his conception of citizen is limited to males who are both free and own some land. In addition, Aristotle does not see democratic governance as the greatest good, saying that such governance is a degenerated state. He defines it along with oligarchy and tyranny thus: “Now a tyranny is a monarchy where the good of one man only is the object of government, an oligarchy considers only the rich, and a democracy only the poor; but neither of them have a common good in view” (Kindle file). In The Politics, Aristotle makes clear that the only “perfect” form of governance is aristocracy, which he defines as leadership by the “best men.” Yet this very definition poses problems for him because of what he has said about the need to keep the citizenry happy. To deal with this issue of the difference between a perfect governance and the reality of the citizenry’s needs, he writes in great detail about who is and who is not a citizen, as well as how to choose new citizens and how to make sure one does not make the category so elite as to destroy the state:

[T]he best [government] must necessarily be that which is administered by the best men . . . it is evident, that in the same manner, and for those very qualities which would procure a man the character of good, any one would say, that the government of a state was a well-established aristocracy or kingdom; so that it will be found to be education and . . . morals that are almost the whole which go to make a good man, and the same qualities will make a good citizen or good king. (Kindle file)

Aristotle does take specific forms of governance in his time and region into account, and he points out that one way of providing control to the citizenry is by making the senate responsible to the groups of citizens, known as ephoralty, who were elected by lots or chosen by their
predecessors. While he concedes that these ephoralty are useful in some ways and that a group of common workers might make better decisions than a single aristocrat, he also posits many problems with giving tradesmen authority of any sort over those whom he sees as naturally better prepared education-wise and morally by virtue of their birth.

Regardless of the fine details, for Aristotle authority in a perfect polis inures in an elite, educated, male, land-owning class: the aristocracy. Members of this class, by virtue of their maleness (women were not considered citizens and were, moreover, just one step above the property level that constituted slaves), as well as by virtue of their class, should have the opportunity to become political leaders. In contrast, a worker would have no such leisure time for study and therefore could not achieve the necessary education. A perfect polis thereby would be run by elite, educated males, whose decisions would be good for all the members of the polis and also would be moral purely because these elite are grounded in the well-rounded education Aristotle lays out as foundational. As educated, moral leaders, these men make the members of the polis happy (eudaimon), and with such happiness the members of the polis lead fulfilled lives, which are the ultimate goal of the polis.

The definition is self-fulfilling, and, while Aristotle does grant that an individual of a class may not be as good as those in the rest of the class, his definition of classes of humans includes an inherent judgment of their goodness. In other words, a member of a class is bred to goodness or lowliness of the class into which he or she is born. Because of this self-fulfilling conception of the ruling class, having been born of that class means that one must be capable of great leadership. Members of any other class simply are not qualified to question that leadership. Thus, the boards of five or ten magistrates are merely a way of creating a seeming responsibility, which allows the lower classes to feel that they are a part of the governance of the state, decide simple questions, and refrain from revolt. For Aristotle, this end run around individuals sharing in the governance of a state is not a problem because abuse of power by an educated member of the ruling class could not happen in the perfect polis; the rule by the “best men” ultimately defines leaders as those who would not be corrupted. His system of education is the training by

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5 In Crete and Lacedeamonia (Sparta), there were boards of five to ten magistrates to whom legislators had to answer for their final decisions. Aristotle speaks of these at length, discussing problems from the level of education and ability to decide well to time and money issues.

6 For Aristotle, good is an absolute term, as is virtue.
which members of the elite class learn goodness and morality; therefore, by definition, any person who has been educated is a good, moral leader.

The Hellenist view, thus rooted in the ruling class, affected the Roman Republic, which was an aristocracy, and which had some involvement of the common citizenry, as well as definitions of citizenship that mirrored the Greek world. But, with the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire and the shift to Catholicism as empire, religion took the place of class as regards leadership. Because religion and politics were interwoven in the post-Christian Roman world, the education of leaders was appropriated by the hierarchy of the Church. This system functioned on the same assumptions as Aristotle’s educated leadership; because they belonged to the Church, which by definition was good and incorruptible, church leaders and members of the hierarchy would inherently make good, moral decisions. Simultaneously, access to religious education depended heavily on class, which completed the circle of authority.

Such a system would be seen as authoritarian by contemporary Western (humanist) standards, and it has been dismissed as such. In the twenty-first century, Aristotle’s conception of auctoritas still functions; however, it now functions within a structure of institutions rather than of religion as class or in substitute for class. This change is primarily the outcome of the humanist movement, which shifted auctoritas from religion to institution by separating religion from state rule, a shift that brought about the formation of non-religious institutions as the primary social formations of governance. The use of cultural and governmental institutions to control behavior through ideology mirrors the use of a national religion to attain the same goals. In the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, a national education system and, even more so, the communication and cultural ISAs have taken on much of the ideological work of even the church (Althusser 1489). In the last half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, cultural ISAs have taken those tasks further through mass media. Regardless, religion, education, communication, and culture are all ISAs in Althusser’s accounting; therefore, when one has become a part of any of these institutions, one’s authority is based in the level one has attained within that institution. Althusser speaks of the school system ejecting the labor force as people reach their maximum degree of “need to know” and continuing on with those whose know-how is seen as necessary for other, higher-level positions (1491). This structure, rooted as it is in a belief in aristocracy, leaves the Aristotelian approach to auctoritas

7 See Althusser’s discussion of power in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.”
deeply based in one’s connection to one’s institutional *auctoritas*. It is important to note that class *is* still a part of the equation because class defines generally (though certainly not individually) how high into the hierarchy one begins one’s membership in an institution as well as how high in the hierarchy one can climb.

The use of institutions to endorse and extend authority such that *auctoritas* is based on one’s connection to authority has led to rhetoricians’ dismissal of authority as an invalid appeal for persuasion because it is dependent on what boils down to “because I said so,” or at least an insistence that the rhetor’s say-so is authoritative based on her institutional tie. For example, Liu points out that Charles Arthur Willard “relocate[es] the source of authority from a transcendent rationality to such relativized loci as a ‘discipline,’ profession,’ or ‘community’” (416), and that Kim Scheppele and Karoll Soltan approach authority by decentering it from a “‘personal’ locus of authority,” focusing on the contexts in which we see the world and thus on factors such as “law . . . text, [and] rituals” (416). Interestingly, these rhetors are working to remove personal *auctoritas* or shift it from a purely individual space, suggesting that there must be more standing behind the person who “says so” for an ethos appeal to work. An Aristotelian appeal to authority is dependent on one’s authorization from the institution to speak. In Althusser’s model, ISAs function to create cultural knowledge. By leaning on the institution for one’s authority, one reifies knowledge that is not dependent on one’s ability to turn information into knowledge, but on one’s position in the hierarchy that authorizes one to speak knowledgeably. It is the institution that creates knowledge through use of the production power of the hierarchy of the institution—its members.

In his defense of Publius Sulla, conversely, Cicero uses a different approach to *auctoritas*. Born into an Equite family, one of the lower aristocratic classes of Rome, Cicero rose to become consul, a post that was unusual for someone of his class who for the most part became military officers and high level administrators (Riggsby). Cicero does not depend on class for *auctoritas* when defending Sulla; rather, he argues from his *experience* as the consul during the Second Catilinarian Conspiracy to make his defense of Sulla, even using his own position from birth as part of the proof: “it is only by my own numerous and great labours and dangers that I have mounted into their rank, and into this lofty position and dignity which I now enjoy” (Cicero 1282). The conspirators were put to death without due process, and Cicero was given an honorific title for having revealed the conspiracy although the execution of the conspirators was
seen by many as a violation of Roman law without precedent. Cicero’s political life was marked by the unsavory parts of the Catilinarian Conspiracy. Yet Cicero chooses to defend Sulla, who stands accused of being among the conspirators. Cicero’s argument does not rest on any standard forms of proof, but only his own actions and knowledge as consul. He essentially says to the jury that as the consul who revealed the conspiracy, he has the most information about it other than the conspirators themselves:

that conspiracy, if it was laid open by me, is now as evident in all its particulars to Hortensius as it is to me. And when you see that he, a man of such rank, and authority, and virtue, and wisdom, has not hesitated to defend this innocent Publius Sulla, I ask why the access to the cause which was open to Hortensius, ought to be closed against me? (1282)

Moreover, he posits, he has more to lose from defending a conspirator if Sulla truly had been one. He thus argues that because he held the vast majority of information on the conspiracy, if he did not know of Sulla’s involvement, it can only be because Sulla was not involved. Further, Cicero explains that he chose to defend Sulla, when anyone could have, because he is certain that Sulla is not a conspirator. Cicero is thus not staking Sulla’s reputation or his ability to gather evidence; rather he is insisting on his own history of credibility in the matter under consideration as the primary proof of Sulla’s defense (Goodwin 40-2). While that history is tied to his role as consul, it is also tied to his discovery of the conspiracy and his personal choice to reveal, rather than join, it. Additionally, because Cicero’s own political reputation was somewhat harmed by the execution without due process of the conspirators, Cicero is not in a position to rely solely on his position as consul for his dignity.

As Goodwin explains, Cicero’s approach to authority is not based on the idea that institution allows him to speak but that experience does. While Cicero’s experience comes from his institutional role, he is using it much as the ProAms we will see in chapter 2 use theirs. ProAms are professionals who use their institutionally gained expertise outside of the institution to enact emerging personal auctoritas. The difference, in Cicero’s case, is that he is not asking the jury to agree with him because he is consul, but because his experience as consul provided him with specialized knowledge. According to Goodwin and Cicero’s own words, he is not saying “because I told you so”; rather, he is saying “because I have proved myself to be trustworthy.” Goodwin’s theory of the argument to authority is based on transactions in which
the rhetor uses her authority to effect the response she seeks from her auditor: “By the same say-so that makes her auditor’s noncompliance a conspicuous insult, the speaker stakes her dignity on the correctness of what she says. To the same extent that she eliminates her auditor’s wiggle room, she eliminates her own” (51). The way in which the speaker makes her auditor’s noncompliance an insult, as Goodwin explains, is a form almost analogous to blackmail. By staking her dignity on her authority, the speaker creates a situation in which she does not need to provide an argument for compliance but does provide her own authority as proof of her veracity and judgment. She guarantees her choice because the auditor believes she would not stake her dignity on a false claim. This transaction is dependent on the value of dignity in the cultural milieu in which the speaker and auditor interact. The auditor has to choose whether to respect the authority of the speaker or openly disrespect her by going his own way. By creating an unpleasant choice, the speaker manipulates her auditor’s decision in her favor. By staking her authority, the speaker changes the auditor’s perception that her “talk is cheap” to a consideration that, in fact, “talk [is] costly to her” (52). This follows, essentially, a form of game theory, in which each partner to the transaction makes calculations about the calculations the other partner will make (52).

More importantly, however, Goodwin explains that this transaction takes more than one form, and can be accomplished explicitly—as in Cicero’s defense of Sulla—or implicitly. An implicit authority transaction is dependent on the auditor (or, one might say, the subaltern) in the rhetorical situation. The auditor in an implicit authority transaction is encouraged to choose a behavior he believes will please the rhetor based on her authority. As Goodwin explains, the jury and Cicero are thus placed into an authority transaction in which they must answer to an appeal to authority, but the appeal as presented is not a mandate. Cicero is betting with his own dignity that he is right. He is inviting his audience to bet with him, staking his auctoritas along with theirs on the outcome. In such an appeal, the “man of dignity” places personal authority and dignity on the line in the name of a favorable outcome. The audience is asked to place their somewhat lesser dignity on the line by agreeing to that which the rhetor requests, but they are placing their dignity in the same betting pool as the “man of dignity” and thus adding their own

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8 While this approach to understanding authority can be conceived as Isocratean or Ciceronean, I chose to use Ciceronean because Goodwin’s work lends itself specifically to the work I intend to do with institutional versus individual authority. In connecting my use of auctoritas to Cicero, I am maintaining its direct connection to Goodwin’s work on Cicero’s defense of Sulla and to dignity in authority transactions.
dignity to his. The defense of Sulla is not the only time Cicero uses *auctoritas* to indicate authority based on dignity earned through a personal history of credibility. Goodwin also indicates that Cicero has a history of approaching *auctoritas* in this way: “[i]n his maiden deliberative address, Cicero argues that the Roman General Pompeii should be given command . . . [because of his] great *auctoritas*” (54). The argument is based in a combination of Pompeii’s victorious history and the army he will lead. Cicero says there will be no need for fighting, that the simple fact of the appointment of Pompeii will essentially frighten the enemy into surrender (54).

Goodwin discusses other authority transactions that are specifically dependent on the authority of dignity, including ones that do not include active demand by the rhetor and ones that do not require active response from the audience. But all hang on the supposition that when one appeals from authority in the style of Cicero, one is drawing one’s *auctoritas* from one’s own authority and one’s known history and not necessarily speaking in the place of an institution. Furthermore, Goodwin makes clear that the rhetor is not arguing for her auditor to agree with her or believe her opinion to be right; she is only arguing for her auditor to act upon her request and follow her authority. The auditor can act in a deferential way and still think poorly of her; his public behavior or response is the auditor’s goal.

Additionally, in Ciceronian tradition, and leaning on Aristotle’s conceptions of “good men” as political leaders, Goodwin explains that “the civic republican tradition . . . long held a system of unequal dignity not entirely unattractive” (57). But Goodwin is discussing the possibilities for a system of equal dignity in which every person enters the civic sphere as only herself or himself. Still, an authority transaction (or all political interactions) need not entail equality of dignity of all the actors involved to provide equal access to dignity. Rather than insisting that each person be accorded an equal amount of dignity, through interaction a contemporary *polis* can insist that dignity hinge on credibility over time. This conception of *auctoritas* differs from Aristotelian authority in that it is not dependent on the dignity of the institution. “The institutions we maintain to provide contexts for our transactions indeed suggest that we are concerned to restrict the authority of dignity,” states Goodwin (56). But this institutional control of authority of dignity is not necessarily so in the contemporary, networked world of digital convergence. In fact, digital convergence moves away from the Aristotelian
sense of authority by providing the means by which these institutions need no longer be the way in which the authority of dignity is restricted.

Although digital convergence occurs well after her time, Arendt sheds additional light on how this technological phenomenon affects the notion of *auctoritas*. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Arendt states from a twentieth-century perspective that “authority is whatever makes people obey” (416); it should be obvious now that this statement is not nearly as simple as it may seem. While she speaks specifically of governmental authority, and therefore obedience (even if to an “agreed upon rule of law”) is the significant factor, she begins her review of authority in the twentieth century by indicating that the character of the century essentially has been such that the century has seen “the gradual breakdown of the one form of authority which exists in all historically known societies, the authority of parents over children, of teachers over pupils, and, generally, of the elders over the young” (403). She cites this basic form of authority as intrinsic to society and as “necessary for the natural order” (403), particularly because of the child’s helplessness (a state she does not in any way proscribe by age or through stages). It is interesting that she begins with parental authority when discussing government styles in the twentieth century. For many of the twentieth century’s greatest philosophers of social theory, the mirroring of the parental authority relationship in the governmental authority is a problem to be theorized and understood in order to be overcome; likely, the need to overcome parental authority as the building block upon which governmental authority is based stems from Aristotle’s use of the family as his foundation for exploring governance of the city-state (Aristotle, *The Politics*, Kindle file). Yet Arendt sees the overturn of this most basic of authorities and the mirror in the overturn of governmental authorities as troublesome in its being—to her—the underpinning of totalitarian society. Arendt concerns herself with authority as it parallels across institutional and individual interactions. For Arendt, the removal of authority from the family unit is the last sign of a social decline to total misunderstanding of what “freedom” means. She therefore sees the use of the term freedom as a tool made to yoke cultures (she focuses on Nazism) under totalitarian control in the name of that so-called freedom. She painstakingly differentiates totalitarian rule from authoritarian rule. The key here is a movement from the bottom up, from the smallest social unit of parent/child to largest of government/subject.
If, as Arendt believes, the breakdown or overturn of governmental and institutional authority is the result of the breakdown or overturn of individual authority, then the obverse should hold as well: the building of individual authority should build institutional authority. Why does authority not work in the opposite way? Why is institutional authority the mirror of individual authority to her rather than the obverse? This paradox seems an inconsistency in Arendt’s argument. Logic suggests that the greater entity would be the model, at least of the breakdown if not of the upkeep. Yet her logic bears out. Because the greater entity of institutional authority is seen, through her breakdown of the assumptions that surround it, to be merely the sum of the individual parts constituting individual behavior into social structures and then practicing that behavior in a social realm that responds to the institutional power within transactions. In the most simplistic of conceptions, if a “child” will not yield to a parent, why would she yield to a police officer, a soldier, a government? This model of argument for authority from family formation to governance parallels Aristotle’s own argument. For Arendt, the implications are extremely important in the separation of totalitarian dictatorship from authoritarian dictatorship (the latter clearly carrying far more positive weight with her). To understand this authority-based conundrum with respect to how digital convergence affects *auctoricas*, this dissertation focuses on the ISA of journalism, rather than on the RSA of government, either of which is a consideration of institutional authority. Yet, as chapters 2-4 reveal, that corollary of individual authority building institutional authority is not what the sub-cases of individuals practicing journalism on the Internet bear out.

Perhaps because it is such a contested notion, as discussed above, some rhetoricians and much of the field of philosophy have attempted to discard authority as a legitimate appeal. The argument, as Liu explains in “Authority, Presumption, and Invention,” is that “[t]o invoke authority . . . is to signal that the rhetor has no more obligation to present arguments concerning the point in question” (421). In other words, it is an argument that simply insists “because I said so” and therefore no argument at all. But both Liu and Goodwin argue against such a simple dismissal of the appeal and the term, pointing to several ideas that underlie the possibility of it being far more than simply a demand for unquestioning agreement. Liu suggests that invoking authority is the first step in invention because it helps to create exigence. By pointing to what “the authorities” on a topic may have to say, the rhetor opens several options. First, she can limit her argument by stating the authority’s stance and then dealing with parts not discussed by the
cited authority. Alternately, she can use authority to create the problem space she will then use to create her argument. Goodwin stakes the claim that the rhetor invoking authority also is placing her authority on the line. Dignity—the basis for authority, according to Goodwin—is the currency by which authority is used in an essentially equal transaction of power. Tacit authority allows for deniability on the authority’s part; however, it also requires the authority to “assure auditors that the speaker is neither inconstant nor abusing his power” by creating a record of credibility (46).

Liu’s argument holds well for the defense of the appeal to authority for writers as well as within the defined borders of institutional knowledge creation. It also highlights one of the reasons digital convergence acts as a threat to institutional knowledge creation: in creating personal auctoritas, rhetors using the tools of digital convergence do not necessarily use someone else’s known authority as an appeal, but create their own authority and hold it in equally high regard. In creating and maintaining individual auctoritas, rhetors act to critique institutional authority—of which they are not part. Through taking on the knowledge-making role of the institution, these rhetors challenge institution by questioning the need for institutional provenance as well as by critiquing its practices; in other words, if their personal authority is sufficient, who needs the institution’s blessing? As with Arendt, neither Liu’s nor Goodwin’s pieces were written within a digitally converged era. As such, they cannot have accounted for the ways in which networked information spaces would radically affect the power that rhetors challenging institutions might gain from using the tools of digital convergence. Those tools depend both on how knowledge is formed and on how the network itself is created. They thus depend on the movement from data to knowledge.

Data without context is not information, and information can only become knowledge when imparted in such a way as to be absorbed; historically, that way is through narrative. In The Social Life Of Information, Seely Brown and Duguid explain that this contextualization and narration of information into knowledge is at least partly an effect of the need for validation beyond presentation of facts alone: “Published documents, for example, often embodied institutional authority of the publisher. The investment evident in a document’s material content is often a good indicator of the investment in its informational content” (187). Investment, in Seely Brown and Duguid’s explanation, therefore acts as a form of provenance not only for the information itself but also for the meaning attached to it. This parity of investment and perceived
veracity would make *The New York Times* a hefty contender in terms of authority. For Goodwin, this cycle is self-propelling. In other words, because *The New York Times* has established authority, it invests its credibility in anything it publishes. Because it regularly publishes credible work, it maintains and gains authority and, therefore, can then invest in further publishing “informational content” as Brown and Duguid refer to it (Goodwin 49). The entirety of Philip Meyer’s argument in *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age*, depends on his cycle of credibility and investment. In it, Meyer contends that with a willingness to lower profit margins and maintain credibility, newspapers can remain print institutions despite the Internet, and in one short chapter alongside it. The knowledge produced by an institution like a newspaper comes from more than simply putting facts into narrative and imbuing those narratives with heft, however. Newspapers use editorial meetings to make decisions on what will be covered, which means that such decisions create both the narrative that readers receive as information and the context that will form that information into knowledge. The difference between information and knowledge, then, comes down to veracity, context, and utility in circulation. Even a vast compilation of data is just that: data. Any set of facts, even related facts, can be called information. Brown and Duguid explain, however, that information acts as knowledge when it helps to “structure society, enabling social groups to form, develop, and maintain a sense of shared identity” (189). Thus, information becomes knowledge when it connects members of a community by circulating in context with other information, creating form and utility. As a group of member institutions, the MSM has the social capital to invest and reinvest in information as they continue to create knowledge. This social capital, which has built the MSM, as the MSM cached more capital, formed the MSM into an institution. This structure for knowledge-making provides power to institutions, and so rhetors who challenge institutional authority, as Liu and Goodwin explain rhetors do, must find ways to enact power, or to build dignity of themselves, in order to create enough social capital to create a viable challenge. The idea that knowledge is an institutional product is particularly important to any discussion of information sharing and knowledge creation on the Web because Web 2.0, the second major iteration of the Internet, takes that production site out of the monopoly of the institution and places it squarely in the hands of anyone with access and interest.

By producing knowledge without authorization, the unauthorized voices of the Web not only threaten the authorized product’s claim to authenticity (through the provenance of
institutional creation), but they also threaten the identity of the institution as a producer of knowledge. Digital convergence makes the product available just as Web 2.0 makes the process possible. Yet many users of Web 2.0, as tool and term, do not even know its provenance; this provenance is important because at its heart lies participation. Tim O’Reilly and John Battelle, two technologists and IT business members who write prolifically about the Web, created the term Web 2.0 as they prepared for a conference on what the Web faced after the dot com bubble burst of 2001: “Dale Dougherty, Web pioneer and O’Reilly VP, noted that far from having ‘crashed,’ the Web was more important than ever, with exciting new applications and sites popping up with surprising regularity” (O’Reilly, “What is Web 2.0”). The group noted that the companies that had survived what they began calling a shake-out rather than a crash had particular traits in common that could be said to characterize the turn the Web had taken. They began by making a list of characteristics, placing Web 1.0 characteristics on one side and what they termed Web 2.0 on the other. Among the characteristics on the 2.0 side are “Napster, Wikipedia, blogging and participation” (O’Reilly, “What is Web 2.0”).

Participation is perhaps the most important term on the list; in particular, participation becomes a cultural move that opens the space for emergence of specific kinds of auctoritas. Jenkins, founder of MIT’s Comparative Media Studies Program, defines convergence broadly as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences . . . “ (2). Such cooperation is a form of participation. Interestingly, it is difficult to define participation in its normal terms where the Web is concerned because even Web 1.0 involved what might be considered participation: people from various backgrounds were involved in the early BBSs that characterized much of what would become the Web, and they were involved heavily in Webpage creation as the World Wide Web was invented by Tim Berners-Lee (not by Al Gore as the joke goes) (Gillmor 23). But Jenkins makes clear that participation is the primary way in which the Internet has changed culture. He studies information exchange communities that have gained power over institutional entities for collective gathering and sharing of information to create knowledge by looking at online groups like the game spoiler communities that arose around the original Survivor series. As he indicates, it is through gathering as a group and participating together that such

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9 The choice of “2.0,” O’Reilly explained in 2009 (in a white paper naming the latest turns in the Web as Web to show that the new growth is exponential), was intended as a “call to action” (O’Reilly, “Web Squared” 1), using the term—2.0—for a second version release of software.
communities are capable of solving the *Survivor* series and outmaneuvering the cultural ISA by doing so before the series airs. However, while Jenkins’s communities clearly shared information to gain *auctoritas*, in his research, sharing did not lead to the promised land of democratic/fully egalitarian space of the digital world. It led only into these specific communities’ worlds. Other scholars, including Shirky, Benkler and Bruns, also have looked at peer-production of information-sharing to see whether a path to knowledge-creation helped forge the utopian vision some futurists believed the Internet would bring about with the rise of individual *auctoritas*.

To that end, in *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage*, Bruns introduces the term *produsage*. Starting from an explanation of Alvin Toffler’s term *prosumer*, Bruns shows how prosumer, intended to describe consumer behavior that enacts production of specific and consumer-centered products, does not apply to individuals and (especially) groups of individuals interacting on the Internet with others and with content. In many ways, utopianists used the idea of the prosumer to propose the purely egalitarian model of the Internet as the likely outcome of networked information. To explain the disconnect, Bruns first discusses Toffler’s re-definition of the consumer, saying Toffler:

> [A]ppears to envision . . . not a shifting of the balance between producers and consumers, but merely the development of even more advanced consumption scales (the very term “prosumer” itself also has the emergence of a professional consumer, of course). (11)

Bruns further explains the difference as being tied to the activity in which individuals participate and the ways in which participation is possible. The prosumer is a participant who moves in and out of the production process for any given field. Bruns explains that, by contrast, Toffler intended a feedback loop created by the producer of a given product (and, in Toffler’s case, primarily consumer products and not necessarily information) listening actively to the consumer and changing her or his product to suit the needs or wants expressed by each consumer. For example, the producer might design and build an ergonomic chair specifically for a consumer based on her spondylitis and using information from her MRI. Here, the line into prosumer is crossed when specialty production is created such that on-demand design and delivery is made possible. Toffler suggests an economic shift into direct order and just-in-time delivery, as opposed to mass production and delivery to a mass market. Produsage, on the other hand, is more focused on the idea that users are directly involved in the production of content through
usage. By taking content and repurposing, reusing, changing, or repackaging and then re-presenting it, produsers become part of an ongoing production process, which does not ever end with an actual product; rather, it leads to an artifact, or an invitation to further produsage. An example of this process can be seen in the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which began as a twitter and FaceBook hastag and later campaign after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the death of Trayvon Martin. The hashtag is a way of indexing information on the Web, essentially saying “this belongs under that heading.” But the hashtag for #BlackLivesMatter moved off the Internet after the police killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, when protests began in St. Louis and New York respectively, and protesters carried signs with the hashtag phrase on them. It has since become a contested phrase with a counterphrase of #AllLivesMatter often used on the Internet, but the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag has gone from an indexing of commentary on the Trayvon Martin case to commentary on the killing of unarmed Black youth, to a protest movement offline, and now to a Website, launched September 30, 2015. The movement page is designed for information gathering, sharing and produsage, and according to the mission statement seeks to move beyond “extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes. . . It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement” (“BlackLivesMatter”). Using the term artifact allows the discourse about the networked world to reflect the process of ongoing usage; the artifact produced is always already open to further produsage: “Users are always already necessarily also producers of the shared knowledge base, regardless of whether they are aware of this role—they have become a new, hybrid, produser” (Bruns 2, emphasis original).

Differentiating between prosumerage and produsage is important in particular for Internet culture, in which the primary process of production is focused on content and not on physical products. Thus, while ordering a chair with customizations I want and having it delivered to my home is a proto-prosumer behavior (proto- because I generally have to pick customization from already-available options), taking a story or video from an MSM (or another produser’s) site, reusing it or editing it for my own needs, and then republishing it is a produser activity. In doing this, I am both interacting with the MSM and creating new content, which I then make available for further produsage by others who may be in my community and may use it to respond or who may be in a community with opposing interests and use it to refute my thinking—any combination of these behaviors fits into the produsage model and acts as a link in a chain of ongoing produsage. Produsage behavior is auctoritas-related in that it requires, builds, and
presents auctoritas. For example, in taking a video from the MSM (or another produser) and reusing, editing, or critiquing it, I am challenging the MSM’s authority. I am not denying the authority of the other produser, but I am asserting my own auctoritas and so I am challenging the MSM’s claim to the institutional right to knowledge-creation. Prosumerage behavior, on the other hand, requires of me only that I ask from the producer that it meet my needs from a selection of options it makes available to me. The two sets of behavior are different in the identity and authority asserted by the agent enacting them.

It is useful to note that produsage of content on the Internet is not plagiarism in its traditional sense. The distinction may be a matter of opinion and, therefore, creating the category of produser is a way to argue that this behavior specifically is not plagiaristic. First, the use of content is not merely a reproduction of the same content for consumption by the produser’s readers; it is a use of the content to create new content. Thus, more than merely taking content wholesale and using it unchanged or even editing it, produsage is reusing, commenting, discussing, and re-purposing content. Second, plagiarism carries with it the connotation of taking credit for or making profit from another’s work. Produsage reveals the fallacy of the notion of “original” work and the reality that all knowledge, even that provided by the New York Times, is created through circulation and contextualization of information. Thus, produsage depends on a nuanced difference between information and knowledge to maintain the separation of produsage from plagiarism. Finally, produsage is itself an argument based in Bruns’s assumption that the creation and finalization of text as product is a conception created by the Industrial Revolution. The idea that any product is fixed and not open to revision or repurposing is the outcome of mass production, which can be seen in the physical product realm when one considers the reuse and repurposing of all materials in agricultural cultures (out of necessity) as opposed to the disposability and replace-ability of products in the mass-produced consumer economy. As for information and texts, one can see it particularly well in the production, editing, redaction, revision, rewriting, and (re)appropriation of biblical works before the canonization (and in many cases even after); although these works are not canonical, they are in circulation, which merely changes their authoritative position. Hence, Bruns suggests that the appropriate response to the challenge to institutional authority created by this (re)use of content is to see it not as a plagiaristic behavior but as a knowledge creation behavior, which is a behavior with a long history. The change itself, however, has also challenged institutional authority as currently
conceived. But then, institutional authority is facing the challenges whether institutions recognize them or not, so the institution must change with the “market” as can be seen clearly both in journalism and in the music industry. Outside of the communication ISA, it also can be seen in education, business (particularly digital business), religion, government, and other institutions.

The Power Law is another concept crucial to understanding the emergence of auctoritas on the Internet because it helps to explain how participation can be spread out among produsers. In *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, Shirky discusses the strengths that heterarchical groups of individuals on the Web can build through peer production (Benkler 251). In particular, Shirky is interested in the ways people interact on social media to create and complete peer-produced projects as compared to the ways corporations create and complete projects. His comparison of the two is based primarily in what is called the Power Law, which is the mathematical and graphic explanation for how crowdsourcing and peer-production work—a process that functions as the opposite of the bell curve, which is the most common measure of naturally occurring phenomena. Shirky’s purpose is to provide an understanding of the greater flexibility inherent in heterarchical groups as opposed to hierarchically organized corporations. The Power Law is also discussed by Benkler and Bruns as well as Barabási because of its importance to understanding online interactions. They focus on this concept particularly because the Power Law is, in effect, the opposite of the bell curve, which is what one expects to see in statistical explanations of human behavior.

When access to information sharing and knowledge creation becomes available, as it has through the technology of digital convergence, despite attempts at equal access, the

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10 Like many, I have used peer-production, or large group peer production, interchangeably with crowd-sourcing, until I began to look into the origin of the portmanteau of crowd-sourcing, which comes from Jeff Howe, a *Wired* magazine reporter, who writes that it is “the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call” (Howe).

11 Access is always already never equal. It is an inherently problematic issue, which must be nuanced to be applied, and which remains, both in our Western world and globally, inherently unequal. The barriers to Internet access, however, are vastly different and no longer depend on certain kinds of institutional approval (though even this statement is problematic). Most access has to do with resource availability, which is always already institutionally approved through class, gender, educational, and other factors. However, one need not gain institutional approval to gain access to the tools, or to learn to use them. The constant in access is the paradox that freedom in one area of access does not in any way mean or guarantee (or even suggest a move toward) freedom in other areas of access. Although it is outside the scope of this project to fully nuance this reality, I use access herein in its narrowest sense to mean that any person “can” log on to the Internet and make her voice heard at some level. The deeper question of access is partly answered here by the explanation of the Power Law. For more on access, see: Robin Goodfellow and
The collaborative workload is not equally shared and voices are not equally represented. The Power Law explains how shared projects tend to work and provides visual representation for growth of the Internet, as Barabási explains. Any person who has had to complete a group assignment will be familiar with the outcome, as shown in figure 1.

![The Long Tail of The Power Law](image)

Figure 1. The Long Tail (on the right) of The Power Law. (Kranen)

The Power Law is sometimes called the 80-20 rule. In figure 1, the left part of the graph represents the majority of the work of about 80 percent, which is accomplished by, at best, 20 percent of produsers\(^{12}\) in a given project. The remaining approximate 20 percent of the work, pictured on the right and known as the long tail, is accomplished by the remaining 80 percent of produsers, but the right side of the graph shows how that last 20 percent is *shared* among the 80 percent of produsers. The long tail, a phrase adopted into Internet lingo, indicates that the mean and the mode\(^{13}\) are far from the left side, which represents the majority of the work accomplished. The mean, of course, is half way through the curve. Yet that equal half is placed

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12 Though Shirky does *not* use this term, I do here because of the information provided via Bruns.

13 Mean is the term used for the average number in a statistical set, while mode is the number found most frequently in that set. In a bell curve, the mean, mode, and median (the number at the very middle separating the higher half of the set from the lower) are all the same. The bell curve is also called a “normal distribution.” This terminology illustrates beautifully how unexpected the Power Law was when first discovered as part of complex network theory, as explained by Barabási (100).
such that about “three-quarters of the [workers] contribute a below average” amount of work, according to Shirky. He states:

This pattern is general to social media: on mailing lists with more than a couple dozen participants, the most active writer is generally much more active than the person in the number-two slot, and far more active than average. (124)

As Shirky further explains, the pattern remains the same for small sites (blogs) or massive projects (Wikipedia, for example); indeed, while one may expect this collaboration pattern to hinder the work, it actually acts to “drive” it (124-5). The inequality allows for produsers who are not prepared to commit a great deal of time to the project to nonetheless provide some value or worth to it, not through volume of work done by individuals, but by volume of individuals doing very little. Because there are so many produsers represented in the long tail, the produsers in the upper ranges can have their work spread, and the produsers who benefit (both those who “create” the content and those who function as audience and are produsers in other arenas) get more than they otherwise would. The Power Law shows how networked projects make use of the inequality of produsers’ exuberance to create better work. By creating the space for produsers to create auctoritas, digital convergence helps drive that exuberance. Much like the college team-project mentioned above, there are always produsers more interested than the others in any given project. For most networked projects and produsage, however, unlike the college team-project, no one gets graded on participation. Participation is thus its own reward, and produsers can make as much or as little of it as they prefer or for which they have the capacity. Shirky calls this approach to project creation “harnessing inequality rather than limiting it” (125). What this means, in practice, is that a social site that depends on mass numbers of people can do so by getting members to buy in at the lowest level of involvement, yet it still can get more done than a small, or even somewhat large, dedicated group could.

Harnessing inequality and allowing produsers to contribute at individual levels of interest also leads to flexibility in problem solving and to the freedom to fail repeatedly. Shirky explains that this freedom to fail leads to innovation; conversely for example, by fearing failure, some corporations fail at creating innovation. Freedom to fail—and to recover from that failure through creating fixes—is one of the reasons that Linux rarely has any given bug for long, whereas Microsoft, where failure is feared or at least not freely embraced, must put out
completely rewritten versions to fix any given bug (and therefore waits until they amass at the tipping point at which rewriting is worthwhile). Linux is open-source, and its user community has a communication forum. Users who find bugs either fix them and then share the fix to the source code or they find bugs and, if they cannot fix them, ask the group, who then take on the problems they can handle or are interested in. For this process to work, a given project has to be “turk”-able. That is, it has to be something that can be broken down into ever-smaller problems so that the work can be spread as widely as possible; thus, produsers at the lowest levels of interest and involvement can choose granular problems to solve, allowing them to maintain participation, even as they maintain low buy-in (242-46).

Low buy-in is an important factor in creating a tipping point from difference of degree to difference of kind, central to the shift in authority effected by digital convergence, which relates to participation in that the majority of people participating in produsage do not commit a great deal of their time and effort. Instead, they do small things, just in time, which accounts for the long tail of the Power Law. The tipping point from a difference of degree to a difference of kind is the moment at which a new auctoritas can emerge in a complex system functioning in a large, scale-free, modular network. Complex systems, as explained by Neil Johnson, often have very sudden shifts from ordered to disordered behavior and back, shifts that look like chaos or phase transitions but are actually characteristic of emergence—these are generally the outcomes of the decision making of interconnected agents in a system; these decisions are based on prior experience and feedback, as it turns into patterns. In The Moment of Complexity, Mark C. Taylor, discusses how these changes apply to contemporary American social fiber and cultural behavior, but his work touches on rhetorical issues as well, as witnessed by the special issue of JAC dedicated to considerations of how Taylor’s work affects the field. In it, while the discussion of systems theory is prevalent, the work of Thomas Rickert specifically addresses the idea that the network itself can be seen as a Gorgian conception of kairos. In Rickert’s conception of kairos qua complexity, the network’s emergent behavior enacts agents as they, in turn, enact emergent behavior through participation in the system. It is this participation that creates kairos by willing their moment of action, just as feedback wills the moment of emergence in complex systems. But this enaction of kairos is not a sign of programmatic behavior on the part of the agent.

Auctoritas is a requisite part of agency in the complex system of networked information sharing because it emerges from the interaction of agents sharing information and responding to
feedback. These co-evolving agents do not simply react to feedback and information they receive from the network; they interact by continually *sharing* information on the network as they receive and produse content. Benkler, a law professor at Harvard’s Berkman Institute for Law and Society who has studied and written prolifically about networks and their power in the late capitalist era, writes in *The Wealth of Networks* that the network includes the connection of persons in addition to the exchange of “content,” a term I use interchangeably with information.\(^{14}\) For Benkler, the permalink created a “see for yourself” attitude of information exchange on the Web, the phenomenon by which people sharing information (most often in a manner that works to create knowledge rather than just passing it along) link to their sources so that their readers may go directly to the studies or blogs or news stories or any other source and, literally, *see* for themselves; in other words, people can judge the site from which the data came, reconceive its meaning, talk back, or simply add on to what they read and publish it in their own space, a form of co-evolution. Therefore, the permalink turned the Internet from a free market of ideas, where all were hawks and none were buyers, into an inter-discourse space of ideas, where information was refined and knowledge—a previously institution-only domain—was created. This ability to cite instantly and to create a sense of *auctoritas* in one’s readers by inviting them to see for themselves as well as to build one’s sense of *auctoritas* by constructing a history of credible produsage (a topic discussed in detail in chapter 3) allows the interacting agents in the complex system to co-evolve. Simultaneously, it enables digital convergence to create a technological shift that moves information sharing among individuals from a difference of degree, past the tipping point, to a difference of kind. The technological changes and their effect will be discussed in detail in chapter 2.

Benkler has also shown that, in fact, although access is limited and is also vastly different in user-experience and approach across the globe, small voices do get heard in smaller pools. These, in turn, sharpen ideas, moving them to bigger pools where they are again sharpened and moved on. Essentially, ideas are moved, created, designed, envisioned, and revised (and revisioned); further, ideas are moved to create knowledge at the “bigger” or higher readership levels of the net—an upward sifting sieve (Benkler 250). This upward sifting of ideas from smaller clusters to larger clusters is partly the outcome of the actual topology of the Web, as

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\(^{14}\) I do distinguish *information* from *knowledge* and discuss the transformation of information into cultural knowledge both above and, more fully, in chapter 4.
received from Barabási’s work, a topology that makes the complex system of the Internet fertile ground for information sharing, which has the opposite effect of the top-down topology of institutional authority-based broadcast.

In *Linked: How Everything is Connected to Everything Else and What it Means for Business, Science, and Everyday Life*, Barabási explains the math, physics, and implications of the Internet using network theory, which has been sharpened by study of the Internet—much of it in his Center for Complex Network Research at Northeastern University. Barabási, like Benkler, looks at network topology online as both a physical network of interconnected routers and a set of links, or hubs and nodes, among individuals groups of individuals. Barabási explains through network theory how the topology of the Internet functions and what the laws of large, scale-free networks (i.e., dependent on preferential linking, fitness and hubs for its heterarchical, decentralized formation) are. As a scale-free network, the Internet (and its World Wide Web, which is only one part of the Internet) does not function with a central, hierarchic command or design. It also does not function like the less-centralized but also hub-dependent network of electricity or highways. Rather, “the World Wide Web is a scale-free network, dominated by hubs and nodes with a very large number of links . . . Starting from any page, we can only reach about 24 percent of all documents” (221). The hub-based nature of the network, in addition to its massive amount of links, and its deceptive smallness, means that a certain topological design can be inferred for the personal links the Internet represents, though not for the physical linking of routers that form its infrastructure. Although nodes on the Internet clearly do not indicate personal connections, each document or site on the Internet is part of the personal linking, human creation the Internet represents. Further, the Internet is a directed network. A

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15 Barabási’s work on network theory predates complex systems work, but also presages it.
16 Internet topology can be measured in varying ways, all defined through hubs and nodes. One can define nodes as any part of a network connected by links. Thus, one can look at the way the Internet connects humans and see each person and the connections that person makes through use on the Internet as a node and its links; or one can look at individual sites as nodes with the links to and the links from that site as the links. One can even choose to look at the physical topology of the Internet by selecting routers as the nodes and then using the cables that connect the routers to users as the links. In each of these cases, the nodes with the greatest number of links will be the hubs.
17 The Internet is known to obey what is called a small-world phenomenon, a rule that says that one need not follow a long path to get from “one end” of the Internet to the other. Rather, network theory shows that in any network, one can get from any given link to another within a certain number of links. In the social network, this number is approximately 5.5, as discovered by Stanley Milgram, a Harvard professor best known for his 1967 studies on people’s willingness to damage others at the behest of authority (Barabási 44). The social world, however, has only about seven billion links (the number of persons alive on the planet). The Internet, by comparison, has many billions more links. Yet, to connect any two nodes on the Internet (that can be connected) one need only travel 18.59 links (50).
directed network is one in which one cannot necessarily follow back the path of links one has traveled. This is due to the fact that while the permalink may be the great revolutionizer in terms of creating a “see for yourself” economy; it is not bi-directional. Just because I link to a blog does not mean it is linked back to me. This directionality also affects the topology of the Internet (see figure 2), “first addressed by Andre Broder, from AltaVista, and his collaborators from IBM and Compaq . . . their measurements indicated that the most important consequence of directedness is that the Web does not form a single homogeneous network. Rather, it is broken into four major continents . . . each forcing us to obey different traffic rules” (227). These four continents look somewhat like a bowtie. The bow’s core accounts for almost 20 percent of sites; one loop represents an outlinked group, which is the group of pages one can get to from the core sites; and the other loop represents an inlinked group, the sites from which one can get to the core. In addition, each of the outlinked and inlinked groups as represented by the loops has a small ribbon of sites one can reach only from that group; furthermore, these groups also are linked by tubes that connect those groups to each other but cannot be reached directly from the core. Finally, there are clusters of sites that are fully disconnected and standalone; these might include security sites, governmental sites and corporation intranets.

![Figure 2: “The Bowtie Structure of the Web” (Benkler 250)](image)

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18 Benkler’s work is entirely licensed under creative commons; as such the use of his diagram here is permitted with citation.
Both Benkler and Barabási use this topological map to explain movement of information on the Web. They both also make clear that the central core comprises the hubs that control the majority of traffic on the Web.¹⁹ These hubs are important, as chapter 3 shows, both because they function at large-scale and small-scale levels of information exchange and because they are the Achilles heel of the Web. The network’s topology also affects the possibilities for its use. As Barabási explains:

Lessig is right: The architecture of the Web controls just about everything, from access to consumers to the probability of being visited by surfing along the links. But this science of the Web increasingly proves that this architecture represents a higher level of organization from the code. . . . As long as you continue to delegate to the individual the choice of where to link, we will not be able to significantly alter the Web’s large-scale topology, and we will have to look at the consequences. (238)

These consequences become clearer as one looks more deeply into the ways the architecture of the network controls the options made available by it. In many ways, the network architecture makes individual auctoritas the necessarily functional mode on the Internet.

Finally, the Internet is also modular. Leaning heavily on new research into the modular nature of the human cell, Barabási and his research team have discovered that the Internet has a modular, scale-free topology, which means that regardless of how small or large it may be, the network functions in the same way, by use of hubs, and that the bowtie effect can be seen both as the overarching continental design and the building blocks that make the design. A modular, scale-free topology is key to understanding how smaller clusters of nodes are created using the same hub-centered design. This modular underpinning of the scale-free network is what allows for the upward sifting activity noted by Benkler. That upward sifting activity forms a powerful tool for individual auctoritas on the Web. Network theory on complex systems, coupled with an understanding of how digital convergence technologies bring Aristotelian and Ciceronian approaches to authority into conflict, create a demonstrable need for a study of how this technological shift is a difference of degree that brings about a difference of kind.

¹⁹ It is useful to note that hubs, like anything else in the world, are not fully stable regardless of interaction density. Hubs can collapse (sometimes because of the addition of new hubs), but they usually do not do so in great numbers because there is a threshold. When one or more hubs collapse, the others take up the traffic.
Significance of the Study

What, then, is the effect of the emergence of *auctoritas* as brought about by digital convergence? In sum, this case study of journalism at the point of change between a difference of degree and a difference of kind in the information sharing of humans by virtue of digital convergence, and the effect that change has on institutional authority shows that institutional authority, an Aristotelian, institutionally-based dignity is in conflict with Ciceronean *auctoritas*, grounded in a personal, temporal, sense of dignity and history of credibility. This conflict demonstrates a clear need to gain a better understanding both of the conflict between the types of authority, and to better understand our own rhetorical definitions of authority. A better understanding of the conflict between authority and *auctoritas* will help scholars in many fields to understand what effect digital convergence is having and will likely have on not only authority but also on institutions, social structure, and digital convergence itself. A more nuanced definition of authority will allow rhetoricians to better recognize and assess enactment of authority and authority transactions as well as allow the field to better consider the role of authority in rhetorical interactions. There are implications for the study of authority as a rhetorical tool. A movement away from Aristotelian authority of institutional dignity and toward a Ciceronian ethos of civic reputation—the temporal rather than spatial—authority is at least part of what will come of the digital age. The greater implication may lie in the “forever-ness” of the Internet. The conception that anyone has the ability to control and shape a *single* narrative of history is already far gone, but with parallel lines of discourse and narratives of meaning that take up similar but not necessarily competing spaces, digital convergence allows for plural lines of historical narrative “of record.” The “of record” is important because being the narrative of record is the primary job of newspapers. And yet, there is no way a single paper can cover everything that needs to be covered in the entire nation on any given day—even given the paper of record caveat of “of historical significance”—since that factor is often an unknown at the time. As the implications are only beginning to unfold in this virtual arena, a great deal more research in rhetoric and multiple other fields is needed.

Summary

This dissertation considers the effects that digital convergence has on institutional authority, particularly in journalism, as a means to consider the rhetorical agency behind Internet-based information sharing and knowledge making by people who previously were
considered audience members by the institution commonly known as the Fourth Estate. In chapter 1, I have described the technological change of digital convergence that challenges the authoritative voice of the institution of journalism as the problem at hand. The review of the literature surrounding authority and digital convergence demonstrates a need for a study of how this technological shift is a difference of degree that brings about a difference of kind. In short, digital convergence has created a space of concern and thus a body of study that applies to the field of rhetoric. The practice of authority transactions is affected in various ways by digital convergence. This study of the challenge to institutional authority through the primary case of journalism demonstrates the change of the rhetorical meaning of authority in response to three specific research questions. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 offer sub-cases as examples of the digital convergence challenge to journalism’s institutional authority. In Chapter 2, I explore the implications of the legal discussion of the “freedom of the press” from the First Amendment as a freedom of technology, as opposed to a freedom of an industry (or institution), showing that the Fifth Estate is essentially a technological effect of digital convergence with implications for institutional authority in the form of a challenge to that authority with a competing individual auctoritas. The chapter then explores the ways in which the institution of journalism responds using proto-authorization, via an analysis of a PBS site’s observation that most Fifth Estate projects are part of Fourth Estate outreach (the site is designed for professional journalists) and a look at some of these hybrid projects, as well as an analysis of CFAPA.org, an online site that provides press credentials to anyone who signs an agreement to maintain the journalism code of ethics, and the ACLU’s use of an app that allows real-time video uploading to protect just-in-time produsers who fear their filming might be interrupted by authorities. Chapter 3 analyzes the case of ReutersGate, in which the MSM is so powerfully critiqued by bloggers that it responds within days. The chapter considers the implications of the bloggers’ interactions as well as the MSM’s reaction. Finally, Chapter 4 considers how WikiLeaks manipulates institutional authority to deploy auctoritas through shape-shifting. The chapter looks at the “third space” created by WikiLeaks, which is not fully a whistleblower/Fifth Estate and not fully a member of the MSM. In Chapter 5, these sub-cases are considered with respect to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The synthesis of these collective analyses reveals the change in rhetorical deployment of authority as made possible by digital convergence.
CHAPTER 2

DEFINING THE MEDIA:
HOW THE PRESS AS TECHNOLOGY AND THE LONG TAIL OF POWER LAW MAKE PROTO-AUTHORIZATION NECESSARY

Before the (r)Evolution: From Zenger to Convergence

In 1735, John Peter Zenger, publisher of The New York Weekly Journal, was arrested on charges of seditious libel. Zenger had, since publishing them in 1733, repeatedly refused to divulge the name of the author of a set of editorials and cartoons lampooning the governor of the Colony of New York, William Cosby. It was not until August of 1735 that he was arrested, having been charged by the colony’s attorney general after a grand jury refused to indict him. Another eight months passed before his trial began. Zenger’s first attorney, James Alexander, was dismissed by the court—which was being presided over by two of Cosby’s handpicked cronies. Ironically, Alexander was, unbeknownst to the judges, the author of the editorials and cartoons which accused the governor of corruption and (what today is known as) payola; he was dismissed for questioning the disinterest of the judges. When Zenger’s new attorney, Andrew Hamilton, arrived from Philadelphia, he found himself facing the same impossible situation that had gotten Alexander dismissed—in fact, Hamilton arrived only in time to give closing arguments. The judges instructed the jury that the only consideration for guilt in a case of seditious libel was whether the defamatory material was published. The jury instructions were, at that time, true to the law. Rather than argue a point of law he could not win, Hamilton dealt with the situation by admitting to the jury that the Journal had published the pieces. He then turned to what he saw as the real matter at hand; there were no false statements in any of the editorials and cartoons. Truth, Hamilton argued, should not be muzzled just because it was uncomfortable to Cosby, or any power. Zenger should be found not guilty of seditious libel. The jury returned “in minutes,” according to Zenger’s own account of the trial, with a not guilty verdict (Burns 98-108).

Zenger’s trial set the precedent for allowing truth as a defense for libel. In addition, it set the precedent for jury nullification in American jurisprudence and is studied, therefore, by
students of both journalism and law. John Peter Zenger was not a journalist. Nor did he write or draw any of the editorials or editorial cartoons for which he was charged with seditious libel. As the publisher, he was the only person Cosby had any recourse to blame. But, as publisher, he was also the one person whose job was defined by the press as a technology rather than by journalism as a profession. In other words, as a publisher, he did not write or work as a journalist; rather, he made his money operating a printing press and making it available for those who wanted to practice journalism. Zenger, a non-journalist from the then British Colony of New York, thus became a hero to future generations of American journalists because of his defense of the right to publish truth about powerful people. In addition, the Zenger trial was one of many British and American trials that express the then-current understanding of the press as a technology and not as a profession or industry.

The understanding of the press as a technology has stood throughout the history of American journalism, but starting in the early nineteenth century it was joined in the public imagination with an understanding of the press as a profession or industry (Volokh 483) in that people came to see the word *press* as meaning journalism as much as it meant the physical technology used in the production of journalism. This understanding of press as industry or profession, as well as technology, has led many, according to Eugene Volokh, to a general view that the protections of the press in the First Amendment apply specifically to members of that profession, rather than applying to anyone who chooses to use the technology. That profession has become an institution in the United States in part as an outcome of the Zenger trial and in part as an outcome of the First Amendment. The country’s Founding Fathers believed strongly in the importance of journalism. Thomas Jefferson, while facing defamatory comments about having fathered children by his slave, Sally Hemmings, famously said, “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter” (qtd. in Burns 388). As discussed in chapter 1, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno define ISAs as always already challenged by counter-cultural movements of all sorts (1234-35). Also, as discussed in chapter 1, because these threats are constant, it takes a viable challenge, one that cannot be deflected or appropriated effectively into style or essentially ignored, to make ISA institutions respond (1233). As such, through noting institutional responses (both whether a response exists at all and the extent and manner of the response), one can gauge the viability of a given threat.
This chapter demonstrates how the institution of journalism responds to the threat to its institutional authority initiated by the emergence of auctoritas, which occurs as the direct outcome of the tools and affordances of digital convergence. It also considers the ways in which this emergence of Ciceronian auctoritas among the Fifth Estate, particularly in what is known as the long tail, leads to a counter-shift by the institution through proto-authorization, and the ways that proto-authorization can then lead to a further response by the Fifth Estate through proto-institutionalization.

Specifically, this chapter addresses research question 1: In the face of digital convergence, how and why does institutional authority respond, reshape, or re-appropriate in response to said challenges? To do so, it considers two ways in which digital convergence threatens journalism’s institutional authority: (1) through the consideration of the difference of kind made possible by digital convergence technology and (2) through consideration of the ways that technology magnifies and highlights the porousness of the borders between individuals and society. It uses a case study of a libel suit against a blogger that illustrates how constitutional protections constrain institutional journalism by recognizing the press as a technology to explain and examine these phenomena, the kinds of proto-authorization enabled through CNN’s iReport and The Guardian’s GuardianWitness, as well as the use of smart technology by civil rights groups and individuals to record and report just-in-time. These just-in-time reporters make up the 80 percent of produsers who account for 20 percent of content produced, and are known as the long tail of the Power Law. How could the individuals making up the long tail at the bottom of the Power Law graph pose a threat to institutional authority? The long tail accounts for only 20 percent of the information being shared (in the case of information sharing for knowledge production, which is the work of the journalism ISA). The threat from the just-in-time member of the Fifth Estate is the ease with which she moves across that porous border into and out of the Fifth Estate. Digital convergence creates a viable threat to institutional journalism’s authority not because it is a new approach to journalism and not because of any tie to political movements. Rather, digital convergence threatens the authority of institutional journalism by allowing a difference of degree of access to information sharing and knowledge creation that is so large as to become a difference of kind, where people who are not journalists play a new and important role.
As discussed in chapter 1, the “bringing together of ideas,” this using of “strands [to] combine and recombine, continuously adapting and readapting to each other” (Rickert 914) that complex systems make possible is not only a basic characteristic of complex systems, it is also the underlying foundation of the practice of produsage. Produsers, then, are enacting emergent behavior in a network that creates them as rhetorical agents through kairos and is created by them in the moment of produsage. Thomas Rickert explains: “This is, for [Mark C.] Taylor, the defining moment of network culture, in which formerly secure walls become permeable, the notion of information is expanded, and change accelerates toward a tipping point where more is different” (914). Complex systems are important to understanding the threat posed by digital convergence to the institutional authority of journalism for several reasons. One reason is that the threat of individual agents in exchanging information is itself a constant in social networks. However, the layering of the scale-free information network of the Internet on the social network of culture opens the space for individual agents to co-evolve with auctoritas at a tipping point, moving from a difference of degree of information exchange to a difference of kind of information exchange through the technological advances afforded by digital convergence. The difference of degree of information exchange, as created by the technological shifts, creates a difference of kind; the difference of kind is in the difference in authority. Propelled by digital convergence, auctoritas, a personal authority built upon experience and individual dignity, comes to the fore. A second reason digital convergence threatens the institutional authority of journalism is seen in Rickert’s statement that “[t]he full implication of network culture is that individuals, society, and environment can no longer be clearly separated” (915). In defining institutions as the building blocks of society, as per Louis Althusser, in chapter 1, this dissertation asserts that society is structured through institutions, and that individuals can thus no longer be fully differentiated from the institutions that form their society. If there is no longer a clear division between the individual and the institution, there also is no clear division between institutional authority and individual auctoritas. The case of Obsidian v Cox particularly serves to help explain the legal ramifications of the technological shift represented by digital convergence and leads to an understanding of auctoritas that relates specifically to the Fourth Estate and its institutional authority and concerns. Because the case points to technological changes as a deciding factor and because it acts to reinforce the legal and rhetorical constraints on the Fourth Estate’s responses to the Fifth Estate’s rise in auctoritas, it allows for an
understanding of how digital convergence’s operation within a complex system turns a
difference of degree of information sharing into a difference of kind. Understanding these legal
and rhetorical constraints helps in exploring the ways the MSM approaches proto-authorization,
but also in exploring the use of digital convergence tools by some groups to attempt a response
through proto-institutionalization. These moves all occur in a complex system in which
interconnected agents, responding to feedback, co-evolve auctoritas as they are willed by kairos
in their interactions to move seamlessly across the porous borders between the individual and
institutional space.

In beginning to understand the viability of the challenge to institutional authority brought
about by the technological advances of digital convergence, it is doubly instructive to look at
how this challenge to journalism’s authority spills into the institution of law. First, such a view
illustrates the importance of understanding the press as a technology in terms of the First
Amendment. Second, it helps in exploring the ways in which institutional journalism’s responses
to this challenge, based in technology, are constrained. U.S. courts must now deal with the legal
ramifications of the affordances digital convergence provides to unauthorized voices in all
institutional spaces; journalism is among the institutions affected. Looking at the constraints to
responses to the challenges created by digital convergence helps in understanding not only how
but also why institutional authority responds, reshapes and re-appropriates as it does, in the face
of digital convergence. Much like Zenger’s case, the case of Obsidian Finance Group, LLC v.
Cox had more to do with the technology of publication than the person responsible for authoring
that which was published. And while Cox is not likely to become a folk hero of journalists to
come, her case illustrates the tensions between institutional journalism and the Fifth Estate while
also presenting the difficulties the Fourth Estate faces in responding to these tensions. The Cox
decision, by erasing the legal boundary between journalists and bloggers for purposes of First
Amendment protections, represents the porousness of the boundary between journalists and
bloggers, the very vague nature of which challenges institutional journalism’s authority.

**Obsidian V. Cox: The Courts (re)Define the Press as a Technology**

On January 17, 2014, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found that, for purposes of First
Amendment protections in libel suits, bloggers are indistinguishable from members of the media.
Crystal Cox, the defendant/appellant,\footnote{This title comes from the fact that she was defendant in the original libel case and sued in appeals court for relief from the original judgment.} was a blogger who had published claims that Obsidian Finance Group, LLC, a company that works with bankrupt companies to discharge court orders, was fraudulent and corrupt. She also published claims that, as an Obsidian executive and court-appointed trustee for a company called Summit, Kevin Padrick had personally mishandled funds. Her blog claims were false, and Cox did not claim they were true. While one would think such an argument is implicit, it is the first step in a defense for libel, generally brought as a request for summary judgment. Cox, instead, made a point of not arguing truth, but of asking for standing, a term I explain in full below as I explain the five parts of a libel argument. The original suit brought about Cox’s appeal \textit{not} on grounds of truth—the primary defense for libel (as per the precedent set by Zenger in 1735). Rather, Cox appealed a procedural decision, made by the judge in the first trial, which affected the instructions to the jury. In the original suit, Cox had attempted to have the court admit her as a journalist and Padrick as a public person (by virtue of his court appointment to position of trustee). Had she successfully defined herself as a journalist and Padrick, whom she had libeled, as a public person, the necessary proof for a finding of guilt on the one count of libel the judge allowed to stand (out of the many that were brought) would have been a higher standard than simple negligence.\footnote{There were, in fact, charges brought on multiple counts. All but one published instance of defamation of Obsidian and Padrick were thrown out by the judge for being so bombastic as to not be believable to an average reader and therefore not open to a charge of libel.}

Though states differ about exactly what must be proved in a libel case, in federal (and most states’) libel cases, the plaintiff must prove some part of five standard points in order to win the case (Pember and Calvert 141-62).\footnote{Note that the burden of proof in libel cases is on the plaintiff and not on the defendant.} First, the plaintiff must prove identification; the person/group/company suing for damages must be shown to be undoubtedly the person/group/company about whom the purported libel was published. Second, the plaintiff must prove publication; for the sake of a libel suit, publication only requires a third party to the libel to have seen/read the defamatory remarks. Third, the plaintiff must prove defamation; the most common definitions for defamation include remarks that harm a reputation, making it difficult for a person/group/entity to conduct her, his, or its business and earn a living. Fourth, the plaintiff must prove falsity; this expectation holds true in every state as well as at the federal level, thanks to Zenger. Without falsity, libel has not occurred. Finally, a plaintiff must prove a
form of fault; fault might fall under the category of simple negligence, fault, or malice aforethought.\textsuperscript{23} It is in this fifth category of libel proof that the Ninth Circuit appeal was decided. (Obsidian Finance Group, LLC v. Cox, 2)

In cases of libel, the standard of proof most commonly has been dependent both on the standing of the defendant as a journalist or non-journalist, and on the standing of the appellant as a private or public person, or, as in this case, the definition by the court of the matter published as “of public concern” (Obsidian Finance Group, LLC v. Cox, 2). Obsidian argued that Padrick was not a public person, and the appellate court agreed. Cox argued her standing as a journalist because standing, until this decision, was the only way to get a malice standard to apply. By finding that the matter in the defamatory material was of public concern, the appellate court held a middle ground based in the Supreme Court’s Citizen’s United case, which I discuss in greater depth shortly. The appellate court thereby shifted the focus from the standing of the speaker to the content of the speech. This meant that, to meet the burden of proof, Obsidian did not have to prove the minimal burden of negligence but had to meet the higher standard of fault. The second part of the decision, which traditionally hangs on Cox’s standing, is equally important to the question of libel. Cox argued that, as a blogger, she was entitled to the defense of “privilege,” meaning that as a member of the media, she had a duty to communicate information. Privilege and public concern tie into each other closely, though, under privilege, the proof standard requires actual malice aforethought for public persons or matters of public concern; this standard was set by the Supreme Court in \textit{The New York Times Co., v. Sullivan}, 376 US 254, 1964 (Obsidian Finance Group, LLC v. Cox, 8). In the trial under appeal, after initially refusing to define Cox as privileged and Padrick as a public person, the judge instructed the jury to decide using the minimal standard of negligence. Cox acted as her own defense counsel in the original trial. In the appeal, Cox was defended by Volokh.

The summary of the Ninth Circuit decision included that:

\begin{quote}
The panel held that Gertz v. Robert Welch, Inc., 418 U.S. 323, 350 (1974) (holding that the First Amendment required only a “negligence standard
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{23} These are legal terms, which explains the repetition of the word \textit{fault}. Additionally, these terms may not mean the same thing outside of media law. For the purposes of media law, \textit{negligence} simply has to do with not paying attention, whereas \textit{fault} speaks to a duty to act in a specific matter. This fine difference is the key to understanding Cox’s request that she be considered a journalist. As a journalist, she would be held to a specific duty, but that higher level of duty also would hold the plaintiff to a higher burden of proof. The inherent assumption is that journalists, as a matter of their duty to their profession, publish matters of public concern.
for private defamation actions”), is not limited to cases with institutional media defendants. (Obsidian Finance Group, LLC v. Cox, 2)

Finding, also, that the post on which the first decision had been made “addressed a matter of public concern,” the court decided that the jury should have been instructed to decide the matter on a standard of fault and actual damages and not on simple negligence, despite its concurrent decision that Padrick, the trustee who had been defamed, was not a public official (2). While the question of libel was sent back to the lower court, the question of media standing for defendants in libel suits was found to be dependent not on institutional membership but on part of the Supreme Court ruling in the *Citizens United* case. The decision noted that:

> a First Amendment distinction between the institutional press and other speakers is unworkable: “With the advent of the Internet and the decline of print and broadcast media . . . the line between the media and others who wish to comment on political and social issues becomes far more blurred.”

*Citizens United*, 558 U.S. at 352. In defamation cases, the public-figure status of a plaintiff and the public importance of the statement at issue—not the identity of the speaker—provide the First Amendment touchstones. (12)

Additionally, the court held that the “case involves the intersection between Sullivan and Gertz, an area not yet fully explored by this Circuit, in the context of a medium of publication—the Internet—entirely unknown at the time of those decisions” (9). But the court made clear that this equality of protections under the First Amendment was not the outcome of the Internet but rather part of the ongoing understanding of those protections, again citing the Supreme Court in *Citizens United*: “We have consistently rejected the proposition that the institutional press has any constitutional privilege beyond that of other speakers” (10, internal quotations omitted in decision). But, if the rise of the Internet is not the source of the decision, how is digital convergence the driving force behind the threat to institutional journalism’s authority? The technological advance evidenced in digital convergence does not create new protections under the First Amendment for individual voices; rather, it is part of the complex system that allows the system to move from homeostasis to a tipping point, making those voices loud enough for institutional authority to be affected by them. This is the tipping point that turns a difference of degree into a difference of kind. Because digital convergence makes publishing information a
readily available option for anyone with access to the network, the technology of the press no longer consists of a physical printing press. With a digitally converged press on a networked system, all nodes/agents have the opportunity at all times to share and receive information. While the majority do not do this the majority of the time—a phenomenon called the Power Law, first defined in chapter 1 and discussed with respect to this subcase study later in this chapter—nearly all agents do some small amount of sharing a small amount of the time. In this way, simply by being a complex system, a scale-free network encourages personal auctoritas in that it makes the cost of information sharing in the form of barriers to access extremely low while making the feedback from sharing high. Digital convergence, agents, the MSM, law, and other components of the system all transact within it, but as digital convergence pushes auctoritas into an emergent state, all the other constituent parts respond. Thus, Cox must be understood in light of the specific effects of the case on legal issues in order to see how the understanding of the press as a technology constrains MSM response, reshaping, and re-appropriation in the face of digital convergence.

In making its decision, the Ninth Circuit did not change existing law. Though its decision was based on the changes in access to publication brought about by digital convergence, the court upheld long standing legal precedents regarding First Amendment protections, meanings of the term press (in the First Amendment’s use of the phrase “freedom of the press”), and conceptions of the institutional press. The court’s decision did not center on defining Cox as a member of the institution; rather, it turned on defining the term press as used in the First Amendment. The press, as (re)defined by the court, is a technology and not a profession or industry in that a technology is a tool that is readily available to anyone with access to it, whereas a profession requires membership, training, or certification—a problem I consider in full in the next section. It is not unusual to conceive of the press in terms of the profession or industry of journalism in contemporary American cultural understanding of the word. However, the etymology of the word press makes clear that this denotation of the word is newer than and parallel to its original definition as a technology. The Ninth Circuit Court decision, therefore, did not address libel law, per se. Rather, it addressed a concern about First Amendment protections,

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24 While the case in question was one of libel, the question of culpability for libel was sent back to the first court to be tried again, using the decision in the appeal as the basis for instructing the jury about how to decide fault.
which, though consistent with precedent, have been brought to the fore through the rise in digital convergence.

In “Freedom for the Press as an Industry, or for the Press as a Technology? From the Framing to Today,” published in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, Volokh traces the history of decisions regarding the press clause in the First Amendment to understand both how the protections provided for “freedom of the press” were intended by the founders and how they have been understood by the courts. Volokh concludes: “The constitutional protections offered to the institutional media have long been understood—in the early republic, around 1868, from 1868 to 1970, and in the great bulk of cases since 1970 as well—as being no greater than those offered to others” (465). In addition to U.S. court decisions, Volokh includes British decisions that concern freedom of the press in cases where those decisions were later cited by American courts or were well-enough known to have had a traceable effect on public notions of press freedoms in the United States. He uses these cases to show that while the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Webster’s American English Dictionary* both began listing journalism-as-industry in its definitions of the word *press* in the 1820s, that definition was not the primary one in those listings nor was it reflected in judicial understanding of the word as applied in First Amendment cases. Volokh also points to individual state constitutions and the specific terms used in their mirroring of the First Amendment:

> These references to a right of “every freeman,” “every man,” “every citizen,” and “every individual” appear to refer to every person’s right to use printing technology. They are much less consistent with the notion that the right gave special protection to the few men who were members of a particular industry. (467)

In addition, Volokh expresses that it was quite unlikely that the country’s founders—landowning, upper class elites—would secure rights to a specific group composed primarily of members of a lower class. This belief seems particularly odd because it would simultaneously deny their own class those rights (469). Therefore, it appears the founders intended the protection of a free press to allow for any person to make use of the technology of publishing. Additionally, in different cases, both the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court have found that these protections do apply beyond journalism as a profession to any person making use of press technology. By providing for these protections, both the founders and the courts
mandate institutional protections for individual *auctoritas*. In the Cox decision, the Ninth Circuit Court reiterates a long-standing constitutional protection for all citizens to make use of the press, but, in doing so, the court also applies these protections to citizens making use of the Internet as a press.

This clarification of the definition of press as technology, and thus the specification of rights, makes answering the challenge digital convergence brings about difficult for institutional journalism. Additionally, defining the press as a technology and not just as a profession leads to a recognition of the real factors that lead the majority of produsers to become just-in-time produsers. These produsers can be categorized using the Power Law and are discussed in detail below. Their use of the technology of digital convergence defines them as members of the Fifth Estate because it is how the press is defined by the Cox case. When a produser uses press technology to create an artifact that meets the standard of public concern, she or he has become a member of the Fifth Estate if only for that moment—and often, it *is* only for that moment. It is this blurring of identity lines between individual and institution that challenge institutional authority, as I explain next.

**Professional Journalists Attempt to Face the Challenges**

In applying this understanding of the press as technology to its considerations of First Amendment protections for members of the Fifth Estate (and, essentially, for all persons who choose to make use of those protections), the court constrains the possible responses of the institution of journalism, and these constraints implicate the difficulty institutional journalism faces in differentiating not only its practice from that of individuals using the technological tools of the press in digital contexts but also in differentiating its authorized voice status as an institution. Those constraints are both legal and rhetorical in nature. In responding to the viable challenge that digital convergence brings to its institutional authority, journalism must use tools that function within the legal definition of the press as technology; thus, the court decision removes one of the response options institutional journalism would otherwise have had—the ability to de-authorize the Fifth Estate through legal means. By defining First Amendment protections as applicable to all persons who choose to speak on public matters, the court denies institutional journalism standing as a specially protected group under the U.S. Constitution. Institutional journalism cannot, therefore, de-authorize non-institutional voices by claiming unique protections under the law. In addition, the Ninth Circuit Court makes clear that the
exigence for its decision is not only the need to apply First Amendment protections equally but also the impossibility of limiting those protections to institutional authority, particularly in the face of technological advances in access brought about by digital convergence. Because information is the feedback mechanism of the Internet’s complex system of information exchange, authorization of voices in the network—the medium by which agents in the network receive the feedback and co-evolve auctoritas—is a key to institutional control of knowledge creation.

While legal de-authorization is not an option for institutional journalism, it is also not a well-honed tool, even if it were one. For comparison, one of the ISAs attempting to de-authorize produsage in the first decade of the twenty-first century has been the entertainment ISA. Specifically, while television- and cable-based broadcast companies as well as film studios have approached some of the pirating that regularly occurs of their products online, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) chose to actively pursue students trading music files through peer-to-peer sharing software. The RIAA chose students, specifically, because they were easier to track and because they were using these programs on university servers. By taking legal action against these students, the RIAA also took aim at the universities that allowed such programs to be used on their servers. While universities responded by changing their terms of service, the RIAA was seen as a bully by the students, and even called overzealous by members of Congress (Keefe). In the end, the RIAA did little more than delay the inevitable; it had to change its business model in an interconnected, digital market. Music is no longer recorded to sell as albums; Apple’s iTunes is in wide use across the music market; optical devices (for reading the CDs and DVDs used for marketing music albums) are no longer standard equipment in many laptops; and streaming apps (like Spotify and Pandora) dominate the market to such an extent that Apple has created its own music streaming app, now a part of every Apple device’s operating system. The RIAA chose to respond to the threat to its authority by combatting that threat in court. Though it did not lose in court, the RIAA nonetheless found that it had to redesign its market and usership models. Meanwhile, some artists chose to invite produsage of their music through online invitations to their “former audience” (in Henry Jenkins’s terms) to become part of the process of music making. In addition, music publication companies (e.g.,

25 U2 even released its most recent “album” directly on iTunes with a free (automated) download to every iTunes user.
BMI, ASCAP) now face social media action by musicians and writers who do not believe their royalties from recordings are fair (Hogan). Despite winning the battle in court, the RIAA lost the war and continues to lose the challenges to its authority created as auctoritas co-evolves on the network.

De-authorizing through legal means also would be a dangerous tactic for institutional journalism because any decision against the Fifth Estate would inevitably threaten the protections the Fourth Estate enjoys and fully employs. Institutional journalism in the U.S. has avoided governmental certification by arguing that, as the Fourth Estate, it acts as the watchdog of the government and therefore cannot be licensed by the very instruments of power it was designed to cover (Lessenberry). If institutional journalism were to win court battles defining who the press is, such a decision would, de facto, place the government in control of the licensure or authorization of the media that purports to report on governmental affairs (including the judiciary). By separating the Fourth Estate from the public, the institutional press would therefore place itself under government oversight. For example, according to Jack Lessenberry, a professor of journalism at Wayne State University and the ombudsmen for the Toledo Blade, a newspaper covering Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan, Michigan State Senator Bruce Patterson introduced a state bill in 2010 that would have required journalists to be certified by a government-appointed board and would require, in the application for certification that journalists “show that they had a journalism degree, three years of experience, or other qualifications, including letters from already sanctioned reporters” (“Only Moral Journalists Need Apply”). Patterson brought the bill to correct what he saw as a media credibility problem: there were too few full-time reporters, and many did not have what he considered adequate training. As Lessenberry notes, the bill would not stop people from covering events or sharing information:

He [Patterson] just thinks it would help the public distinguish who was a reputable reporter, and who wasn’t. Now, I have to say, I understand his concern. I have been reporting on serious subjects for more than thirty years. I see people writing on blogs or running their mouths on various broadcast media who clearly have no idea what they are talking about, and who haven’t bothered to check their facts. (Lessenberry “Licensing the Press”)
Lessenberry agrees, in the quote above, that it is aggravating to see and hear things shared (and even discussed) by people who clearly do not know what they are talking about and who have not done basic fact-checking. And Lessenberry agrees that it is “often hard for the average person to distinguish between who is a credible news source and who isn’t” (Lessenberry). So, while Lessenberry doesn’t find the motivation behind the idea problematic, he nonetheless presents the idea of government licensing, that is authorizing, the media as problematic. Besides the first basic argument Lessenberry makes, which centers on the professional and ethical concerns raised by having to get someone “in the club” to write letters to get one “into the club,” there are other difficulties here that are highly problematic for the Fourth Estate, which he points out. First among these is the First Amendment, which prohibits Congress from abridging the press—and which takes precedence over state laws. Once again, the institutional press faces legal constraints in its response to unauthorized voices co-evolving auctoritas on the Web.

Lessenberry points out that journalists concerning themselves with maintaining a licensure-free profession is more than just the journalistic “habit of shouting ‘the First Amendment’”:

- it is vitally important that legally everyone has the same right to commit journalism, for one simple reason: If any government is allowed to start designating who can be a journalist, it naturally follows that it will also be tempted to say who can’t be one. (“Only Moral Journalists Need Apply”)

Rather, Lessenberry uses this commentary to highlight the importance, to journalists, of journalistic independence, particularly from the institutions it is designed to cover. If the government, which the Fourth Estate is meant to watch on behalf of citizens, were to be in the position to authorize journalists, it would also, ipso facto, be in the position to de-authorize journalists. To allow governmental authorization/de-authorization of journalists would be to effectively silence dissent. And so, while Lessenberry acknowledges the credibility problems the Fourth Estate faces in the age of digital convergence, his solution is a completely open field in which all are authorized. He does not concern himself with institutional journalism’s efforts to de-authorize Fifth Estate voices, in part because his earlier contention that all citizens have a right to “commit journalism” suggests that he disagrees with such de-authorization. Lessenberry’s is not the only approach to dealing with this challenge to institutional authority among journalists, however.
In *The Vanishing Newspaper*, among other arguments, Philip Meyer suggests that one of the solutions to the credibility problems journalism currently faces might be to create a self-governing body, separate from the government, to provide certification to persons seeking to work as journalists. This argument has merit; licensing journalists will allow the authorized media to maintain what traditional journalistic schools of thought and the Associated Press Managing Editors (APME), the American Society of News Editors (ASNE), and the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) have set forth as ethical and professional guidelines in their respective ethics codes. It also has some drawbacks, however, including questions of who is authorized to authorize. Meyer’s suggestion of a body of journalists assigned to accredit practicing journalists falls short in part when considering Lessenberry’s commentary on the “in-club” members as arbiters of who belongs in the club. However, it does suggest that credibility is an important issue for journalists—so much so that a state senator (and he is not the only one, nor is Michigan the only state) and a journalist have, each in his own way, suggested approaches to licensure. If licensing is thus not a working option, one has to return to the ideal of every citizen’s right to “commit journalism” (Lessenberry). Yet, in such an ideal, a Fifth Estate does not exist, because it is always already part of the Fourth Estate and, as noted in chapter 1, such a definition creates a null set—meaning the Fourth Estate does not exist either. One also must ask if self-definition as a journalist is a requisite for membership in this (non)category. But the question is far from moot.

The question of who *is* and who *is not* a journalist goes to the heart of matters of professionalism for members of the institution and those who have higher education in the field of journalism. Institutional journalism’s need to remain unlicensed and the field’s push to professionalism come into conflict in the face of the challenge to institutional journalism brought about by the rise of digital convergence. In response, institutional journalism has sought approaches to maintain institutional authority as well as to de-authorize unauthorized voices. Journalists’ professional ethos hangs on the First Amendment protection of “freedom of speech, and of the press,” as seen in Lessenberry’s columns, but it depends heavily on a sense of the importance of credibility as well, a credibility rooted in accountability to institutional authority.

In response to the Cox case, for example, David Carr, a media columnist for *The New York Times*, wrote a blog post that seems at first deeply concerned with concepts of free

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26 Until his death in February, 2015.
speech, but, as it continues, the tension between journalistic ideals of free speech and the journalistic sense of professionalism and dependence on institutional authority become evident. In “When Truth Survives Free Speech,” Carr begins by describing his anger at hearing that a journalist was being sued for libel but quickly moves on to lambast Cox for publishing false, defamatory information:

I went to work on a blog post, filled with filial umbrage, saddened that the Man [sic] once again had used a boot heel to crush truth and free speech. But after doing a little reporting, I began to think [the case] was actually something else . . . a blogger using the Web in unaccountable ways . . . The ruling on whether she was a journalist . . . was very much beside the point . . . Journalists who initially came to her defense started to back away when they realized they weren’t really in the same business.

One key turn in this paragraph comes in the second sentence with Carr’s use of the phrase “but after doing a little reporting.” Though he had begun with a focus on free speech and the power of journalism, Carr shifts tone here and begins to focus on Cox’s non-institutional standing—as just “a blogger.” For Carr, a blogger who also is a journalist has accountability to the journalistic institution by doing the digging and fact-checking work of reporting. The insinuation is that had Cox done “a little reporting,” she would not have published defamatory material—that had she been a reporter, her accountability to the institution of journalism would have caused her to do that reporting. Such an insinuation, in turn, suggests that Cox did not do “a little reporting” because Cox is not a reporter. Though the logic is somewhat circular, Carr’s rhetoric posits that a reporter would not libel, and therefore a blogger who libels is not a reporter. He makes this point even more evident when he says, “Here’s the problem. None of that was ever proved, nor was it picked up by other mainstream media outlets.” This dependence on the story being both credible and then being “picked up by other mainstream media outlets” points to Carr’s bias.

The problem for Carr is not just the question of the truth that he claims to be defending in both his headline and invective. Rather, Cox’s claims were not picked up by the MSM, and for Carr the lack of MSM follow-up proves the lack of truth in Cox’s claims. Carr’s issues with Cox, however, are not really about truth; they are about the questions of professionalism that members of the Fifth Estate attaining legal standing as media create. Were Cox a member of the institutional press and found to have published a falsehood, she would be expected to print a
retraction. Oddly, while Carr does not call for (or seem to expect) a retraction, he also does not point to this fact of journalism: even professional, institutionally authorized journalists publish falsehoods. The implication is that institutional journalism, even when it publishes falsehoods, does so honestly, with accountability, and as a result of error. More importantly, for the subcase of Cox, however, it highlights Carr’s, and The New York Times’s institutional standing and need to embody and reinforce the institution. Were truth Carr’s only concern, he would have pointed to the fact that even his paper has been forced to publish retractions—and then he would have explained the process of journalistic fact checking. But Carr chooses instead to paint Cox as a woman of questionable sanity and ethics, writing, “Ms. Cox, who calls herself an ‘investigative blogger,’ has a broad range of conspiratorial/journalistic interests.” Carr’s use of quotes around the term “investigative blogger,” as well as his use of the phrase “calls herself,” act rhetorically to create doubts—both about Cox’s chosen title and about its application to her. In journalism, such a practice is called poisoning the well, and in rhetoric, it is called ad hominem argumentation; this practice is anathema to journalistic ethics in all but editorial pieces such as this one because it focuses on the journalist’s judgment rather than on the subject of the journalist’s reporting. The New York Times speaks with a voice that is not only institutionally authorized, but also authorizing. Carr, as an authorized voice of The New York Times has de-authorized Cox by casting doubt on her authority. Carr’s piece was cited in the Cox appellate court decision. De-authorizing Cox acts to re-authorize and re-embody The New York Times’s institutional authority and standing, as well as Carr’s place within that institution.

In addition, Carr’s piece points directly to digital convergence as the source of the challenge to institutional authority:

In the pre-Web days, someone like Ms. Cox might have been one more obsessive in the lobby of a newspaper, waiting to show a reporter a stack of documents that proved the biggest story never told. The Web has allowed Ms. Cox to cut out the middleman; various blogs give voice to her every theory, and search algorithms give her work prominence.

Carr’s argument here historicizes the role of institutional journalism and its members before the rise of digital convergence. In the days of “one more obsessive in the lobby,” newspapers and reporters acted as gatekeepers of knowledge. Cranks of all sorts would either write letters to the

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27 That implication will be questioned directly in chapter 3 with a look into RatherGate and ReutersGate.
editor or, as Carr cites, often spend whole days in the lobby trying to gain a reporter’s attention. Arguably, Carr’s problem, as delineated in his characterization of Cox here, is not her obsession but that he no longer holds the keys to the gate. In addition, Carr fails to explore the fact that many of those cranks were in the lobby with credible, pertinent information, and many reporters used these sources as starting points for stories. Were he to have done so, as a member of the institution, he would have pointed out that reporters still use “obsessive[s] in the lobby,” whether the lobby is in the news building or on the Web, but that they use them as starting points, just as he used Cox as a starting point to telling the truth as he found it in his “little [bit of] reporting” about Padrick and Obsidian. There are no more gatekeepers because there are no more solid gates, just porous boundaries. Cox, despite being a crank and despite having lied and bald-facedly defamed, reflects a very real challenge to MSM authority. Cox represents the porousness of the boundary that defines Carr as a journalist and Cox as just a blogger.

But Carr insinuates that Cox’s non-membership in the journalistic club is due to the publication of lies, not to the publication of blogs. That argument is highly problematic, as well, because publishing truth does not automatically authorize a voice on the Internet, and being authorized does not automatically entail publishing only truth. Carr easily avoids this difficulty when he chooses not to mention the history of defamation in journalism (from yellow journalism to muckraking to contemporary instances of inaccurate journalism—an example of which I discuss in chapter 3). The ideal Lessenberry puts forth, of a credible, somewhat professionalized, non-institutional journalism committed by any and all who choose to do so, fails to meet the needs of a media facing challenges to its authority. The licensure model also fails, as explained above. And this failure of both the ideal and the licensure models returns the argument to issues not of journalistic credibility or even of professionalism, but to issues of institutional authority. Within Carr’s column and Lessenberry’s and Meyer’s struggles to find solutions lies the struggle of institutional journalism to find ways to respond to the threat to institutional authority. The attempts to speak to licensure, as Meyer does, garner negative responses from journalists who see dangers for Fourth Estate in the separation from Fifth Estate, while attempts to fold the Fifth Estate into the Fourth by celebrating every person’s right to commit journalism, so to speak, garner the response that Fifth Estate journalism undermines the professionalism of Fourth Estate journalism both by being libelous and by making unprofessional, unpaid, unreported information
the norm in a market of professional reporters. Yet the institution must find ways to respond to
the emergence of *auctoritas* of information exchange on the network.

**Institutional Journalism Responds through Proto-Authorization**

As an outcome of the digital-convergence-produced threat to the institutional authority of
journalism, there have been several approaches to de-authorization, some of which I have
discussed above, as well as attempts at shifting the business model on which print and broadcast
journalism have traditionally functioned. In addition, some approaches to defending institutional
authority function primarily by way of proto-authorization and include proto-authorization
through inclusivity (with incentives for good reporting), through assuming publication of some
blogs, and even through some forms of training. These attempts at proto-authorization make use
of the tools of digital convergence to provide a low degree of authorization while simultaneously
maintaining institutional control over content and making use of produser created content.

For example, CNN, the broadcast cable news channel that heralded the 24-hour news
cycle, also has become a print venue through its Website CNN.com. On CNN.com, proto-
authorization takes the form of iReport, a part of the CNN Website that, according to its *About*
page and blog “invite[s] people around the world to upload stories, photos and videos that they
think deserve attention from a wider news audience.” The iReport site allows registered users to
post their material, but once on the site, the material is visibly marked with a disclaimer of any
verification on CNN’s part. This procedure allows CNN to open its site to public use for
publication without taking on the burden of credibility or the legal burden of libel. CNN makes
clear to those learning about the site, as well as to users, that the information on the site is not
verified unless marked as such. On its *About* page, CNN says:

> Everything you see on iReport starts with someone in the CNN audience. The stories here are not edited, fact-checked or screened before they post. CNN’s producers will check out some of the most compelling, important and urgent iReports and, once they’re cleared for CNN, make them a part of CNN’s news coverage.

The process for proto-authorization, in this case, has several levels. These levels reflect parallel
levels of institutional success that iReporters are encouraged to aspire to, and are: contribution,
vetting, and publication/broadcast. By contributing to iReport, one might sense one has attained
the same level of success a person joining the institution might feel. In being vetted, one has
received a level of acknowledgement based on one’s readership, somewhat akin to rising in the ranks. Finally, in having one’s story published or even broadcast, one attains the achievement of joining the ranks of CNN reporters—if not in the newsroom, or in a salaried position, at least virtually—and one attains one’s proverbial fifteen minutes of fame.

The first level is that of contribution. Anyone may upload content, and anyone may read the content that has been uploaded. Participating in this community allows produsers to make use of CNN’s status as a network hub to gain access to a broad audience. Gaining such an audience helps the produser who does so to build her *auctoritas* through page views, likes, shares, and other social media strategies; CNN iReports can be shared on FaceBook. But this level of proto-authorization is minimal. It provides the first step in creating *auctoritas* on a scale-free network like the Internet. As Albert-Laszló Barabási explains in *Linked*, which I considered in chapter 1, hubs are the key to a scale-free network because they contain approximately 25 percent of the links on the network. In addition, because they sit in the center of the network topology (see chapter 1, figure 1), they act as traffic directors, facilitating movement from the In-Continent to the Center to the Out-Continent. Only the tubes and islands that are reachable from the external wings of the bow-tie or not at all from the regular network, respectively, do not depend on the Center for their links on the network. Also as explained in chapter 1, the Internet is a directional network: linking to a site only sends traffic to that site; it does not send traffic from the site to the node that linked to it. Thus, linking *from* a site like CNN, which is one of the hubs of the Internet, is far more powerful than linking *to* it. By posting on the iReport site, a blogger can also link to her own site, thus using CNN’s hub status to drive page-views on her individual blog site. Opening such a space for produsage, however, poses dangers for CNN’s fitness. Because a produser posting on CNN is linking *from* and not *to* the site, she attaches herself to CNN’s authority, but, if the content she produses, like Cox’s, is not only false but libelous, CNN’s liability for libel and institution authority as a credible news source could be in question. CNN mitigates both legal and authority implications on its blog by explaining that:

> Sometimes people post deliberately untrue stories on iReport—about celebrity deaths, for example. Hoaxes are one of the risks of user-generated content and at CNN we take them very seriously. Fortunately, they have been few and far between on iReport. The number of real, important and excellent iReports is far greater than deliberately untrue
stories . . . These stories matter and they’re why we are confident in and excited about the future of participatory journalism. (“How CNN iReport Works”)

By reiterating both the presence of intentionally false stories and its commitment to take such issues “very seriously,” CNN acts both to detach its institutional authority from stories it has not vetted and to maintain its authority despite hoax stories appearing on its site. It also acts to assure readers not only of its commitment to enforce the community rules that ban such hoaxes (and therefore provide redress) but also of its authoritative promise that it will address such problems without removing access from all users. The community is thus invited to police itself by reporting hoaxes to the moderators; such self-policing is, in turn, assuring to produsers who do not want to lose the (low) level of authority claimed by their (nominal) connection to the MSM via a hub site on the Internet. Finally, to maintain the proto-authorization stance that such a post and project open, the blog entry ends with a set of questions that invite comment. The nineteen comments include thanks to CNN for creating iReport, questions about whether stories are appropriate, and advice requesting international availability—which CNN started in 2012, about a week before the post’s comment. But the last comment, discussed in detail below, also suggests that CNN institute a change to the iReport structure that affects the second level of proto-authorization: vetting.

This next level of iReport proto-authorization is reached when a story garners enough page views to be chosen as a “compelling, important and urgent iReport[s]” and thus for verification and possible inclusion in the CNN news cycle, both on the Web and in broadcast. If a story is vetted and chosen, it loses its banner that warns readers it is not verified and gains, instead, a red bug that reads “CNN iReport.” The CNN iReport bug is a small red square at the top left corner of the story, which appears both in the preview and on the page. It is like the red CNN bug that all CNN stories carry, but includes the word iReport beneath CNN’s Trademark. A story that is chosen to become part of the CNN news cycle also may benefit from added reporting, producer notes, and/or additional commentary from the author—as elicited by the producers. At this point, it has reached the level of publication/broadcast. By creating an entry point to being included on CNN’s broadcast and main page as a verified contributor, CNN offers an incentive for “good reporting.” iReporters whose work is regularly featured gain a greater level of auctoritas, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that the auctoritas they gain is and
extension of institutional MSM authority. Here, MSM authority and *auctoritas* as it co-evolves through emergence in the complex system of the Internet become entangled. CNN seeks to use proto-authorization to harness and co-opt the complex system from which *auctoritas* emerges by establishing boundaries around iReport. But these boundaries, too, must remain porous. CNN cannot keep all the stories out, or it loses the multivalent reward system by which it rewards participation. It also cannot accept all stories (thereby bringing all within the boundary of CNN) because that would place its credibility and authority in danger. Thus, the system of vetting and ranking places iReporters at a remove from CNN’s institutional authority, while allowing CNN the right to co-opt and the produser the opportunity to link. The question of whether the *auctoritas* gained through iReport vetting is *despite or because of* is dependent wholly on one’s perspective of *auctoritas* on the Internet. If one wishes to become an institutionally authorized voice—or if one sees such authorization as necessary—one sees it as a bonus. This is how CNN iReport’s vetting process acts as an incentive. If, however, one is looking only at questions of *auctoritas* as presented in chapter 1, questions that lead to comparisons of Aristotelian and Ciceronian authority models, one has to question whether the proto-authorization leads to an emergence of *auctoritas* despite its ties to institutional authority.28

In the comments section of the blog post quoted above, a community member whose login is NSNONLINE suggests that iReport should shift the burden of vetting from CNN producers to an elite team of iReporters with what the user considers proven credibility records:

My candid advice to CNN Management is to create a forum of credible, well-experienced ‘iReport Group of Journalists’ across the various continents—starting from United States as back-check on stories earlier submitted by iReport for authenticity; such that after verification, more engaging, fact-bound, true, investigative and timely scoop being submitted by iReport become visible on CNN broadcast.

NSNONLINE indicates this process would not only allow international iReport vetting to run more smoothly, but it would allow more stories to reach CNN’s verified status. This “candid advice” is an example of CNN’s function as an aspirational space, discussed in detail below. Here, NSNONLINE, while still part of the long tail of the Power Law in which 80 percent of

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28 This question of the move from institutional authority to individual *auctoritas* and into a possible proto-institutional authority will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.
produsers contribute 20 percent of content, even if closer to the rising slope of the 20 percent of produsers contributing the top 80 percent, is using her or his position as an editor for an online daily in Nigeria and a contributor to CNN’s iReport to suggest that produsers with interest in growing their connection to CNN’s institutional authority may do so by taking on more responsibility within the iReport system. While this does not fit fully into either the hierarchical business model of CNN or the Power Law driven heterarchical model, this hybrid model makes use of both.

Still, CNN’s iReport authorization can lead to further proto-authorization off the CNN site; whether a post is vetted after being submitted or not, CNN iReport drives traffic and provides a sense of journalistic professionalism by posting assignments on its iReport page. The assignments range from “Your best shots from the plane” to “Your memories of the 1970s: Share your vintage photos” (“CNN iReport”) and are designed to provide prompts for community members interested in participating who may not know where to begin. The site also uses badges to reward participation, followership, and vetting. These badges are awarded at all levels, and are designed to maintain involvement and drive the continued contribution that can lead to higher levels of proto-authorization. Badges are also a common tool of social media community building. All these tools help CNN to maintain a sense of connection within the community to keep it from being what the MSM essentially is—a broadcast station where media post with no expectation of feedback. This creation of a sense of community acts to reinforce the idea of an emerging auctoritas while maintaining the distance between CNN and iReporters as discussed above. That there is feedback in the iReport section is one reflection of the way in which digital convergence has forced the MSM to refocus its model. This community interaction helps to counteract the discussion boards at the bottom of MSM stories that have a tendency to devolve into polarized shouting matches. Through the use of badges to build community involvement and vetting to provide a path to MSM publication, CNN’s iReport creates a proto-authorizing force that centralizes voices while marking them with its institutional badge of approval (at varying levels) and maintaining enough control that stories of which it disapproves can be removed. This level of control pays back to both produser and institution, also at varying levels. The produser, as noted above, has the ability to link from the MSM as well as to—an important difference on a directional network. The MSM has the ability to maintain control over the production of knowledge as well as the aspirational space. In creating this space, CNN allows for a not-quite
authorization, hence a proto-authorization, of produsers on the Web; with this proto-authorization, CNN is able to use the best-received work that is prodused to add to the value of its own network hub. While CNN is only one hub among the MSM hubs on the Web, it is a powerful one with an international draw, and its approach to proto-authorization has been taken up by others.

For both legal and technical reasons and in a slightly different manner, The Guardian, a United Kingdom newspaper that has grown from a regional to national paper in the bottom three of the eleven national papers ranked by circulation, also has added a participatory feature to its Website. Though The Guardian is a U.K. national paper, it does have a U.S. edition of its online paper and does have a U.S. readership, partly due to the WikiLeaks publications (discussed in detail in chapter 4). In March 2012, The Guardian began a program it called GuardianWitness. The program uses WhatsApp, a data chat tool for iOS and Android phones, as well as online tools for individuals to upload photos, videos, and stories, much like the CNN iReport site. Unlike the iReport site, however, the Witness site primarily functions by assignment, and all stories undergo prepublication review: “Posts will be reviewed by our team and suitable contributions will be published on GuardianWitness, with the best pieces featured on the Guardian site—you could even help shape the news agenda” ("GuardianWitness"). While the site and its guidelines are aimed primarily at British audiences, the U.S. audience is encouraged just as much as the British to contribute and participate. The top assignment on August 26, 2015, during the writing of this chapter, for example, asks users to “Share your most vivid memories of Hurricane Katrina” ("GuardianWitness"). The legal constraints on The Guardian in creating a prepublication review have to do with a lack of First Amendment protections and stricter definitions of libel in the U.K., but the approach of The Guardian in asking U.K. and U.S. audiences to participate is unique in that its editor-in-chief, Alan Rusbridger, stated his reasons for creating GuardianWitness on Twitter; among them was: “7. It recognizes that journalists are not the only voices of authority, expertise and interest #openjournalism” (“The Guardian' Calls for Citizen Journalists Via App”). For produsers writing for GuardianWitness, there is the knowledge that any stories published have undergone professional scrutiny, and those judged journalistically valuable (by professional journalists) are added to The Guardian home site. This aspirational space does not depend on badges or page counts; it depends directly on approval from a member of the institution.
As indicated above, aspirational space is an important part of the proto-authorization of non-institutional voices by the institution. Because institutional journalism (and in particular the members of the MSM who control the hub spaces of the central continent of the Web) continues to draw the majority of news traffic on the Web and because institutional journalism has an historical record of publication that any person who publishes under its name becomes part of, institutional journalism becomes the aspirational goal for some bloggers; these bloggers make their aspirations clear by posting to the hub MSM sites. However, not all bloggers hope to become part of MSM news; rather, some hope to critique it.\(^{29}\) Still others hope to become critics of the MSM from within the MSM, as happened with Brian Stelter, a media blogger who was hired by The New York Times to join its newly-formed media team due to his history of critical blogging about media (Page One). Stelter began his career as a media critic blogging while attending journalism school; he now hosts the CNN media critique show Reliable Sources, which he took over from Howard Kurtz.

In addition to creating reporting opportunities for the Fifth Estate, as CNN and The Guardian do, there are other ways for the MSM to approach and proto-authorize the growing number of voices on the Web. A blog (or any other node/site that is used to share information) begins to grow as more and more other nodes link to it. Recognizing this, all blog software make blogrolls part of the design, but most blogger communities also make blogrolls part of the social norm of blogging. A blogroll is a compilation of blogs that a blogger recommends to her followers and readers by listing them, often on the right hand column of her blog. Much like the etiquette that does not so much require as encourage one to follow a user who follows one on social media, when a fellow blogger links one’s blog on her blogroll, a blogger is expected to return the favor in kind. At the very least, a blogger is expected to have a blogroll of some kind, even if it is not a very inclusive list. As a blogger is linked to from multiple blogrolls, for example, her node grows, as Barabási explains in his scale-free networks theory. The growth of her node will be reflected in a growth in potential readership. A node becomes a hub through the act of being linked to; enough growth, and who the blogger links to from her page becomes important. Thus, the importance of hubs lies in the traffic that they can bring in for the sites that can link out. As such, any growing node on the network presents a form of competition. If the growing node has both high linking and fitness, it might become a hub. But even a node that

\(^{29}\) One such blog is analyzed in detail in chapter 3.
cannot become a hub in a network that is dominated by hubs driven by the MSM, a growing node is worth owning for the links it controls. Thus, for many MSM outlets, picking up growing blogger nodes as published blogs can accomplish two tasks at once. It can drive Internet traffic to its site, and it can quickly build an online staff. As the MSM tries to retool its business model to face the challenges of digital convergence, instant traffic and instant staff are both good ideas. Five days after The Volokh Conspiracy blog post about the Obsidian v. Cox decision appeared, the blog was picked up by the Washington Post, where it is now published regularly. In those five days, from January 17 – 22, none of the blog posts were about the Obsidian decision, free speech, or the media. Publishing blogs as part of their online publication, often with the possibility for occasional hard print publication of some blog entries, is one way in which the MSM both proto-authorizes on the Internet and maintains control of hub sites’ fitness and linking growth. This allows MSM to both maintain the illusion of a non-porous boundary between institutional authority and individual unauthorized voices on the Web, while simultaneously co-opting those voices and making use of the strengths of the network, as explained by Barabási—specifically preferential linking and hub fitness. Rather than citing an unauthorized voice on the Web, who, while she or he may be an expert in her or his field, is not a journalist, MSM can simply co-opt the voice by offering it publication space, thereby providing the journalistic authorization for the topic specialist’s authorized voice—and once again reifying MSM’s position to authorize journalistic publication. Such projects include the proto-authorization tactics discussed above as well as far smaller projects including blog spaces created by hometown newspapers. Gannett, a national news corporation, for example, encourages its local papers to host blog spaces for free use by members of the local community with the promise that content of interest will, once a week, be published by the newspaper. In this way, the small-scale hubs maintain the same kind of linking and aspirational space as the large hubs. Though many Fifth Estate advocates like Dan Gillmor, who writes in We The Media and MediActive about non-MSM approaches to journalism, encourage widespread involvement in and with media, they do advocate a range of activities from maintaining an independent media presence in the face of the MSM to familiarizing users with MSM tactics and praxis to allow users to be better arbiters of information (as Gillmor says he intends to do with the tools in MediActive). The visibility of hybrid MSM-independent media projects makes them the primary target of most people’s understanding of the Fifth Estate.
Other Members of the Long Tail: We The People

But many of the advocates who seek to define who the Fifth Estate take yet another group into account. MediaShift is a PBS blog that addresses digital convergence issues for members of the MSM. In its guide to citizen journalism, Mark Glaser primarily explains citizen journalists as the users of interactive media sites as described above. Glaser explains that the majority of independent media sites that are viable are MSM-funded sites made available for non-MSM produsers. And while he recognizes that citizen journalism poses a threat to what he terms many “old-school journalists,” he also quotes Kenneth Neil Cukier, of The Economist, whose views are far more pro-Fifth Estate and who considers the Fifth Estate “akin to the ‘gentleman scientist.’” Cukier added:

The tools of broadcast media have gone from owning paper mills, presses, million-dollar transmitters and broadcast licenses, to having a cheap PC or a mobile phone in one’s pocket. That gives everyone the ability to have a direct rapport with the news as either a consumer or a producer, instantaneously. This is like the advent of literacy: it threatened elites and sometimes created problems. But it empowered individuals and led to a far better world. The new literacy from digital media will do the same, even as it creates new problems. (qtd in Mediashift)

And, while Glaser closes his piece on citizen journalism with this essentially optimistic note, he does not draw attention to a very important point made by Cukier in it: the journalist of the digitally converged society is any person with the tools who chooses to use them as represented by the words of the motto of one site attempting to encourage press behavior by all, “We the people, in the Internet age, are the free press” (CFAPA.org).

The site is called the Constitutional First Amendment Press Association or CFAPA. It provides press credentials, freely, to anyone willing to take its pledge and agree to its terms of use. Citing Wikipedia, the Home page claims that, “‘The Press’ now consists of every literate adult who owns a PC, tablet, or smartphone” (qtd on CFAPA “Home”, emphasis in original). Whether the italicized section is accurate is a matter for debate in a different analysis, but it should be debated. Still, the claim the CFAPA is making is not one of professionalism or of institutionalism; rather, the group is claiming a right to a use of technology. Founded in March
2014, the CFAPA’s stated goal speaks to the depth to which the Fifth Estate challenges the authority of institutions in general (as well as of institutional journalism): “The long-term goal of CFAPA is to make citizen journalists so ubiquitous that public officials and police officers will stop asking us to see press credentials” (CFAPA “Home”, emphasis original). The video page on the site currently focuses on police asking persons filming in public for credentials or telling them they may not legally film in public.

Filming in public has become the most common way in which members of the “former audience,” as Henry Jenkins refers to them, have become members of the Fifth Estate, and video clips of police behavior in public have become among the most visible artifacts of this Fifth Estate behavior. Video clips of police have become part of news stories, particularly in coverage of deaths of unarmed young black males in the U.S. in the last year. These clips not only are shown online but they are also, in fact, rarely posted only to the produser’s blog or Website. Instead, they have tended to end up on national news broadcasts and on the news hub sites on the Web. In addition, the produsers shooting the clips also have become subjects of MSM news coverage—sometimes for their actions and sometimes for their interactions with police. This approach to reporting has become mainstream in the last year, but has been fairly commonly practiced for years. In 2007, Carlos Miller, a Miami photojournalist, started a Website called Photography Is Not A Crime (PINAC), which seeks to archive and catalog video clips of police interactions with the public, after he was arrested for photographing Miami police as part of an assignment (“About Us” Photography is Not a Crime) The site encourages users to “Be the media” and upload their own videos and stories as well as to follow ongoing stories of police abuse. While the site centers on police harassment, it also is a model for the just-in-time reporter whose story is her own or that of someone who may become the focus of the news because of her vigilance. The just-in-time reporter, often not a person who identifies as a member of the Fifth Estate, uses the tools made available by the technological advances of digital convergence to cross the porous boundaries into and out of the role of news consumer and news producer. It is this ability to cross at will, often without identifying as a member of the Fifth Estate, and always with very little effort, that points to the emergence of auctoritas from the complex system as a difference of kind emerging from a difference of degree.

As part of a series on The Guardian’s online U.S. section, called “The Counted,” Oliver Laughland and Jon Swaine tell the story of how Feidin Santana came to film the shooting death
of Walter Scott in North Charleston, SC, in April, 2015. Santana discusses the difficulties he currently faces dealing with the aftermath of witnessing the shooting, of police harassment, and of media attention, but among the points Santana makes clear is that he does not see himself as having made a decision to join the Fifth Estate. He says he thought his presence might prevent something bad from happening, but he also says that after the shooting he told the second officer on the scene that he had recorded the shooting and that the second officer, though he told him to stay where he was, paid no attention to him as he left. The story ends with Santana saying that though there have been threats against his life for his actions, he would make the same choice again, because he believes people should take care of each other. Santana is not alone in dealing with the aftermath of crossing the permeable boundary between the Fourth and Fifth Estates via digital convergence. Others whose lives have been permanently changed by their decision to press the record button on their cellphone cameras and share the videos they film with the public have faced police harassment as well as threats from people who see what they have done in a negative light. By crossing the porous boundary between the individual and the institution, these agents have become nodes in the network of information sharers using digital convergence tools to make the information they are privy to broadly available. While MSM broadcast media, in a sense, depend on these nodes for the video clips that then drive the news stories through the cycle, creating more stories along the way, the MSM also are challenged by the nodes as the rise in number of videos circulating lead to investigations that point out systemic police abuses that have gone unreported by the MSM in departments across the country. As such, these just-in-time reporters not only capture the breaking news and function as a check on the power of the police, but they capture the breaking news and function as a check on the MSM’s inability or unwillingness to do so. The challenges have led to institutional authority’s many responses, but those responses have also led to a response by some in the Fifth Estate.

The rise in citizens using the smart technology on their cellphones to record everyday activities, including abuses of power, has led to authorities demanding that cellphone users not film or that they hand over their phones or, in some cases, that they produce press credentials to prove their legal right to film. This rise in the demand for credentials is cited by the CFAPA as the reason for its existence. In order to make authorities realize that the press is everyone with the tools of the press, the CFAPA provides the credentials of membership in the press. This credentialing—this proto-institutionalization—can be useful in situations when press
identification is demanded for entry into an event, but it is problematic in a general sense. The laws that journalists use to provide for their access to information and the right to film are open access laws that are not dependent on journalists’ standing. One does not have to provide press credentials to file a Freedom of Information Act request. One does not have to provide press credentials to film in public. Still, there seems to be a lack of understanding of these facts among authorities and the public. The CFAPA attempts to mitigate this problem by making those credentials available because it is easier than challenging an authority figure in the moment, though it is, in and of itself, problematic. The ACLU, however, has chosen a different route. To empower citizens to make full use of their rights and maintain protection to do so, the ACLU has created an app, available only in some states at this time, that live streams what a user films from the app directly to the state’s ACLU team. Using the ACLU app does not immediately prompt the ACLU to open a case to assist, but it does prompt review. In addition, the app requires that users allow the ACLU to use the information and share the videos with the MSM. However, while the app requires a voluntary release, it also offers some protection. If the cellphone being used to record is taken and destroyed, the video is saved at a remote location and cannot be destroyed, and the destruction is recorded. This app is available in California, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, and Oregon. Though the sites and downloads for each of these apps is slightly different, the basic capabilities are the same, and each site includes information on how to conduct oneself in a situation with police or other authorities. In New York, the ACLU has a Stop and Frisk App that not only records and reports, but aggregates information about where police are active in real time and asks users to take a survey detailing stop and frisk activities. The information is aggregated and compared with data aggregated by police precincts from officer reports. The Stop and Frisk App site includes the notice, “Stop and Frisk Watch is intended for use by people witnessing a police encounter, not by individuals who are the subject of a police stop” (“Stop and Frisk Watch App”).

Both the CFAPA and ACLU attempt to make use of digital convergence and technological changes to provide free, easily accessible tools for a form of proto-institutionalization. By offering free press credentials, CFAPA allows citizens to claim journalistic privilege so that citizens do not have to face off against police officers who are not aware that they do not need the credentials, and that First Amendment protections of the press extend to all citizens. Alternately, the ACLU allows citizens to use the institutional authority of
the ACLU, an established civil rights group, thereby proto-authorizing the just-in-time journalist in the name of the civil rights group, itself. While this may have no bearing on whether a citizen is arrested for filming, it will assist in the preservation of evidence. However, both approaches have a single problem in common; both require that an agent interacting in an complex system of information exchange in which she or he may not identify as a member of the Fifth Estate—or even consider the possibility of momentarily crossing the porous boundaries into becoming a member of the Fifth Estate—have the forethought to take the pledge and print out credentials, or download the app before filming. The requisite for these early attempts at proto-institutionalization are a form of self-identification that raise the low cost of participation that drives the long tail.

Summary

Just-in-time approaches to reporting are the most common approaches being taken by members of the public, and they are the way most people become part of the Fifth Estate. Although chapters 3 and 4 examine ways in which members of the Fifth Estate become far more active in the creation and circulation of information, moving it into knowledge-creation, the simplest form of sharing is the site at which the greatest number of provers share. It is an entry point to the news cycle that requires nearly no training or commitment (unlike running a blog), and so is far more likely to be used by the majority of the public. The just-in-time reporter is an example of the Power Law at work in complex systems. As explained in chapter 1, in a Power-Law-driven system, 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the participants; the remaining 20 percent is done by 80 percent of the participants. These just-in-time reporters are the 80 percent who individually contribute very little, but as a whole contribute enough to become a noticeably emergent system that can, at times exhibit “surprising and extreme characteristics . . . a mix of ordered and disordered behavior” (N. Johnson 34). In *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, Clay Shirky indicates that the rise in social media tools coupled with the extremely low cost of involvement (in the sense both of money and of time and involvement) have allowed the network to “radically alter . . . the size, sophistication, and scope of unsupervised effort” (21). Shirky uses examples from the London transport bombings in 2005 and the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 (34-7). The responses to these disasters on Flickr was from just-in-time users who posted photos of themselves so their loved ones would know they were alive, of the destruction so it could be broadcast and shared (and
further prodused), of signs and warnings in the areas where they found themselves; further, they acted within the Flickr community and beyond to react to the photographs, share information, and show each other support. But these surges in Flickr uses around the specific disasters discussed are not likely to have involved the same group of users. In fact, they are likely to have involved vastly different groups of people, groups that, just as their individual members crossed the porous boundary into the Fifth Estate by sharing information online, were nonexistent before each disaster and stopped existing when the exigency that had created them no longer maintained them.

Because the just-in-time produser can move at will in and out of the Fifth Estate and does so—often without joining or self-defining as a member—by making use of the tools of the press to share information that is “of public interest” (to use the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals’s phrase), and because the Fifth Estate cannot be legally separated from the Fourth Estate, the Fourth Estate is most threatened by these produsers. Because a just-in-time produser need not join or identify in any way to become part of the knowledge-creation process, the institution-based provenance of knowledge and its management of that process are challenged. Much as Frankfurt School theorist Walter Benjamin suggests that in the age of mechanical reproduction the removal of provenance from art opens a door to political appropriation by the proletariat of the space of art (1184-86), this shift in the use of auctoritas opens the door for the individual to appropriate the knowledge-creation space.

In addition, as the Fourth Estate seeks to proto-authorize through such sites and approaches as CNN’s iReport and The Guardian’s GuardianWitness, and through taking up the publication of nodes as they grow bigger—thus appropriating their links and their fitness as well as their content—the Fifth Estate also has members who respond to proto-authorization both by the MSM and by other institutions and through free ease-of-use, openly available credentialing, like the CFAPA provides, and through free, smart technologies, such as the ACLU provides. These responses act as a marginal form of proto-institutionalization, allowing the people who choose to film regularly to do so freely, regardless of press credential demands, but they also require a self-awareness or expectation that one will need such credentials or a belief that one needs to have downloaded such an app on one’s phone. Because the 80 percent of produsers who move across the porous boudary between individual and society in the digitally converged information world do so in a just-in-time manner, such proto-institutionalization is not as
Having examined some of the long tail in this chapter, Chapter 3 considers the short, rising end of the Power Law, the 20 percent of produsers who account for 80 percent of the content produced. These are produsers whose identities and time are deeply tied to their produsage. Low buy-in is not what attracts these produsers; they can be likened to the members of the college team project who do most of the work while most of their peers add only minimally to the project. Chapter 3 considers how these produsers’ goals and identity buy-in put them in a position from which they make use of digital convergence to design tools that function within the complex system.

A more effective form of proto-institutionalization is discussed in chapter 4.
CHAPTER 3

INTERBLOGGING SHIFTS AUTHORITY ON THE NETWORK: REUTERSGATE VS RATHERGATE AND THE TOOLS OF THE 20 PERCENT

If your [sic] going to ruined [sic] your career, at least work on the photo a little longer than two minutes.

Matt Mallams, Photographer (“Odd Photo”)

On August 9, 2006, The New York Times ran an article titled “Bloggers Drive Inquiry on How Altered Images Saw Print” in its Technology section. The article begins with a three-paragraph explanation that Adnan Hajj, a photojournalist working for Reuters Wire, had been found to have manipulated photos, that the discovery occurred on the blogosphere, and that it had “created an uproar on the Internet,” a measure based on activity on Technorati.com, a blog indexing site (NYT “Bloggers”). But the two-page article is not dedicated to the Internet aspects of the story. Rather, it centers on digital photography and MSM authority in the digital photography age. Although couched by its headline and nutgraph32 as an article about the blogosphere, the article’s rhetoric acts to create an apologia for the MSM in the digital age and a reification of The New York Times’s position as the lead member of what Louis Althusser calls the “Communication Ideological State Agent,” as discussed in chapter 1 (1489), and thus the head of institutional journalism and authority in journalistic knowledge-making in the U.S. The story behind the story shows how individuals or groups of individuals use digital convergence to design, generate, and position authority as agents in a networked system, allowing reinforcement, resistance, and change in institutional authority.

As chapter 2 established, according to Power Law, 80 percent of produsers on the Internet account for only 20 percent of the content prodused. In this chapter, I consider the other

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32 A nutgraph is the first paragraph of a news story in print. It is referred to as such because it is supposed to present the story “in a nutshell.”
produsers. The climbing arc on the left of the Power Law graph who only make up 20 percent of the produsers, but create 80 percent of the content produced. I do so by considering the case of “ReutersGate,” in which a blogger and his community successfully critiqued the MSM, forcing a response within fewer than four days both from the MSM member it was critiquing and, equally important for analyzing the rhetoric of authoritative response, from The New York Times. For this analysis, Albert-Laszló Barabási’s network theory, Yochai Benkler’s theorizing of the networked economy, and Axel Bruns’s work on produsage inform an analysis of how a group of bloggers formed a hub by designing a tool I term interblogging, which is a practice that creates a single node of many on the Internet, allowing small nodes the linking capacity of larger, more popular nodes. Additionally, Stephen Cooper’s analysis of bloggers as press critics helps to inform this examination of blogging’s role in relation to institutional journalism and its authority. This analysis shows the generation of authority among bloggers, but it also includes the “SportsShooter” forum in which the critique was discussed and that forms the bridge from unauthorized voices to institutional authority through a space for professionals acting in their non-professional roles. An analysis of the interplay among the bloggers, the photographers, and the MSM leads to an understanding of how individuals, alone or in groups, generate and exercise auctoritas in direct relation to institutions, creating a viable challenge and thus forcing a response.

Starting with a timeline of events, I show how these interconnected bloggers caused the MSM not only to respond to its corrective, but also to do so within days, as compared to an earlier case, “RatherGate,” discussed by Cooper, in Watching the Watchdog, involving doctored memos detailing President George Bush’s Reserve service. I compare the two cases to show how bloggers design tools within digital convergence that co-evolve auctoritas and call the MSM to account, illustrating how feedback, within the complex system of the networked information economy, leads to design of tools that bring auctoritas to the fore. Together, these cases show how the Web’s interactive nature both calls for and creates auctoritas among the 20 percent of produsers in the left hand spike of the Power Law graph, those who account for 80 percent of the work, as well as how that auctoritas makes possible the higher level of interlinking achieved by the bloggers in the RuetersGate case.

Interblogging, as this chapter makes clear, occurs when a cluster or community of bloggers across multiple sites uses the produsage process (discussed in detail in chapter 1) in
such a way that it becomes an ongoing conversation that acts much like the comment section of a single blog, though far less randomly, and maintains an ongoing thread of communication but with a much larger pool of readers. This complex combination of co-evolving auctoritas and use of the network’s strengths turns the cluster of blogs into a single large node—a small-cluster hub, in essence. By making use of this tool of digital convergence, blogs can change a difference of degree of information sharing into a difference of kind of information sharing. Therefore, blogs and the process of interblogging can force a response from the MSM.

**The Changing Of The Blogosphere**

**ReutersGate**

Some time in the early morning hours of Saturday, August 5, 2006, Adnan Hajj, a photojournalist working as a stringer (freelancer) in Beirut for Reuters News Wire posted the following photo to the Reuters Wire along with the included cutline and credit line. The photo was picked up by multiple outlets, but the outlet that would become the center of conversation was *Yahoo!* News, which published the photo to its Internet news site.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 3. Original cutline and credit line:** “Smoke billows from burning buildings destroyed during an overnight Israeli air raid on Beirut’s suburbs August 5, 2006. Many buildings were flattened during the attack.

REUTERS/Adnan Hajj”

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33 Because the actors in this situation interact from across the globe, I have set the timestamps to Eastern Daylight Time (because of the season) for ease of relating one to the other.

34 A cutline, also known as a caption, is the text that accompanies a photograph in a newspaper or wire service; it contextualizes the photo. A credit line provides the name of the print or wire service and photographer responsible for the photo.
At 6:41 p.m. that same day, this photo appeared on the blog LittleGreenFootballs.com, along with the comment “OK, now things are getting weird” (Johnson). Charles Johnson, the creator and primary author of Little Green Footballs, is best known for his participation in the exposure of the Bush memos as forgeries, known as RatherGate and discussed in full below (Cooper 60). Johnson had blogged at Little Green Footballs since 2001 and, although he is no longer part of the group, he was a founder of a media company called PJ Media formed from his community of bloggers and the bloggers working with Instapundit, a popular right-leaning blog (PJ Media). Johnson and his community of bloggers began to dissect the photo in their respective blog posts. Johnson explained the smoke in the photo could not have happened naturally as evidenced by repeating pixilation and the fact that smoke from two burning buildings would never look exactly alike in nature. He declared that such pixilation most likely was the outcome of the photoshopped “clone” tool.

About three hours later, at 9:53 p.m., photojournalist Geoff Miller pasted a link to Yahoo!‘s publication of the photo on a members’ chat forum of the Website SportsShooter.com, which he titled “Odd photo from Lebanon . . .” The link was accompanied by the comment, “Not looking to get political on this one . . . But, um, does anyone see anything odd about this photo?” The SportsShooter thread reached its maximum capacity, as set by that site’s rules, by August 7, at 12:50 a.m. The following evening, August 6, at 9:43 p.m., Johnson reported that Reuters had released the original photo, meaning that it could now be compared with the doctored version. According to The New York Times article, Reuters had killed the first photo by 10 a.m. of August 6. The SportsShooter forum continued its activity as well, reporting that Hajj had been fired by 9:52 a.m. At 10:15 a.m. that day, YNetNews.com, an Israeli Internet news outlet, posted a second photo identified by another blogger in Johnson’s blogger community, MyPetJawa.com, as doctored. The story included that Hajj had been fired and that Reuters had admitted to the doctoring of both photos and had pulled all of Hajj’s photos from the Beirut war.

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35 All quotes from the blogs and discussion forums in this chapter will be quotes exactly as they appear. Standard written English is not of particular concern for most people commenting and chatting on these spaces, and so the quotes are likely to contain errors to SWE, but those errors are not considered egregious in their original context.

36 A site can set the amount it will allow for a thread or forum to reach before the conversation has to be continued elsewhere or stop. I found no other thread in this case suggesting that before the comments reached capacity Reuters had jumped in.

37 A photo kill is a notification on a wire service for all users that a photo has been pulled from circulation for a specific reason, usually with some information. This allows any editors who have used the photo to print clarifications if necessary or replace the photo if it has yet to go to press.
(920 in all) off its site. By August 8, at 8:00 p.m., the BBC online news site published the same information, focusing on the doctored photo and Reuters’s reaction. On August 9, *The New York Times* published its story about the photos and the photographer, focusing on MSM handling of digital photos. The scandal was dubbed “ReutersGate.”  

*The New York Times* article “Bloggers Drive Inquiry on How Altered Images Saw Print” is key to understanding how the MSM, as a whole, was challenged by the corrective critique—as opposed to it having been only a challenge to Reuters. Although the title of the article and its placement in the Technology section of *The New York Times* suggest that it is about the blogosphere, only the first three paragraphs consider either the blogosphere or the Hajj photo. The rest of the two-page article is dedicated to an explanation of how the MSM faces the challenges posed by digital photography. While not disclosing its own photojournalistic practices, *The New York Times* quotes photo editors from other major news outlets on the photo editing process. Additionally, while not making itself the source of news, *The New York Times*

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38 The American cultural insistence on putting “Gate” on the end of any topic name to indicate a scandal is, in itself, a worthy subject for research. Clearly, it has lost resonance with the name of the Watergate hotel, but the implication remains of authority overstepping bounds and the population being forced to come to grips with what unchecked authority is capable of.

39 It is considered inappropriate ethically for journalists to become the news or cover a story by using themselves as sources. Doing so creates a conflict of interest. The Society of Professional Journalists recently released its new ethics guidelines which include avoiding conflict of interest (http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp).
follows ethical requirements to remain transparent and discloses that it has run Hajj photos—
while stating it has not run the ones in question:

    The Times, which ran a picture of his as recently as Saturday on its front
    page, has published eight of Mr. Hajj’s Associated Press and Reuters
    photographs since March 2005. Times editors said a review of those
    pictures found none that appeared to have been changed improperly.
    (“Bloggers”)

In addition to clarifying The New York Times’s involvement level in the story, this statement also
is designed to reauthorize The New York Times by addressing the issue directly and by assuring
the reader that the institution is investigating itself. Here The New York Times leans on its own
authority to reauthorize itself. The reader is assured not only that The New York Times did not
publish the photos that were caught by the bloggers but that the editors checked all the photos
the paper had published by the scandalized photographer, suggesting that the reader could trust
that they were not doctored because they were now New York Times verified photos. The logic is
circular but effective. In bringing their institutional authority to bear on the photos that were
published, The New York Times verified them and indicated it would not be retracting them even
though Reuters had killed all 920 photos published under this photographer’s name. Therefore,
The New York Times’s apparent imperviousness to the error of other news agencies—Reuters,
but also all the other agencies using Reuters’s photos—is a mark of its imperviousness to this
challenge that digital photography brings.

    But the next paragraph of the article offers a sentence that makes clear just how much of
    a challenge digital convergence poses to all the MSM: “Still, his activities have heightened the
    anxiety photo editors are already experiencing in the age of digital photography, when pictures
    can be so easily manipulated by computer” (“Bloggers”). This statement further reifies The New
    York Times authority by openly revealing its awareness of the challenge posed to it, thus
    reassuring the reader that the institution is maintaining awareness and that its investigation was
    conducted with that awareness. It also reassures the reader that this is not the first instance in
    which The New York Times has had to confront these challenges, creating an assumption of past
    successes dealing with it and thus of institutional experience. Additionally, The New York Times
    acknowledges the readers’ own auctoritas in filtering and understanding information: “[t]hese
    advances . . . may have made readers more skeptical of what they see in newspapers”
(“Bloggers”). This explicit recognition of readers’ agency also functions to strengthen The New York Times’s own authority. As with its understanding of the challenges posed by digital photography to photo editors and thus the institution, The New York Times here reiterates its authority by recognizing the challenges the MSM faces with the possible loss of confidence in the MSM by the reading public. The article continues then to quote the associate managing photo editor at the Chicago Tribune, part of one of the largest news corporations in the country; a representative of Reuters; the director of photography at the Associated Press, the largest news wire corporation in the English language press; and the director of photography for USA Today, one of the most popular national newspapers that originated to compete with The New York Times. Each of these photo directors explains the news photo editing process used at his or her corporation, and the Reuters representative also discusses the ReutersGate photo itself:

“On Saturday, we published 2,000 photos,” Mr. Holmes said. “It was handled by someone on a very busy day at a more junior level than we would wish for in ideal circumstances.” He said this aspect of the problem was the result of “human error,” not malicious intent.

This statement by Paul Holmes, “a senior Reuters editor who is also responsible for the agency’s standards and ethics” (“Bloggers”), allows Reuters to use The New York Times’s authority to maintain its own institutional authority. The New York Times adds to this quote that Reuters says it dealt with the photo “within 18 hours” but does not make clear whether they addressed it within eighteen hours of publication or eighteen hours of the discovery by Johnson and publication at Little Green Footballs. This explanation of the speed with which Reuters responded further demonstrates The New York Times’s authority and further strengthens Reuters’s authority as well, in particular because it phrases the behavior as a responsible choice made by a responsive authority, not as a defensive choice made in defense of authority.

It is standard to use multiple sources to report a story. This approach verifies the information provided, but it also illustrates that The New York Times’s own reportage is credible. In addition, however, while The New York Times is following basic journalistic ethics by not reporting on its own photojournalism editing process, it also uses the multiple sources, which follow its own statement about having used Hajj’s photos but not those in question, to distance
itself from the challenge.\textsuperscript{40} The New York Times’s standing is strengthened by the facts that the scandal occurred to a different agency and The New York Times did not run the photo. By reporting on it, The New York Times benefits both from the credibility it gains in reporting on journalism’s challenges and in reassuring the reader that its own institutional processes are being re-verified to ensure that its credibility will remain intact. The benefit in covering the failure of a member of the institution of journalism ensures that The New York Times can discuss the challenge to journalism writ large without admitting to a challenge to its own authority.

However, as I discuss in chapter 1, the best gauge of a challenge to an institution is the institutional response. In this case, while the bloggers directly challenged Reuters, a member of the institution, and Reuters responded specifically, the bloggers did not challenge The New York Times, and yet The New York Times responded to the challenge. The New York Times’s decision to report the ReutersGate story accounts for only the first three paragraphs. The rest of the story can only be explained as a response to a threat to the journalism’s overall institutional authority. Were the story intended merely to report about the technological effects of blogging, as suggested by the story’s title, or about the occurrence of doctored photos at a major news outlet, something newspapers do report about, the story would have centered on technology or on the timeline. But the story centered not on how the photo got published despite being clearly doctored, but on how editors work to avoid such failures as they face the dangers wrought by the digital age. Interestingly, the story does not focus on the blogosphere or its threat to journalism directly, yet the threat drives the story, just as the headline suggests. Certainly, that threat must be understood to be a great one to receive national attention and for a news story to cover not only the what of reporting but the how—particularly at The New York Times.

As I explain in chapter 2, the topology of the Internet, the just-in-time tools of digital convergence, and the low participation costs of the Power Law-driven complex system make auctoritas both a necessary tool and a necessary outcome of information exchange in the digital age. The interactions of agents in the complex system create and mandate auctoritas much in the same way that participation in a complex system means that kairos wills the rhetor. There are, as I explained in chapter 2, multiple avenues to joining the Fifth Estate, whether intentionally or coincidentally. Unlike the 80 percent of produsers who are responsible for 20 percent of content,

\textsuperscript{40} This is not an assertion of the intent of the writer or editors of the article; it is the outcome of standard journalistic practice.
however, active bloggers like Johnson of Little Green Footballs are the 20 percent of produsers responsible for the other 80 percent accounted for in the Power Law. Their use of digital convergence tools requires a higher participation cost, and they design multiple approaches to fully engage in their identities as members of the Fifth Estate. Johnson is just such a rhetor; before ReutersGate, he participated visibly in another “Gate” scandal, the Bush memo scandal known as RatherGate. Unlike ReutersGate, Johnson was not at the center of RatherGate but was among the central participants. In addition, Johnson took the lessons he learned from RatherGate and applied them to form the group of bloggers that would become PJ Media, a group that would build on interlinked blogging conversations—or interblogging—to challenge the MSM at a greater level. To understand how these challenges differ and how the use of tools differ, I consider RatherGate below and how Johnson and other participants built and used their auctoritas to elicit a response from the MSM.

**RatherGate**

Although the 2004 RatherGate scandal surrounding the forged memos questioning President George Bush’s Vietnam era service did not yield the kind of responses that ReutersGate did, it is helpful to this analysis in several ways. First, it demonstrates how bloggers and commenters on public blogging sites (i.e., those that combine commentary and blogging together) build auctoritas just-in-time by qualifying their commentary in their history, experience, or personal connection while they add to multiple ongoing conversations on many different sites. This approach to auctoritas in large-group commenting is the norm online, as people share information at mass levels, and it can be seen in Henry Jenkins’s critique of participatory culture. Second, RatherGate stands in contrast to ReutersGate because of the multiple sites involved and the lack of referencing between the sites. While Benkler, in his chapter on the networked public sphere discusses ways in which multiple sites turn at some point toward a central space from which to work, he also focuses on ways in which decentralization across a network functions to create and disseminate auctoritas, particularly in his example of the exposure of the Diebold papers by an investigative blogger in New Zealand and the students around the U.S. who helped her using multiple sites and servers. RatherGate worked in much the same way as a networked public sphere is expected to work, with multiple conversations in multiple spaces building to a cacophony that filters up to the MSM and is then answered. Conversely, as I explain below, interblogging takes this model and implodes it.
Members of groups that congregate to share information in this manner piece it together from multiple sources and personal authority within the group, gathering little by little what each could not individually have known. In Watching the Watchdogs, Cooper dubs bloggers like Johnson “Media Watchdog Bloggers,” following Patrick Frey’s usage (33). Cooper dedicates more than twenty pages to unraveling the publish-then-filter process that led to Dan Rather’s resignation and, months later, a report issued by CBS. After CBS broke the news of the memos’ existence, which called into question President George Bush’s Vietnam war service record during his run against John Kerry,\(^{41}\) The Boston Globe and The New York Times both ran the story the next day—without verification. By that time, on a site called Free Republic that (in its design) combines the old format of bulletin board services (BBSs) and blogging, there were many comments on the story, including one quoted by Cooper saying, “I am saying the documents are forgeries. . . . This should be pursued aggressively” (qtd. in Cooper 57). The statement came at the end of a rant about the use of TrueType fonts and the technology available for typing in the 1970s. This was the publish step. The next step follows closely what Benkler describes as filtering.

Multiple users responded and while—as with any Internet comment thread—some were spurious, some picked up on the question of the type font used in the memos. Other responses focused on the formatting and (mis)use of military terminology and operating procedures. In all, while the memo was being attacked for its content and the timing of its release, the primary conversations were centered on the visual and formatting elements of the document—a process of document verification. Readers in common between Free Republic and another, more popular site called Power Line “alerted bloggers to that comment” (58).\(^{42}\) While there was not absolute consensus regarding the type font, the discussion of whether it was a technology available in the 1970s continued. Johnson then posted on Little Green Footballs an explanation of a test he used to prove the memos were forged. Using his experience as a desktop publishing expert and graphic designer to gain auctoritas, Johnson wrote:

> I opened Microsoft Word, set the font to Microsoft’s Times New Roman tabbed over to the default tap [sic] stop to enter the date “18 August 1973,” then typed the rest of the document purportedly from the personal

\(^{41}\) It would come to be assumed that the memos were in response to ad campaigns calling Kerry’s Vietnam era service and medal into question.

\(^{42}\) The accusation of forgery cited above.
records of the late Lieutenant Colonel Jerry B. Killian. And my Microsoft Word version, typed in 2004, is an *exact match* for the documents trumpeted by CBS News as “authentic.” (qtd in Cooper 60, emphasis original)

The above quote contains some key aspects of online authority building, but so does the rest of Johnson’s explanation. Johnson makes certain to explain the difference between typewriter fonts and computer fonts. On a typewriter, each letter has a fixed width, called monospacing, whereas on a computer, the font is designed so that each letter’s actual width on the page is dependent on the letters that surround it, called TrueType. Thus, an “i” takes the exact same space as an “m” on a typewriter, but not on a computer. Given this nature of type, Johnson clarifies, the same text typed in Times New Roman on a typewriter and on a computer would not line up because the letter spacing would be drastically different. Having provided this expert-level information of how fonts work on typewriters and computers, Johnson then describes his experiment in detail and allows the reader to fully grasp the importance of the memo being “an *exact match*” to the computer-authored document. Johnson’s experiment was reproduced many times in the argument that followed. On *Power Line*, former and retired military personnel also were providing information about omissions of military codes required on all memos, misuse of military style dating and abbreviations, and even the use of lower case in military memos (which is *not* standard). These writers placed their *auctoritas* squarely in their past experience in the military, stating their rank, branch, and years of service. Two officers titled their comments “An Officer Weighs In” and “Another Officer Speaks” (61), indicating their *auctoritas* in the title of their posts. Another listed not only his 21-year career in the Air Force, but that his primary work was in personnel management, meaning he would have typed and filed such reports at that point in his career, which he is careful to qualify as being from 1968-1981. Both his long career working in the personnel management arena in the military and the fact that his career started before the purported 1973 date of the documents and lasted until well after, support his *auctoritas* on the subject. The focus of his post: “Memos were NOT used for orders, as the one ordering 1LT Bush to take a physical” (all caps in original, qtd in Cooper 59).

Likewise, a left leaning political watchdog site called *The Daily Kos* included defenses and responses to the “evidence” being offered on *Power Line* and *Free Republic*. This answering back to blogosphere commentary from across the political divide is part of what makes the
publish-then-filter process successful. As an idea gains salience, it comes to the attention of bloggers who read the “other side”; those readers link the posts in their blog communities and comment on them. Their community then responds to the originating argument, but within its own cluster of users. This pattern of produsage both further spreads the idea and, because it widens the audience, allows for the idea to be challenged and filtered into ever bigger clusters (Benkler). To this end, authority is part of every interaction involved in these discussions. These agents create their auctoritas using digital convergence and credentialing. Such authority creation is part of the process of networked information sharing; it is the auctoritas of digital convergence. But it is not interblogging, which allows those involved to shortcut some of this information filtering, as I explain below.

To continue the story of RatherGate, Rather soon appeared on CNN with Wolf Blitzer to personally vouch for the memos’ veracity. Thus, the MSM became involved in coverage of its coverage, not unlike The New York Times’s verification of its own veracity in the ReutersGate reporting. The Boston Globe published a purported defense of the document’s veracity from a document expert (the expert later insisted he had been both misquoted and quoted out of context). And The Washington Post (The New York Times’s primary competitor) ran an essay by one of the first designers of TrueType fonts in word processing, who explained in great technical detail the history of word processing and TrueType fonts (67-70). The MSM was now fully involved with the story, with CBS defending its stance and other outlets arguing against it. However, MSM coverage of the story focused on CBS’s journalistic practices and the expert testimony of Joseph Newcomer (the pioneer in desktop publishing). There was not an MSM discussion of the blogosphere’s influence in bringing the fraud to light. Within two weeks, the blogosphere had managed to effectively critique the MSM, causing CBS to admit the forgery and promise a report (52-77). Unlike The New York Times story about ReutersGate, the MSM coverage of RatherGate focused on the memos, Rather, and CBS. Thus, while the bloggers who drove the inquiry managed to garner a response from the institution, the magnitude of the challenge was limited to the incident itself and therefore was not large enough to earn a defense of institutional practice.

Still, Cooper posits RatherGate as important because; “[a]part from the issue of the accuracy of mainstream reporting, this case also illustrates the symbiotic relationship of the

43 The report of the internal CBS investigation was released nearly four months later (Cooper 76).
blogosphere and the mainstream media” (77). Such interdependence holds true for “watchdogs of the media,” but it also applies to other sites from which the MSM might pick up a story that goes viral, to which the MSM turns (sometimes with disastrous results) for personal interest stories, and on which the MSM counts for circulation via social networks, as shown, for example, in chapter 2. Finally, this scandal is important because of the way in which such multiple sites as *Free Republic, PowerLine, Daily KOS,* and others interacted as individual clusters filtering and investigating information as they published it and linking to each other; these actions combined to create the upward filtering Benkler uses to explain how ideas produced in small clusters on the Web move into currency in larger clusters until they reach the main cluster and are likely to be picked up by the MSM (255). These individual clusters acted as unique bowtie clusters (shown in chapter 1, figure 2), but, as a group of bowties, they also acted as a single bowtie cluster as information filtered upward through them, as predicted in Barabási’s and Benkler’s work. Though many of the users on these sites belong to the long tail of the 80 percent of produsers, the sites themselves are blogs run by members of the left side, the 20 percent. Working in conjunction with each other, they moved a critique that had at first been ignored by the MSM up through their clusters and into MSM coverage. This upward sifting sieve is the key difference between RatherGate and ReutersGate. RatherGate is the outcome of multiple sites that do not directly link to each other, but whose work is cited by the others and whose conversations affect the others, moving the topic upward through ever larger bowtie clusters until they reach the MSM.

In the case of ReutersGate, the circulation of information did not occur in the upward sifting sieve Benkler describes. Though Johnson and his group of bloggers carried out their MSM critique across multiple blog sites, the sites did not form a cluster of bowties. Rather, because of how they were organized and because of how they were interlinked, this group of blogs formed a single node. As Barabási’s work predicts, such a highly interlinked node with a high fitness (because of its external linking as well as its interlinking) forms a large node, and a large node is on its way to becoming a hub—the central part of a single bowtie. Because Johnson had formed this group of interlinked bloggers, his group was in a unique position to enact a more powerful form of *auctoritas* in its MSM critique when he received the tip about the doctored

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44 The Rolling Stone 2014 publication of “Jackie’s Story” is one recent example.
photo from Beirut. Johnson had designed a group of blogs that could act as a small hub, participating in and precipitating interblogging.

**Interblogging**

Interblogging occurs when a cluster or community of bloggers turn the produsage process into an ongoing conversation that, while it plays out on multiple sites, acts much like the comment section of a single blog, maintaining an ongoing thread of communication. The formation of nodes and the difference among nodes, clusters, and hubs are discussed in chapter 1. The primary difference between interblogging and what Benkler refers to as “mutual citation” (255) resides in how the group of blogs interacts as well as in the outcome of that interaction. While Benkler comments on this idea, he does not name it or recognize it as a difference of type: “The emergence of the writable Web, however, allows each node to itself become a cluster of users and posters who, collectively, gain salience as a node” (255). That cluster of users and posters, by forming an individual node, can build authority through interblogging, a phenomenon reliant on the affordances of digital convergence as a difference in kind, and challenge the MSM through that authority. Unlike a cluster of nodes formed into a bowtie, as the topography discussed in chapter 1 explains both the clusters and the larger Web are, a cluster that forms into a larger node acts like a single, highly linked node. This means that the large node does not have the problems of directionality between the continents of the bowtie. In addition, a node becomes a hub by growing links; therefore, a large node created by tightly interlinking a cluster of nodes without a directional problem brings them closer to becoming a hub. These bloggers choose to move beyond the blogroll, as defined in chapter 2.

While the comments section on the *Little Green Footballs* site looks much like other comments sections, it is not here that the interblogging occurs. Comments sections of blogs and websites tend to look like a true free marketplace of ideas; there are many hawkers and no one knows who the buyers are. The comments section of a popular blog or site will have hundreds or even thousands of comments. Each of these comments is its own thread, and each thread can have its own replies even into the hundreds and thousands—depending on the blogger’s levels of control and server size. Thus, a comments section on a blog is essentially a large field of rabbit holes. And yet, despite this constant possibility for sprained ankles and message loss, messages do pick up steam, as RatherGate shows, and they do gather salience. This gathering of salience and amplification tends to occur as ideas in the comments area are responded to by the blog’s
author and then turned into blog posts. They then, as Benkler explains, get further filtering and discussion, which will, for some ideas, hone them and carry them upward to bigger blogs or nodes. After RatherGate, Johnson reorganized his blog and several others. The new design included the traditional comments section, though as I discuss below Johnson is clear about his control of comments, but its focus is not on filtering ideas from community comments, but from other blogs. Johnson’s organization, which became a venture capital funded citizen journalist media hub called PJ Media, began through a form of centralized blog control whereby Johnson and his blog community began to reference back to each other’s blogs and built an ongoing conversation across multiple sites.

Interblogging, therefore, cannot occur without the writable Web and particularly without the permalink, which in turn is a key to understanding the interactions among the several blogs involved in ReutersGate as well as to understanding the role played by photojournalists and the MSM as the story unfolded. It is key as well to grappling with digital convergence as a difference in kind, not degree. In chapter 1, I discuss the influence of the permalink in creating a see-for-yourself approach to auctoritas on the Web. This see-for-yourself approach allows a blogger to not only discuss a document but to link the entirety of it for anyone interested to go and read. As Benkler states: “In the mass media . . . instead of allowing readers to read the report alongside its review, all that is offered is the professional review in the context of a culture that trusts the reviewer” (218). The trust that the MSM traditionally has been given is based on institutional authority, a concept more fully addressed in chapter 4. In short, individuals using the Web do not have access to the resources that the MSM uses to create and maintain credibility. Instead of relying on an institutional history or on the dignity afforded her by the institutional credential she has earned, a blogger can create an immediate sense of auctoritas by inviting her audience to “see for themselves” (as Benkler puts it). As I discuss in chapter 1, this approach to information sharing allows for a continuation of produsage through revisioning, editing, or refutation, among other actions—at least in part because it allows her readers to see what she has done with the artifact and to respond as they like using her work as well as the original and their own. But it also allows the blogger to take the same rhetorical step The New York Times takes above in its article about ReutersGate. By saying she trusts the audience member to make sense of the information for himself and then to return to her argument and agree with her, the rhetor essentially bets her dignity in a Ciceronian manner, as Goodwin explains occurs in an authority
interaction; yet, the rhetor has no explicit authority over her audience. She has placed her dignity on the line by creating transparency through the use of the permalink, and in doing so, she builds her own auctoritas. However, even a blogger who builds a history of credibly covering issues over time is not likely to build the kind of readership that a print or broadcast outlet can achieve. In fact, very few online sites achieve a mass readership. How, then, is any individual to join the public sphere on the Internet as an authorized voice?

As explained by Barabási and Benkler and discussed in detail in chapter 1, linking (the see-for-yourself part of the writable Web) is part of how node visibility is achieved. Mutual linking—or pointing—among bloggers in communities of interest drives traffic among multiple sites in small clusters on the Web. These small clusters grow up around areas of interest—whether that interest is politics or shepherding—and follow the directional bowtie design. Among regular blogs, as explained in chapter 2, this mutual linking is directional. Directional linking, however, has limitations for traffic on the Web, as explained in chapters 1 and 2. Linking to and being linked from are not of the same value for visibility. In particular, when fitness is concerned, being linked from a hub is far more important than linking to a hub. Anyone can link to an MSM hub, but that link does not travel in both directions, which means that too few people might ever see what a blogger writes.

These limitations are key to understanding why interblogging is a phenomenon that brings about a difference of kind of information circulation. Because the Internet is generally directional and one can surf to, but not back, information is usually directional as well. The multiple blogs that form the node used to discuss the ReutersGate scandal not only were interlinked heavily, but they also allowed users to see the map of their interlinking as they shared the history of their interaction through the blogs themselves. This approach to information sharing provides new information at the same time that it provides old information and the ability to track the conversation back and forth across blog sites, creating a multi-directional meta-picture that overlays the directional Web of blog conversations. One such example is: “Ace has been saying for a week that mainstream media is headed for a major meltdown, by outsourcing so much of their reporting to low-paid foreign stringers with highly questionable loyalties and ethics” (Johnson). Johnson helps the reader follow the map of interaction that comprises the ongoing conversation among these blogs by pointing not just to Ace’s site but to past content of the site and how that content is relevant to the current conversation, as well as by
juxtaposing it with the paragraph before, which links to a GIF that provides further cloning proof. In addition, the link to Ace’s site is returned because that page at Ace’s site gets linked to the new page at Johnson’s site. This particular difference, that the members of this blogging community updated their sites to reflect their interactions, evolved out of Johnson’s experiences as part of the group of bloggers who helped to bring the authenticity of the Bush memos into question in what became known as RatherGate. It is also what differentiates the community as interbloggers.

In her piece “Reviewing Fauxtography: A Blog-driven Challenge to Mass Media Power Without the Promises of Networked Publicity,” Nikki Usher explains that the structure of the blogger community centered on Little Green Footballs is such that Johnson has control over all that appears. There are millions of comments on the site, but none are immediately visible on the site. Instead, what one sees is the conversation Johnson has with his interbloggers. Usher therefore notes that this control disqualifies Little Green Footballs from being a Habermasian public, and she argues that this design portends negatively for the utopian concept of a fully free and democratic Internet. Usher takes Johnson to task for his hierarchical control of these blogs:

LGF links back to a wide circle of anti–media networks that are all invested in a tightly connected hub of conservative (and in this case) pro–Israel audiences. LGF, as the genesis of the story and one of the top–ranked blogs, has considerable authority in bringing new findings from other less visible blogs to the surface.

Usher has described interblogging exactly, but finds the centralized mechanism problematic. Because of Johnson’s control, because he uses terms like idiotarian and lizardoid, and because he makes clear that he will delete any comment he finds particularly stupid, Usher dismisses his blog as a failed public. In addition, Usher struggles with Little Green Football’s use of terminology and acronyms as a whole, complaining of an entire page in the About section dedicated solely to defining them. Yet, she makes clear that Johnson’s site has a viable purpose and design:

LGF can serve as a central point of distribution of conservative ideas and collaboration because of its readership. Though the blogs it connects to each provide its own set of commentary, the blogs feed off a system where blog posts from different blogs are interlinked. Ownership by Johnson’s
Pajamas Media facilitates aggregation and systemization across blogs. Thus, LGF is not working in isolation but is pushing forward a particular point of view in concert with other like-minded blogs.

While Usher has attempted to portray the problematics of belonging, she misses the necessities of belonging, dismissing the situation as not really representing a talking back to the MSM. Usher’s concerns about the availability of auctoritas in speaking to the MSM is rooted in gaining MSM attention. Her difficulties with Johnson’s interblogging community include (1) that he maintains control over which commenters appear in the main text; (2) that he edits the comments section; (3) that the conversation occurring across the interblogging node are self-referential; and (4) that having found this idea after RatherGate, he and two other bloggers founded a site called PJ Media, designed to function as a citizen journalist hub from which bloggers could interblog for conservative issues, specifically against the MSM, and which now includes an online television broadcast.

Nonetheless, how can one consider an MSM corrective to be successful if the media are not responsive? Usher seems to be reaching for the argument that the subaltern cannot speak, that to speak the language of power is to become part of the institution. But she does not make that argument explicit. Instead, she argues that, by courting an MSM response and by grouping themselves into a single node controlled primarily by Little Green Footballs, the bloggers involved became an arm of the MSM. In addition, all bloggers control and edit comments. Finally, self-referential conversation is, in fact, what makes interblogging work. It is a core reason that PJ Media was successful enough to gain venture capital and succeed as its own media company without MSM capital, reportage, or aggregation. Therefore, while there is value in Usher’s call for a Habermasian approach to publics on the Internet, it is important to consider the realities of network topology and the broader situation of how digital convergence tools are used within a Web that both allows for and calls for auctoritas. Further, Johnson’s response to his experience in RatherGate was to design a more powerful blogging tool for MSM critique, one that proved its worth in ReutersGate.

**How Interblogging Changed the Blogosphere**

The ReutersGate example differs from RatherGate in some important ways. As is clear from the timeline of occurrences, within seventy-two hours of Johnson’s Little Green Footballs publication of his suspicions that the Hajj photo had been doctored, Reuters had killed the photo,
killed all the other photos filed by Hajj, and announced that Hajj had been fired. In that time, as well, *The New York Times* reported the story and defended institutional journalism in a digital age. As compared with RatherGate, in which CBS took weeks to correct itself and months to release the report of what happened, ReutersGate took fewer than three days from first post to photo kill and firing Hajj, and less than a week to being reported in *The New York Times*. However, speed is not the focus of the story; rather, it is an effect of how the blogosphere had changed and was developing, underscoring digital convergence as a difference of kind, not of degree. In the present case, the greater phenomenon of interblogging—and the *auctoritas* derived from it—can be seen emerging. Because interblogging was the driving force behind the MSM corrective, the critique did not need to follow the traditional publish-then-filter approach (Benkler) that functions through interaction among multiple nodes to filter an idea and refine it, moving the refined idea through bigger and bigger node clusters until it reaches the central Web, where the MSM is likely to notice, and where MSM sites reside along with broadly popular blog/MSMs like *The Huffington Post* (Benkler). Instead, in creating a single node out of a group of separate nodes, interblogging allowed the conversation (the published critique) to reach a wider audience much more quickly and in a way that did not mirror viral activity on the Internet while having the same effect as a viral idea and as RatherGate and other successful MSM critiques online. By designing this tool as a response to the multi-vocal free market place of ideas blogging that drove RatherGate, Johnson marked himself and those he blogged with as part of the 20 percent. As a produser-designer, he not only makes use of the tools of digital convergence, he also uses the tools to create more powerful tools from which more concentrated *auctoritas* emerges.

Several interactions in the events of ReutersGate point to interblogging and its impact on authority. First, while Johnson is believed to have been the first to post the photo with indications that an unenhanced photo could not have shown the abnormally duplicated smoke as it was presented, he was not the only blogger involved in the node that set off the broader conversation and revealed the photoshopping. In addition, after the first post, Johnson not only continues his

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45 *The Huffington Post* acts much like an MSM in its size and popularity, but it is not part of institutional journalism per se because it works primarily as a news aggregator. By culling already written/produced stories from the Web and republishing them, *The Huffington Post* saves on production and editing costs while benefitting from the institutional authority of others. In addition, *The Huffington Post* does include some original content and some invited blogging. It thus can act as both a blogging/content creation node and an MSM node. Using this model, *The Huffington Post* has managed to build and maintain its authority and straddles these two types of knowledge creation.
coverage through regular updates by citing fellow bloggers in his node who likewise are discussing the photo, he also encourages his users to contact Reuter’s, providing them the contact information to do so. Additionally, he links to the ongoing conversation in the *SportsShooter* forum. In places where he cannot link, he also credits with a form of in-text citation: “(Hat tip: Mike).” Likewise, all the bloggers in this node, while citing each other through interlinking their pages when discussing and updating the conversation, also interact in the text as interlocuters in a conversation, and carry forward past discussions within their own community as part of the conversation:

Rob at *Left & Right* has isolated some repeating elements. Check out his animated GIF showing one section that is very obviously cloned.

Ace has been saying for a week that mainstream media is headed for a major meltdown, by outsourcing so much of their reporting to low-paid foreign stringers with highly questionable loyalties and ethics.

*(Johnson “Reuter’s doctoring”)*

In these two paragraphs, Johnson not only links to *Left & Right* as well as Ace, he uses one to comment on the other. Additionally, Johnson creates GIFs similar to Ace’s, but more involved, as more information comes in, GIFs that Ace then links from his page. This linking back is a way of getting around the directional nature of linking on the network. Though Web linking is directional and a link from *Little Green Footballs* to Ace will not create a link back, Ace does so at his end so that the blogs maintain a tightly linked structure and thus remain a single conversation rather than a set of heavily linked nodes. But these bloggers (and the others in their node) are not just refining ideas; they maintain the updates to the story on the same page as the original story—and not within the comments section—including date stamps, thus driving each other’s posts to build a single conversation.

Simultaneously, they nod to outsider sites (such as *SportsShooter*) and link to those as well, though they do not bring them “into” the conversation. These outsider links differ from the interblogging links in that they cite the existence of the stories, but do not treat them as additions to the conversation:

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46 For ease of reading, I have underlined the links, thereby changing the format of *Little Green Football*’s posts. Johnson uses light blue to indicate the links. I have underlined them in black so that printing in black and white does not affect their recognizability.
Professional sports photographers are discussing the image here:

(Johnson)

Here, despite the fact that the forum on SportsShooter contains technical information that informs the verdict those users reached, Johnson does not share the information; he simply links to it. This link is materially differently from the two above. Likewise, the users on SportsShooter do not bring quotes in from Johnson’s site, but they do link it along with YNET once the story reaches there. These actions show a clear delineation of insider and outsider, with the insiders comprising an interblogging node while still “interacting” through citation with outsiders who comprise other communities of interaction as well as MSM. Though the SportsShooter forum maintains the same “rules of engagement,” as a forum for discussion, it is a single Webpage, rather than multiple pages forming a single node. The SportsShooter forum, as compared to the interblogging community, uses an older approach to online interactions. Much like the Bulletin Board Services (BBSs) of the early Internet, it contains and presents a single space for a single conversation. To move to other conversations, users can choose from among the other fora. This forum, like any other on the site, is started by a user looking to discuss a topic of personal import (and, by creating the forum, the user demonstrates the hope that it is of import to others), in this case, what the user finds troubling is in the photo. Not only does the interblogged community carry on a conversation, it opens that conversation to a bigger audience than would be available to a single-site conversation, such as a forum. SportsShooter is open for comment only to members of the community, even though it is open for reading by anyone searching for topic covered in its fora. By interblogging, the members of Johnson’s multi-blog community open the discussion up to their plural and (even if only slightly) differing readerships. Additionally, Johnson links to Michelle Malkin, a conservative blogger with experience in the MSM, who reports on his reportage, thus using institutional authority to ground his own. Were Johnson to lean only on his expertise and history of media watchdogging, he would not attain the same auctoritas as he does by tying the MSM into his own auctoritas. This authority is also bolstered by his link to SportsShooter, discussed below. In all, Johnson uses several approaches to creating the auctoritas he needs to challenge and critique the MSM—some of which include the MSM, itself.
Bruns’s work on produsage includes several ways in which different produsers participate. Among them are ProAms. ProAms are, as their name suggests, professional-amateurs who use their status as professionals in their fields (whatever field it may be) to provide produsage in amateur arenas online. As such, these ProAms might be specialists in graphic design discussing typography, like Johnson in RatherGate, or former service members discussing proper military headers on memos, as did the officers in the blog sites mentioned in RatherGate above. ProAm produsers form part of the feedback loop to the MSM because they add information that comes from a site of expertise—just the sort of person a journalist would turn to for comment on a story the MSM might cover. In the case of ReutersGate, the feedback loop between interbloggers, ProAm produsers, and the MSM increased the pressure on Reuters to react to the challenge being posed—originally by digital convergence-empowered citizen journalists. This interaction between citizen journalists and ProAms on the Web is not new and has been used to correct the MSM in the past. In the case of ReutersGate, however, the use of interblogging to bolster citizen journalism’s authority made the response of the MSM in general, and Reuters’s specifically, much more immediate.

The *SportsShooter* forum that was started to discuss the Hajj photos acts as another example of ways individuals engage tools of digital convergence as a means to speak with *auctoritas* to challenge the MSM although sometimes they are members of the MSM in their professional lives. On the forum, professionals acting on their expertise but outside of their professional positions discuss the photo, both pointing out how the smoke can have been faked and suggesting mitigating circumstances. The conversation also leads to one photographer, Jason Fritz, suggesting that someone contact Reuters’s, and another, Drew Buchanan reporting that he already has done so:

I wrote a letter to Yahoo! and REUTERS; I don’t know if that’s why they took it down or not, but it’s likely.

Regarding a REUTERS photo taken by Adnan Hajj August 6, 2006 timed at 3:49 p.m. ET.

Yahoo URL source:
http://news.yahoo.com/photo/060805/photos_ts/2006_08_05t152933_450x304_us_m.

Caption reads: Smoke billows from burning buildings destroyed during an
overnight Israeli air raid on Beirut’s suburbs August 5, 2006. Many buildings were flattened during the attack.

I highly recommend the described photograph taken by photographer Adnan Hajj, employed by REUTERS be reviewed and REMOVED from Yahoo.com and affiliated websites for unethical and unmoral qualities. The photograph displays obvious signs of over-editing photo manipulation by software program(s). The manipulated image is highly offensive; especially to photojournalists. Yahoo! Inc. should be ashamed for allowing this kind of disgraceful material. Although Yahoo! Inc. does not represent or endorse the accuracy or reliability of any of the information, content or advertisements contained on or accessed from any of the services contained on this website it is the responsibility of Yahoo! Inc. to not allow disgraceful “manipulations” such as these. The image HIGHLY exaggerates the described situation in the caption. The image implies a bias on the part of Adnan Hajj, the photographer, which is unethical and should not be tolerated.

Please take these words into immediate consideration. (“Odd Photo”)

Several factors make this letter important to understanding ProAm performance of *auctoritas* and its effects on produsage. In its header, Buchanan lists all the important originating information for the photo, revealing to his fellow photojournalists as well as the MSM outlets to which he is writing that he has considered the sheer number of photos handled by any large MSM outlet but also that as a professional acting in an amateur arena, he has the expertise to know what information is relevant to the outlet. In addition, the letter includes the phrase, “The manipulated image is highly offensive; especially to photojournalists.” Including this sentence informs Yahoo! and Reuters, as does the indexing information, that he is one such professional and has the *auctoritas* to recognize a violation of photojournalistic ethics and to be offended. The power of ProAm produsage lies in the ability of professionals pursuing their interests—during their personal time—to have direct *auctoritas* both from within the institution and without. In participating on the forum, they create personal *auctoritas*, but in the performance of the interaction, they use their institutional authority to build and maintain this *auctoritas*. Much as
Johnson used his *auctoritas* as a graphic designer and former military personnel used their service histories to discuss the RatherGate-based Bush memos, ProAms bring professional experience in multiple fields to engage any subject covered by the MSM. This dual positioning provides ProAm users with additional *auctoritas* when acting as a corrective since the dignity of their professional *auctoritas* remains in effect even while they act outside of their institutions. ProAm space can act as a bridge between the blogosphere and the MSM. It can also act as a mediation space, as is clear in some of the comments in this forum attempting mitigation:

> If you’re going to blame anyone, blame the photo editors at Reuters for not catching an obvious FUBARed pic. For all we know this is an (advanced?) amateur who submitted the photo and who also lives in a part of the world where there are bigger worries in the world than photojournalism ethics. You know, like, hey is that bomb about to land in my lap? (Wes Hope, “Odd Photo”)

Hope’s comment is met with skepticism of Hajj’s possible amateur status, but also positive reinforcement that the editors and Reuters must take some of the blame. About five hours later, Lesley Ann Miller links the forum to a *Jerusalem Post* story in which Reuters admits the photos were doctored. Later, Geoff Miller links to *Little Green Footballs*, noting that Johnson has added information showing that there are cloned buildings in addition to smoke. This link is followed by links to the MSM confirming that Hajj has been fired and the photos killed. Thus, by linking back to the blogs and then to the MSM, as well as by being reported by the MSM, the forum becomes part of the story while connecting the “amateurs” in the blogosphere with the “professionals” in the MSM. Meanwhile, Johnson links from *Little Green Footballs* to the *SportsShooter* forum. When ProAm produsers provide their backing to the *auctoritas* of amateurs online in an MSM corrective, they form a bridge to the MSM, and in this particular case, it may be that a ProAm was the bridge from *Little Green Footballs* to Reuters. Because it is unclear how the photographer knew to look at *Little Green Footballs’s* site, and because the site was linked from a photojournalist forum popular across North America, the interaction of ProAms with bloggers had a very real effect on Johnson’s *auctoritas*.47

> By directing his readers and interbloggers to the forum, Johnson attaches his work to the *auctoritas* of the photojournalists. While he does not quote the forum, he does note that they are

47 And it may have had an effect on Reuters’s speed in decision making as well.
discussing it while providing the link, and he adds, “Verdict: obvious fraud” (Johnson). As discussed in the interblogging section above, this link from the blog does not make SportsShooter part of the community in which Johnson is interblogging. Rather it connects the two, using SportsShooter to bolster Little Green Footballs’s argument. In addition, the citation of Little Green Footballs on SportsShooter functions as recognition of Johnson’s auctoritas. In this way, Johnson’s conclusions are backed both by the ProAms in the forum and on his site, creating a bridge to the institutional world of journalism. The photojournalists, in addition, try to contact Reuters and encourage each other to effect change, strengthening that bridge. While the primary pressure at this point came from Little Green Footballs and Johnson’s interblogging community, the addition of the ProAm forum was noted in MSM reports, including Ynet News’s coverage of the Hajj case as it unfolded—in stark contrast to the weeks needed for the RatherGate corrective to occur

**Summary**

The case of ReutersGate illustrates several issues that arise in the use of digital convergence to challenge institutional authority. As shown by comparison to RatherGate, bloggers (even ones involved in both cases) have used the Internet to critique and correct the MSM, thus challenging it. Even before 2006 when ReutersGate occurred, bloggers were challenging the authority of journalism and practicing competing journalism as citizen journalists and members of the Fifth Estate. The difference in MSM response to ReutersGate acts to highlight how communities on the Internet emerge and how that emergence allows those communities to design tools, form individual nodes, build greater efficacy, and challenge the MSM more directly and with immediate results. The immediacy of those results yet again underscore the difference in kind that the difference of degree of information sharing within the realm of digital convergence leads to.

The community surrounding Johnson’s blog Little Green Footballs included multiple bloggers using the tools of the Internet to create an interblogging community. By using hyperlinks to each other to create an ongoing conversation—links that were intentionally linked back—they created an emergence model that allowed their information to circulate through their multiple sites and become filtered into knowledge more readily. They each relied on the other both for their authority and for their filtering capacities to build a group authority even though the group did not name itself, consider itself a hierarchy, or create a mission statement. And, in
this heterarchical space, they became a single node, even if only temporarily, to transform into a single entity made up of agents in a networked system. In the process, they co-evolved *auctoritas* built both from a history of credibility in challenging MSM, as well as from the strength of the tool they designed through digital convergence.

The MSM in this story also illustrates the power of interblogging, and not only through coverage of bloggers as the lead in the *New York Times* story. Because ReutersGate garnered immediate response, thanks to the interbloggers and their MSM bridge in the ProAm community, institutional authority changed by correcting itself (as Reuters did) as well as by resisting the interbloggers’ agency and reinforcing its own authority (as the MSM stories, but especially the *New York Times* story did). In reporting on digital photojournalistic practices, the *Times* reinforced institutional journalism’s authority. In using the interbloggers to introduce the topic, but assigning credit to an institutionally accredited photographer for the correction, it then also denied the interbloggers’ agency in taking authority for the MSM correction.

According to *The New York Times*, Reuters was informed of the fraud by one of its own photographers. The *Little Green Footballs* “post was spotted by a Reuters photographer in Canada, who quickly notified the editors on duty, and they began an investigation” (“Bloggers”). The photo was killed by Sunday morning, according to the article posted by Ynet News, the *SportsShooter* forum, and a post on *Little Green Footballs*. But there is no way to verify precisely how Reuters found out about the fraud and when. By the time Reuters killed the photo and fired Hajj, the story had been widely circulated across Johnson’s interblogging community, the *SportsShooter* forum, and Ynet News. It was not covered by the BBC online until after the firing, and it was not covered by *The New York Times* until Tuesday. In addition, both in the interblogging community and in the forum, members encouraged each other and readers to contact Reuters about the photo.

In ascribing the notification to a Reuters photojournalist, Reuters seeks to maintain its authority in the process of having it challenged. Even though the photographer found out about the photo from *Little Green Footballs*, and even though he was in Canada and not at all involved in the production, editing, or posting of the photo, by clearing up the fraud Reuters—his agency—indicates that its employees have credibility and that Reuters encourages and responds to such in-house critique. The blogosphere is incidental to the challenge from Reuters’s point of view. While Reuters is not actively denying the part played by the interbloggers, it is ignoring
that role and the interbloggers who participated. The New York Times, on the other hand, directly acknowledges the interbloggers’ actions and their effects but publishes a story that is aimed at reauthorizing institutional journalism in general and maintaining its own authority specifically.

Finally, the interaction between the MSM and the interbloggers reiterates the viability of the challenge to the MSM by individuals and groups of individuals using digital convergence to design, generate, and position authority as agents in the network. All institutions are resisted and challenged at all times. By dint of their knowledge-creation position in a given culture, institutions are the target for resistance to cultural hegemonic practices. But also because of their position as knowledge-creators, institutions need not respond to such challenges unless they are viable. In fact, not responding to non-viable challenges is part of what marks non-institutional voices as lacking in authority to challenge. When a viable threat is posed to institutional authority, however, the institution must respond. Therefore, the paradox of challenge is created: By responding to unauthorized challenges that the institution deems viable, the institution authorizes the challenges and thus the challengers.

Clearly this form of authorization is not the same as institutional authorization through dignity and membership. Still, in a digitally converged network, such authority carries weight and offers future credibility, which is most clearly seen in the case above with Johnson’s authority. As part of his identification in the New York Times story, he is marked as having been involved in the RatherGate challenge years earlier. This involvement lent him credibility that he was able to use in making the ReutersGate challenge. That challenge, in turn, has advanced his authority. This interaction with the MSM, in which individuals (and groups of individuals) gain authority by challenging the MSM successfully and use it to further challenge MSM authority, is part what pushes the shift in rhetorical meaning of authority. When an individual gains and uses such authority over time, he or she builds a Ciceronean auctoritas. That auctoritas allows that individual to pit individual auctoritas against institutional authority in a viable manner. How much of that authority carries forward and how it is deployed, as well as how institutions (in general) will respond to the shift in authority as an outcome of practice, is yet to be seen.
CHAPTER 4

AUTHORIZING THE THIRD SPACE: HOW WIKILEAKS SHAPE-SHIFTS TO MEDIATE BETWEEN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH ESTATES

On April 5, 2010, a video appeared on YouTube that had been shot from the gun turret of a U.S. military helicopter as the gunner mistakenly shot Iraqi civilians and two Reuters reporters. The video included glib remarks made by the gunner as he fired. When another civilian stopped his van to help the wounded, he too was shot at, and his children (in the van) were wounded; one died. Within days, the video had more than ten million hits on YouTube (Domscheit-Berg).

WikiLeaks.com had arrived—or, at least, it finally was noticed.

WikiLeaks had, in fact, been on “the scene” since 2007, posting leaks that ranged from minor internal governmental squabbles in developing countries to clear proof of tax evasion at Julius Bär, a Swiss bank, and even “the handbooks from Guantánamo Bay, the ‘Camp Delta Standard Operating Procedures’” (Domscheit-Berg). And, while many point to it as the first Website of its kind, allowing whistleblowers to anonymously dump their information without direct contact with the press, and thus without danger of having their identity revealed,48 another site, known as cryptome.org had been functioning in the same capacity since 1999 (Domscheit-Berg).

“Collateral Murder,” however, was different. Among other things, it was edited and headlined—something no other WikiLeaks data dump had ever been, the salience of which I discuss below. Additionally, rather than simply posting to its own site, WikiLeaks posted the video to YouTube and held a press conference at the Press Club in the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., mobilizing as many digital convergence tactics as it could while involving the MSM. WikiLeaks also contacted The New York Times (Page One), which ran a story about the

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48 It is against journalistic ethics and practice to reveal sources' names or identifying information without permission. However, without federal shield laws to protect journalists from being compelled to do so in court, and with only some states maintaining these laws, journalists can be forced to do so, as was made most publicly evident in the Valerie Plame case, in which New York Times journalists were jailed on contempt of court charges until they agreed to name sources.
video. According to the documentary, *Page One: Inside the New York Times*, the newspaper treated Julian Assange, who referred to himself as “a journalist with the values of an activist,” as a source. Still, “Collateral Murder” was just the first step in *WikiLeaks’s* shift from a whistleblower dumping ground into a Fifth Estate mediator for the Fourth Estate, a third space I explore in this chapter. In chapter 2, I considered ways that the CFAPA and the ACLU attempt proto-institutionalization as responses to proto-authorization by the institution of journalism. These attempts range from providing free press credentials online to using smart technology to create apps that live stream video to ACLU offices for safe-keeping and review in cases in which a person believes her or others’ rights are being violated. In turn, they form a path across the individual and the social boundaries that have been made more porous by digital convergence. In chapter 4, I consider the case of *WikiLeaks*, a whistleblower site that allows anonymous information drops, and its interaction with the MSM through the War Logs and CableGate scandals. This chapter addresses research question 3: What are the effects of digital convergence regarding the creation and circulation of information as well as the transformation or manipulation of information into knowledge? As I examine the different attitudes toward authority presented in each of the partners’ accounts of the interactions, I address how *WikiLeaks* grows to form a third space, a mediator between the Fourth and Fifth Estates, which is a more sustainable form of proto-institutionalization if only because it does not require a decision to join or self-identify. Foregrounding the chapter’s discussion of Fourth Estate, Fifth Estate, authority, mediation, and the third space are the questions of how *auctoritas* is shared, created, and managed by *WikiLeaks* throughout the formative period of the publications and how its ability to shape-shift affects and is affected by its relationship to the MSM. *WikiLeaks’s* shape-shifting behavior and its ability to move from a team of people forming *auctoritas* to a unit attempting to form a third space proto-institutional authority are prime among those effects, as is *The New York Times’s* difficulty in pinning down just what *WikiLeaks’s* role was in relation to *The New York Times’s* institutional role.

Beginning in June, 2010, *WikiLeaks* would use its publishing power through digital convergence as well as another massive dump of information to try to change its relationship to media in general and *The New York Times* in particular—and *WikiLeaks* would use the situation to become an authoritative actor in knowledge creation, a proto-institutional act that I also explore in this chapter. But *WikiLeaks* was already making use of some MSM tools. By using the
publication capabilities made available through digital convergence in addition to taking the information to the MSM, *WikiLeaks* was building its own *auctoritas*. Using digital convergence both to receive and to publish this information, while also learning from its experiences with the MSM to change its interactions and publishing behavior, *WikiLeaks* shape-shifted, turning into a source, a media partner, or a mediator for the Fifth Estate and back as needed. Shape-shifting across the spectrum between news-consumer to news-produser allowed *WikiLeaks* to accomplish this feat.

In this chapter, I discuss how *WikiLeaks*’s relationship with MSM outlets functioned to allow it to create *auctoritas* for itself as it also made use of its platform to publish and build upon its MSM relationships to create a media-partner-based *auctoritas*. This combination of using the MSM and digital convergence helped move *WikiLeaks* into a relationship with the Fifth and Fourth Estates. Through these shifts, the language used within and about *WikiLeaks* changed to include such terms as editor, publisher, and media partner, and *WikiLeaks* shape-shifted from being a hacker project and a passive informant from whose data meaning is made to a participant in the media project of meaning making—and back as necessary. This chapter considers the differences between information and knowledge, analyzes three books, one written by each of the major players in the largest of the *WikiLeaks* leaks, and uses these considerations and analyses to understand *WikiLeaks*’s evolution and use of *auctoritas* and creation of a third space, outside of but related to the Fourth and Fifth Estates. The three books are *Open Secrets: WikiLeaks, War and American Diplomacy*, by *The New York Times*, of which the Introduction is the part dealing with *WikiLeaks*’s interactions with the MSM, and which is written by Bill Keller; *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrecy*, by David Leigh and Luke Harding; and *Inside WikiLeaks: My Time With Julian Assange at the World’s Most Dangerous Website* by Daniel Domscheit-Berg. The specific *WikiLeaks* publications reviewed as data points from these books are the Afghanistan War Logs, Iraq War Logs, and CableGate, as well as general commentary in the books about *WikiLeaks*.\(^49\) The Afghanistan War Logs, the Iraq War Logs, and

\(^49\) Although the substance of the Afghanistan War Logs, Iraq War Logs, and CableGate are not necessary for understanding this chapter’s claims, it is useful to know what these files represented in terms of material information. The Afghanistan and Iraq War Logs are field reports from Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively, and show the sometimes extreme difference between what commanders reported from the field and what was shared with the public, which is why *WikiLeaks*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times* found them so compelling. Finally, CableGate, another play on the infamous Watergate, comprised hundreds of thousands of missives from and to the state department, often with derogatory remarks about foreign leaders and
CableGate consisted of hundreds of thousands of intelligence files, some of which originated from the field in the battle zones in Afghanistan and Iraq and some from diplomats to and from the U.S. State Department. These files are known to have been leaked to WikiLeaks by a former soldier in the U.S. Army, Chelsea Manning. At no point did WikiLeaks verify Manning’s involvement. Manning confessed to having copied the thousands of files and uploading them to WikiLeaks to an online acquaintance.

This chapter further concerns an important difference between WikiLeaks and the Fifth Estate as described in previous chapters. First, while WikiLeaks is the conduit for specific kinds of information-leaking to the MSM (much as sources generally act to get information to the MSM), it is a simultaneous publisher of the same data. By contrast, sources provide data or information to the MSM, but they do not publish and are not members of the Fourth or Fifth Estates. And, whereas bloggers act as publishers and are members of the Fifth Estate as discussed in chapters 2 and 3, they differ (both from sources and from WikiLeaks) because their goals do not include providing information to the MSM—even when they act as an MSM corrective. The WikiLeaks’s project is different because it acts neither as the point of origin for the information nor as the final point for release of information. Yet WikiLeaks participates in both sides of the interaction, and—as WikiLeaks’s stated goals throughout project process make clear—acts to turn that information into cultural knowledge. Before analyzing the rhetorical stance each of the three main partners in the WikiLeaks project took toward WikiLeaks’s shape-shifting auctoritas, I examine the difference between information and knowledge. To do so, I first consider the steps WikiLeaks took in getting the Afghan War Logs, Iraq War Logs, and CableGate leaks project published. Then, with regard to editing, I compare the WikiLeaks ethos at that point in time to institutional journalistic ethos. In comparison, the two illustrate the specific uses of rhetoric of institutional authority in the descriptions of the interactions as presented by the books. While the books cannot present the interactions themselves, they do

including directions to spy on foreign leaders’ financial affairs. Together, their publication on WikiLeaks and by the MSM caused a great deal of embarrassment to the U.S., until the scandals were undermined in the press when Assange was brought up on charges of rape in Sweden.

50 Born Bradley Manning, and court-martialed as a Private First Class, Chelsea Manning has admitted to uploading hundreds of thousands of classified files to the WikiLeaks site while working as an intelligence analyst in the U.S. Army in Iraq. Manning announced after her sentencing that she was a m-f transgender and requested that she be referred to in the feminine and using her chosen name henceforth. This analysis respects her wishes except where quoting directly from sources does not permit any other approach.
represent an authority interaction with the reader; one in which the author(ity) asks the reader both explicitly and implicitly to comply with the author(ity)’s views.

**Information Differs From Knowledge**

Following “Collateral Murder,” the data dump that brought *WikiLeaks* to international fame included hundreds of thousands of files from Afghanistan, Iraq, and the U.S. Department of State. When *WikiLeaks* brought what would become the Afghan War Logs, the Iraq War Logs, and the CableGate to *The Guardian*, it was with the intent that *The Guardian* get *The New York Times* to join in publishing these materials. There were several reasons for this move, which benefitted both *WikiLeaks* and *The Guardian*. First, the laws protecting speech in the U.S. were stronger and more liberally applied than those in the U.K., which would serve both the Website and the paper. Second, while *The Guardian* had a fair-sized readership, it was not the most widely read paper in Britain; *The New York Times*, on the other hand, is among the most read newspapers in the US and the world, ranking 39 of the top 100 papers in the world by circulation in 2011 (*National Newspapers Total Circulation*).

*WikiLeaks* also had much to gain from getting the MSM on board in general: the MSM offered (1) authority in understanding the data, (2) exposure in publication, both of the stories and of the *WikiLeaks* site, and (3) experience that could turn that information into knowledge. First, MSM journalists who had been embedded with troops, and even those who had not been in Iraq or Afghanistan but who had covered the military, understood military jargon and could read military reports—despite the shorthand and specialized vocabulary used in them. Second, the MSM offered *WikiLeaks* the “front page”—something no Web address can offer yet regardless of its size or general importance. And third, MSM reporters had the time, the manpower, and the experience to take the leaked information and contextualize it along with other “stories” rather than simply leaving it as data. *WikiLeaks*, for its part, brought more to the table than just data. *WikiLeaks* had the digital convergence tools to manipulate the data on a massive scale. While the reporters of *The New York Times* had some experience with digital tools and while *The New York Times* has a Web publication team, neither group of people had made use of the hacker mentality and knowledge of how to use the tools to cope with the hundreds of thousands of files that had been leaked to them.

Nonetheless, Julian Assange had very specific ideas about how *WikiLeaks* should operate that created some obstacles to the partnership. These ideas, which formed the ethos of publishing
at WikiLeaks, affected how information had been handled, but also how it was handled once WikiLeaks began its partnership with The New York Times, The Guardian, and later Der Spiegel. While Assange made his disdain for the press as clear as he had made his loathing of all forms of government, his actual reasoning is made most manifest in Inside WikiLeaks: My Time With Julian Assange at the World’s Most Dangerous Website, written by Daniel Domscheit-Berg, WikiLeaks’s second-in-command.\(^1\)

Publishing everything we received was part of our concept of transparency. What else could we do if we didn’t want to open ourselves up to accusations of playing favorites? Whether the material affected the political right or the left, the good guys or the idiots, we published it. We only filtered out what was irrelevant. Admittedly, some of our publications went pretty far, containing private e-mails that carried implications for the lives of uninvolved third parties. (Domscheit-Berg, ch. 2)

In his book, Domscheit-Berg explains that WikiLeaks was, at this point, comprised of no more than himself, Assange, and an occasional volunteer. As a site devoted to transparency, WikiLeaks held an ethos of transparency. Domscheit-Berg explains that he and Assange both believed that the MSM presented as many transparency problems as governments did, primarily because the MSM were businesses and therefore beholden to advertisers. In addition, Domscheit-Berg discusses the impossibilities stated above of editing: “What else could we do if we didn’t want to open ourselves up to accusations of playing favorites?” he asks. Yet, two sentences later, he states that they “only filtered out what was irrelevant.” Thus, without any consideration of the bias involved in “filtering” and conceptions of “relevance,” Domscheit-Berg dismisses all other options. While third parties sometimes got hurt, Domscheit-Berg tells the reader, he also seems unconcerned because his cause is just. However, without editorial decision-making, there also was no context by which readers could frame the data—in some cases, there was no way for readers to even understand it. Given a set of email exchanges, the public might be able to draw any set of conclusions, but given a year’s worth of bank statements showing bank fraud (one of

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\(^1\) Assange wrote an “autobiography and manifesto” with a ghostwriter in 2010, under a six-month contract with Canongate Books, U.K. At the end of the six months, the authors provided the publisher with a first draft that both authors and publisher say the authors were unhappy with. The authors asked to rework the contract. The publisher refused. Citing the work as a fascinating reflection of an interesting man, Canongate published the first draft as-is. The authors have claimed that the book fails to meet its intended goals because while it provides autobiographical information, it does not meet the “manifesto” part of the deal. Until recently, the book was unavailable for purchase in the U.S. or its territories.
the earliest of WikiLeaks’s big-impact uploads), only people who knew how to read such things could possibly understand what was going on and why it might be important.

Newspapers, by contrast, use editorial meetings to make decisions on what will be covered. Those meetings include journalists who pitch ideas. Those ideas the editors think are important, become stories; stories are written by reporters using multiple sources and trying to filter the information to make it into a cogent narrative. The editors then decide which stories will get published. They also decide with designers how to present that material so as to imbue it with the priorities those editors deem it to have. These priorities are demonstrated by what page a story is on, whether it is above or below the paper fold, whether it has a photo or graphic, whether that photo or graphic is the dominant image on the page, whether the story jumps (is kept whole on a page or continued to another), and even what kind of newspaper the story is printed in—whether a checkout tabloid or a newsstand broadsheet (186). And, for The New York Times, the question is also whether the story “swings”—that is, whether it is in the local (i.e., New York City only) edition or in the national edition as well. For example, it was decided that the story about WikiLeaks’s release of “Collateral Murder” would swing (Page One).

As discussed in chapter 1, data sans context is not information. And information is only knowledge when it is shared in a way that makes it absorbable. WikiLeaks’s release of the Bär documents is one example of the data versus information versus knowledge problem. When they received the “jumble of figures and calculations, organigrams, workflow documents, and contracts onto our digital mailbox” (ch. 2), Domscheit-Berg says it required several days to understand what they were looking at. They then published these materials with a summary. Without that summary, the information would have remained nothing more than a jumble of documents. Even so, Domscheit-Berg states that without Bär bringing suit against WikiLeaks to make them take the documents down, the documents might have gone largely ignored (ch. 2). Information is absorbable through narrative—such as the summary provided for the Bär documents—but more often through longer narrative that brings together strands of multiple stories. Yet the Bär documents were still only information at that time. Seely Brown and Duguid’s work, as discussed in chapter 1, shows that not only are context and narrative required for knowledge making, so is utility. Information becomes knowledge when it functions to form communities (189). As a group of member institutions, the MSM have the social capital to invest and reinvest in information as they continue to create knowledge. Though the Bär documents can
be said to have utility, they did not have that utility until they were put into a narrative and shared in context with other stories by the MSM. As *WikiLeaks* evolved, even though it was not an institution, it would come to use both digital convergence and the MSM to join in the creation of knowledge, not just the dissemination of information, accruing *auctoritas* in the process. Partnering with the MSM, *WikiLeaks* used the strategies it learned from the media to gain authority intrinsic to the difference between information and knowledge. It would then use its position and authority to create a third position of mediator between the Fourth and Fifth Estates.

It is instructive to look at the three primary books published about *WikiLeaks* to understand not only the relationship the major players had to each other, but also to see how that relationship affected the ways each performed and reacted to each other’s performance of authority. In comparing how descriptions of *WikiLeaks* changes over the course of its interactions with *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, I analyze how each outlet’s rhetoric is grounded in its authoritative position, as well as how that position is affected by the interaction. The three narratives can be tracked across their interactions through three points at which their narratives cross: the Afghan War Logs, the Iraq War Logs, and CableGate. Through longitudinal comparison of each of the three at similar points, one can see the ways that differing expectations and beliefs about authority played out in their partnership—though not all three saw it as such—as each adjusted for the others’ behaviors. Looking at the three books in this way will allow one to see the evolution of *WikiLeaks* as it progressed from an unknown Website to one of the most talked about international topics—one fully worthy of many more than the three books that have been written about it thus far. In the process, it allows for an understanding of both the building of media-partner-based *auctoritas*, and shape-shifting as a form of proto-institutionalization as these were practiced by *WikiLeaks*.

Benkler makes clear that on the Internet ideas essentially are moved, created, designed, envisioned, revised (and re-visioned), and moved from local nodes—small circles of information sharing—to create knowledge at the “bigger” or higher readership levels, creating something of an upward sifting sieve (Benkler 250). Dan Gillmor gives examples of both how this upward movement works and of how some ideas go viral—skipping the lower level sifting and getting to millions of consumers within hours—but are then sifted at those higher levels, *if* they survive the news cycle (189). These viral ideas are instructive of knowledge creation in digital space when that knowledge creation occurs outside of the traditional Fourth Estate institutions. *WikiLeaks* is
a perfect case, precisely because the ideas do not sift at lower levels. They are not exchanged and refined by many people before becoming cultural knowledge: Some rely on the MSM turning them into “stories,” and some only become “stories” after they affect the MSM. At this point—the juncture of The Fourth Estate and The Fifth Estate—the question of whether The Fifth Estate turns information into knowledge, which is an institutional act and therefore one that would directly challenge the institution’s primary role, plays out. In the case of WikiLeaks, tracking the site as it develops and evolves its role in relation to the MSM can show the change over time as the institution of journalism reacts to this threat (real or perceived). Those changes lead WikiLeaks toward proto-institutionalization.

**Authority In Rhetorical Presentation**

In this section, I provide two specific types of analysis that help to understand the authority transaction among the three partners. First, I code the three books written about WikiLeaks for data points that suggest the comparative degree to which each author considers the authority of WikiLeaks. Second, I provide three rhetorical analyses of the language used in those transactional moments to do understand how the authority transaction plays out in terms of Goodwin’s understanding of the authority transaction between the author and the reader as well as what the partners involved present regarding their beliefs about their interactions with each other. These sections are labeled by the three news outlets and the titles of the books written by the editors of the outlets, suggesting that institutional concern about proto-institutionalization is taking place. Together, as I outline below, these two analytical strategies reveal WikiLeaks’s use of shape-shifting to create and use auctoritas toward a project of proto-institutionalization via the affordances of digital convergence.

To this end, using an analysis of each text’s rhetorical attitudes toward WikiLeaks’s authority positioning, I consider the focal areas from topic of news through journalist over the course of three data points and commentary. The first data point, the Afghan War Logs, represents the beginning of the partnership among the three players. The second data point is the Iraq War Logs, followed by the third data point of CableGate. While each book is compiled in a radically different manner and focuses on a different attribute of the publishing partnership, junctions can be found and correlated to form a common ground for comparison. This comparison is instructive because of the place each of the three partners holds in relation to institutional authority in the media, an issue I discuss in deeper detail in this section. The New
York Times is the biggest and most widely read of the three media partners involved in this exchange; it also is the least openly available on the Internet, choosing to charge for most of its content. The Guardian, however, is not as influential a paper and, although it has standing as part of the institution of journalism and has grown its online presence, it is not at the pinnacle of the newspaper industry; nonetheless, this paper is widely available on the Internet, including a U.S. edition despite being a U.K. paper. Finally, WikiLeaks begins the timeline as a relatively unknown social networking Website, thus appearing only on the Web, with (at best by Domscheit-Berg’s reporting) merely a handful of operators. It becomes a fully operational network and publisher of international secrets—though at no point does it publish in print; while it does not become a member of the Fourth or Fifth Estates, its growth and evolution form and define a third space relating the two to each other. Their various positions on the authority spectrum, as well as their different levels of (historical) involvement with digital convergence, create the power dynamic among the three partners and make the forms the interactions take worthy of rhetorical study. The attitudes, as well as their changes over time, help illustrate the ways in which WikiLeaks attempted to become an authoritative agent in the creation and circulation of information as well as the transformation or manipulation of information into knowledge. The comparison also illustrates how agency was used and created throughout the process to form proto-institutional auctoritas, as seen through the reactions evident in the texts. This reaction is best demonstrated in The Guardian editors’ reaction to WikiLeaks making a use of authority they think is overstepping, as I explain in detail in The Guardian subsection below. Finally, I consider how WikiLeaks created and circulated information, how it transformed information into knowledge—and, therefore, how it presented a challenge to the institutional authority of journalism—and specifically how that challenge differed from the challenges posed by the members of the Fifth Estate, discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Focus Of Topics Within The Books

The following three tables show the results of analysis of the three texts written by the WikiLeaks insiders. The New York Times book Open Secrets is, in part, a look at the process by which The New York Times came to work with Assange, as well as its partnership with The Guardian, and the process of publishing the stories that came of the hundreds of thousands of documents leaked through WikiLeaks. The second and by far the larger part of the book is a republication of the stories The New York Times published using the leaks, stories about the leaks
and about *WikiLeaks* itself, and stories about the trial and sentencing of Chelsea Manning. *The Guardian* book, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrecy*, does not aim to reprint either set of War Logs or CableGate materials; rather it seeks to explain the “behind the scenes” work of the journalists involved and to provide analysis regarding the cultural meaning of *WikiLeaks* and *The Guardian*’s role in the leaks. The dual role of this rhetorical approach as both more open to digital convergence challenge and in some ways more closed is discussed at length in *The Guardian* section. Leigh and Harding use the introduction to do the majority of their analysis of who Assange is as a news topic/character and, more importantly, what *WikiLeaks* means. The rest of the book reports the process of working with *WikiLeaks* but does not analyze *WikiLeaks*’s role in that process in as complete a manner. Finally, with twenty-one chapters and a timeline, notes, prologue, and epilogue, *Inside WikiLeaks: My Time with Julian Assange at the World’s Most Dangerous Website* traces Domscheit-Berg’s role as second-in-command of *WikiLeaks* from the time he meets Assange to slightly past the point at which Assange fires him from the group, including Domscheit-Berg’s resignation from *WikiLeaks,*\(^{52}\) the close of the Iraq War Logs, and CableGate. The three plot points during which *WikiLeaks* partnered with *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* are covered toward the end of the book, since Domscheit-Berg begins his narrative when he started at *WikiLeaks*, just before their release of the Julius Bär papers in 2007, and since he resigns close to the end of the Iraq War Logs publication period. Though the book focuses on Domscheit-Berg’s relationship with Assange, it also looks carefully at *WikiLeaks*’s relationship with the MSM and the role of Websites he terms whistleblower platforms in relation to the MSM.

The tables below are set up by the primary players in the interactions: *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *WikiLeaks*. These tables represent my findings using a coding method that addresses five types of references for *WikiLeaks*: Topic, Source, Fifth Estate, Freelancer/Media Partner, and Journalist.\(^{53}\) Initially, I coded them using the numbers 1 through 5

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\(^{52}\) Though Assange fired Domscheit-Berg on the group’s internal chat space, and therefore in the one shared space for all members of *WikiLeaks*, Domscheit-Berg refused to leave the group, attempting to work with the other members of the group to achieve his vision for *WikiLeaks*.

\(^{53}\) There is a fine differentiation between topic and source. There are times at which one writes about one’s sources and, often in journalism, sources make themselves newsworthy. In the case of *WikiLeaks*, for example, this phenomenon played out at least in part because of the type of material *WikiLeaks* provided to its MSM partners. But it also arose because of *WikiLeaks*’s position as a highly visible—perhaps the first highly visible—social media site dedicated to Fifth Estate behavior. It also was brought about by Assange’s behavior. Additionally, differentiating between whether one is a free-lance media partner or a fully invested journalist is somewhat difficult, as chapters 2 and 3 indicate. In this case, the difficulty comes both because of the fine line between the Fifth Estate and
where 1 = Topic, 2 = Source, 3 = Fifth Estate, 4 = Freelancer/Media Partner, and 5 = Journalist.

While coding, I conducted a close reading of each of the three books. For example, I searched for every mention of the WikiLeaks/media outlet interaction and assigned a number to the terms used to describe the interaction or, WikiLeaks itself. After coding, as shown in tables 1, 2, and 3, I dropped the numerical reference and used the category that it specifies alone. Therefore, when one reads the top horizontal line of each table, the five categories represent the five data points for the analysis.

The vertical line of the tables first shows the overall, or total, number of coding hits. Although totals typically appear at the bottom of a table as the result of simple addition, in this case I place them at the top because they help give a sense of the overall attitude of each publication’s editorial team toward WikiLeaks. The other categories are the Afghanistan War Logs, Iraq War Logs, CableGate, and Commentary about any of these. As discussed above, the three are chronological points about which each of the three books considers, and commentary about The Afghanistan War Logs, The Iraq War Logs and CableGate is something all three had in common. I recorded on the vertical line the number of times I found these subjects in the texts. The Afghanistan and Iraq War Logs and CableGate, together, comprise the thousands of files recorded onto a set of CDs marked “Lady Gaga” which she secreted in and out of her workplace on a base in Iraq, where she was an intelligence clerk. The files included field reports from officers in Afghanistan and Iraq that told a sometimes starkly different version of battle than what was being portrayed in public, and the CableGate files included thousands of cables sent to and from the U.S. Department of State. Many of the CableGate files were dismissive or insulting of world leaders, like German Chancellor Angel Merkel, and one instructed a U.N. diplomat to spy on the personal financial information of world leaders.

The specific four parts of the texts that I analyzed were chosen first by their relationship to the three narrative plot points (i.e., Afghanistan War Logs, Iraq War Logs, and CableGate) and...
the general commentary about WikiLeaks that characterized all three books. Next, in each subsection of text, I searched for the points at which interactions with Assange (as representative of WikiLeaks) or WikiLeaks (as an actor) were mentioned. These sections of text and the coding used to classify them are in Appendix C. In these smaller subsections of text, I then analyzed the narrative to find where on the table the author’s description of WikiLeaks belongs.

Table 1: The New York Times Perspective from Open Secrets: WikiLeaks, War and American Diplomacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The New York Times</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Fifth Estate</th>
<th>Freelancer / Media Partner</th>
<th>Journalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan War Logs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq War Logs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CableGate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 reveals that The New York Times editor, Bill Keller, presents WikiLeaks almost entirely in a topic or source perspective. The overall scores in the topic and source categories are close enough as to be nearly equal. The three outlier points in Fifth Estate are interesting both in that they come primarily from the commentary section of the writing and that they are so few. The three mentions of WikiLeaks in a Fifth Estate perspective in the CableGate section are interesting primarily because, as I discuss more fully below, by the time of CableGate, The New York Times was no longer working directly with WikiLeaks. Rather, Keller and The New York Times were receiving all their data directly from The Guardian. Below I discuss the actual rhetoric used in these remarks.
Table 2: The Guardian Perspective from WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Guardian</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Fifth Estate</th>
<th>Freelancer / Media Partner</th>
<th>Journalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan War Logs</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq War Logs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CableGate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 reveals that The Guardian editor David Leigh presents a less rigid view of WikiLeaks than does The New York Times editor Bill Keller. While his view is less rigid, however, it is still somewhat limited to topic and Fifth Estate. Only very rarely does Leigh refer to WikiLeaks in terms of partnership, and the majority of the references are in the commentary. With one exception, all the references to WikiLeaks as a partner come during the discussion of CableGate. When compared to the totals above in Table 1, and where each of those occurs, this also shows an interesting pattern. Both Keller’s and Leigh and Harding’s perspectives of WikiLeaks seem to skew toward journalist as the project moves forward. This parallels WikiLeaks’s and behavior, as I discuss fully below in the section on shape-shifting, as well as Assange’s own beliefs about the organization and aspirations for it. That both Keller and Leigh and Harding’s perceptions match Assange’s aspirations and attempts is telling in that WikiLeaks’s deployment of auctoritas is here most clearly effective. In the sections discussing the rhetorical analysis of the books, I delve into how each of the authors dealt with this ongoing change within WikiLeaks.
Table 3: *WikiLeaks’s Perspective from Inside WikiLeaks: My Time with Julian Assange at the World’s Most Dangerous Website*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WikiLeaks</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Fifth Estate</th>
<th>Freelancer / Media Partner</th>
<th>Journalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan War Logs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq War Logs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CableGate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 reveals that while Domscheit-Berg of *WikiLeaks* has far more freedom placing his team anywhere on the spectrum, he presents *WikiLeaks* primarily in the source, Fifth Estate, and partner categories. He very rarely sees *WikiLeaks* as journalists and discusses it as a topic only a little more often. The numbers within the three data points have no linear quality to them, suggesting no movement in one direction or another.

In comparison, it is easy to see that the MSM publications experienced some constraint in describing *WikiLeaks’s* authority, but that *The Guardian* was far less constrained than *The New York Times*. In addition, it is also clear that *WikiLeaks’s* shape-shifting can be seen in Domscheit-Berg’s description of its sense of authority when interacting with MSM at different points in the project. Together, these tables reveal the tensions about authority that played a role in the *WikiLeaks* project, which leads to the need for the rhetorical analysis of the texts that were coded to better understand the attitudes presented in them. This analysis is presented in the next three subsections.

**The New York Times: Open Secrets**

I begin this rhetorical analysis of the three books with *The New York Times*. While *WikiLeaks’s* deals began with *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* was drawn in after
(whether at Assange’s request or at The Guardian’s depends on whose story one believes), The New York Times’s involvement made WikiLeaks’s U.S. Military and Department of State leaks MSM fodder. This is both because of The New York Times’s standing in the U.S. and worldwide and the simple fact that such a paper would reveal U.S. military and diplomatic secrets. While The New York Times’s editor, Bill Keller, characterizes WikiLeaks as a source throughout much of Open Secrets: WikiLeaks, War, and American Diplomacy, he also must deal with WikiLeaks as a topic for reporting. Yet Keller goes to great lengths not only to place Assange and WikiLeaks in the role of source while disavowing any connection either might have as a partner, unlike The Guardian, which Keller discusses regularly in the text as a media partner and Der Spiegel, which he mentions once, though clearly in media partner terms, and then ignores as though it were a nonentity.

Keller specifically writes, “[w]e regarded Assange throughout as a source, not as a partner or collaborator, but he was a man who clearly had his own agenda.” Keller is trying to place WikiLeaks permanently into the source category, the same category in which Keller’s rhetoric places Assange and WikiLeaks most often throughout the book, with the greatest number of references, 12, falling into the source category. Still, this overt statement of The New York Times’s relationship with Assange sets up more than just that relationship because it also places The New York Times in the position of authority. That authority is crucial both to The New York Times and to WikiLeaks, as well as to the relationship between them. It is also crucial to understanding the importance of the rhetoric that Keller deploys in this book—and to understanding the importance of his statement above regarding Assange and his “agenda.” There is little room for change in The New York Times’s perspective; WikiLeaks is sometimes a source, sometimes a topic, but The New York Times remains bound to its institutional authority and therefore covers what it deems to be “the story.” This rhetorical stance arises directly out of Keller’s and The New York Times’s Fourth Estate institutional authority even as it reinscribes it.

Here, by explicit statement of its consideration, The New York Times gives an implicit statement of its authority. “We regarded Assange throughout as a source” not only defines the relationship, but does so from The New York Times’s point of view, with no rhetorical room for any other. Here, the use of the word “throughout” conveys emphasis. Having set The New York Times up as the final authority on the matter, Keller dismisses other options, “not as a partner or collaborator.” Having underlined The New York Times’s agenda subtly by eliding it, Keller
finishes by undermining Assange’s by naming it as such; “but he was a man who clearly had his own agenda,” he tells us. This tactic is called poisoning the well (see chapter 2) and sets up a contrast to *The New York Times*, which by this comparison is designed to look as though it has no agenda or, at worst, has only a benevolent agenda. Unlike *The New York Times*, Assange is here made out to have an inherently selfish agenda through the use of the words “his own.” *The New York Times’s* implicit authority is important because Keller’s book is, in and of itself, an argument to the reader about the *WikiLeaks* story. As Goodwin explains (see chapter 1), implicit authority is useful to the wielder of that authority because it leaves room for denial (47). Keller need not claim authority per se, and he does not make any comment about the agenda of *The New York Times*. But his authority is made manifest in the beginning of the statement, “We considered.” By stating the relationship in such terms, both using the plural and by claiming the right to define, Keller claims the implicit authority of *The New York Times*. The reader is invited to reach conclusions about authority and agenda based on what the authority says, and the authority here counts on the institution’s history as an authority as well as the authority of being in print; having been in print for more than a century lends them the kind of authority discussed in Seely Brown and Duguid’s work (see chapter 1). Because the ethos of the book is mostly, though not entirely, couched in implicit terms, *The New York Times* is not taking an explicit stance against the Fifth Estate or even against Assange or *WikiLeaks* for that matter. Also as discussed in chapter 1, Goodwin makes clear that any message received in an implicit exchange is the burden of the receiver, not the authority sending it, because “[t]he silent man of dignity is under no pressure to use his dignity with care, for if it later turns out that he was wrong, he can simply deny that he ever even tried to exercise, much less abuse, his authority” (47). And so, without having to place *The New York Times’s* dignity in danger of discredit, Keller can assert that dignity and have the reader follow it to the conclusion which best serves his institution’s authority. This serves *The New York Times* both because it maintains its authority and because it need not state its position explicitly—a stance which further allows it to maintain authority by maintaining some semblance of journalistic neutrality. This exercise of authority reifies authority, just as the exercise of authority in the “Bloggers” article and in the Cox column discussed in chapters 1 and 2 do.54

54 This use of institutional authority to reinforce institutional authority is not particularly surprising. As Althusser makes clear in his discussion of ISAs, described in chapter 1, the primary work of the means of
Over the course of the first part of the book, Keller’s discussion of Assange or *WikiLeaks* as a source (12 occurrences) is just slightly more common than his mention of them as a topic (10 occurrences). Alternately describing Assange as an “office geek,” a “smart and well-educated but arrogant man,” and a “Peter Pan,” Keller discusses Assange as a topic throughout most of the explication of the early dealings between *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *WikiLeaks*. He repeatedly refers to Assange as “the man”: first as “the man who set this curious story in motion” and then as “the man who would be a large presence in our lives.” These references to Assange as the topic of discussion and of story remove him from the position of equal actor in the journalistic interactions that formed the stories to come out of the leaks. They even move Assange and by association (since the two are often substituted one for the other) *WikiLeaks* out of the source position. These mentions set the tone for the book in general. While the book contains, in large measure, the stories that came of the leak, the book itself is not primarily about the biggest leak of secret information in U.S. history. Like the “Bloggers” article analyzed in chapter 3, it is a story about the story. The narrative makes Assange and *WikiLeaks* the topic of discourse, thus reinscribing *The New York Times*’s position as the authority on the story and on knowledge creation. By putting Assange and *WikiLeaks* into the context of his choosing, Keller uses the institution of journalism to create the narrative and the institution of the *New York Times* to provide it with credibility—an adroit rhetorical action. But Keller cannot completely escape the importance of what *WikiLeaks* has done, nor can he escape that *WikiLeaks* is more than a source.

Keller does, therefore, describe *WikiLeaks* in what can be considered Fifth Estate terms three times; once in the CableGate section and twice in the general commentary in this section. The three are limited, both in their wording and in the category to which they can be ascribed. But all three are telling, both for what is and what is not written. While two of the comments take a rather lukewarm tone such as the none-too-effusive “I would hesitate to describe what *WikiLeaks* does as journalism” (Keller), one manages to play both sides of the power interaction in its rhetoric. In the final analysis of the CableGate stories, Keller holds *WikiLeaks* to a journalistic standard that one might expect, at the very least, to find at the Fifth Estate level, and

production is the reproduction of the means of production. For ideological production, that must include the reproduction of the means of ideological production.
one could even stretch to argue, were it not for the rest of Keller’s book, that the standard met
media partner status:

For its seeming indifference to the safety of those informants, WikiLeaks
was roundly criticized, and in its subsequent postings it has largely
followed the example of the news organizations and redacted material that
could get people jailed or killed. Assange described it as a ‘harm-
minimization policy.’ In the case of the Iraq war documents, WikiLeaks
applied a kind of robo-redaction software that stripped away names (and
rendered the documents almost illegible). With the embassy cables,
WikiLeaks posted mostly cables that had already been redacted by The
Times or its fellow news organizations. And there were instances in which
WikiLeaks volunteers suggested measures to enhance the protection of
innocents. (emphasis added)

This paragraph bears some analysis to fully expose the double standard WikiLeaks faces in
Keller’s judgment because the rhetoric seems more straightforward than it actually is. First, it is
paradoxical to treat WikiLeaks as both a source and as a publisher/partner/journalist at the same
time. Yet Keller does just that in this paragraph. He begins by pointing to WikiLeaks’s failure to
act professionally: “For its seeming indifference to the safety of those informants, WikiLeaks was
roundly criticized.” This sentence is presented as a statement of fact, but its passive construction
hides as much as it reveals. WikiLeaks was attacked primarily by the U.S. government and Fox
News, and then by other U.S. MSM for its handling of data in this case. It was not attacked in the
foreign press, and it was not attacked by users. Attacks in the blogosphere were fewer—so much
so that they are not discussed in any of the books. Thus, the attacks were prompted by the people
who suffered most as a result of the leaks and only secondarily by the MSM, which suffered a
challenge to its authority, and not in a measurable way by anyone else.

Second and equally important, one would not expect a source to have the professional
training required to understand much of what goes into the protection of sources in the
institutional practice of journalism or professional situations. Yet Keller’s rhetoric here clearly
suggests an expectation that Assange have and apply this journalistic knowledge. Furthermore,
when he either does not have it or does not apply it, Keller takes Assange to task. Essentially, in
Keller’s logic, Assange’s greatest failure is the failure to act as a journalist, despite the consistent
message so far in the book that he is not one and his organization cannot be seen as journalistic, which might be seen as a Catch-22 from which Assange may not be able to extricate himself. While one may say that proper names are obviously not to be left in military reports, this knowledge was not obvious to Assange or the WikiLeaks team, and, as importantly, there are greater nuances of which the team (and most non-professionals) was unaware—at first. According to Domscheit-Berg, Assange’s greatest issue with redacting names is the same issue he had when leaking other documents. Interestingly, as discussed above, both Assange and Domscheit-Berg tried to publish documents as they received them, believing that in such a way they could avoid the bias they saw in MSM publications. WikiLeaks, they believed, could only provide absolute transparency and allow those involved to deal with whatever came of it (ch. 2). Although this approach had changed somewhat with the release of “Collateral Murder,” the first WikiLeaks piece to receive a title and to be edited, a complete, unedited version was published alongside the edited version as proof that editing had been done for clarity’s sake, according to Domscheit-Berg (ch. 13). For Assange, as for Domscheit-Berg, what created bias was the editing process, and only a total negation of the process itself could remove that bias. The first step in redaction, nonetheless, was a simple batch script that removed proper names, which is a form of editing. But, after doing this work, the WikiLeaks team realized that removing names was not enough to truly mask information and that in many cases information in a given document easily could be linked back to an informant by the context and clues in the rest of the text. For WikiLeaks, the process of redaction became a process of professionalization—one that Keller discusses, but fails to recognize as such because doing so would require that he recognize the organization’s move into journalistic space. It is at this point, that because of Keller’s institutional authority position, he both demonstrates and fails to recognize WikiLeaks’s shape-shifting behavior. The WikiLeaks team was not fully aware of its own shape-shifting at the beginning either, but, because Keller is so intent on reifying The New York Times (and by extension the MSM) authority, his rhetoric both sets the double standard and fails to acknowledge the changes that do occur in WikiLeaks’s auctoritas.

Another instance in the quote above in which Keller uses implicit authority to undermine Assange, and by extension WikiLeaks, occurs as Keller tells us that “Assange described [the redaction of names from the files] as a ‘harm-minimization policy’” (Keller). Here Keller uses the word “described” and the single quotation marks around
the phrase “harm-minimization policy” to allow the reader to choose to dismiss Assange, WikiLeaks, and the action as futile. Having already set them up to be seen as reckless, Keller here suggests that what was done was too little, too late although he never has to say it in so many words. By poisoning the well with comments about the harm WikiLeaks is supposed to have been attacked for causing and then putting harm-minimization in quotes, Keller leaves the reader with a choice: believe that Assange could minimize harm he had already been attacked for causing or recognize him as “a man with his own agenda.” Keller’s authority (which he draws as an editor and representative of The New York Times) is not really ever in question because he does not make the choice explicit. It is also never in question because passive voice writing allows him to not name any actor but WikiLeaks. This rhetorical move is a continuation of Keller’s implicit use of authority. By couching his intent in the connotations of words and the use of punctuation rather than in commands or direct comments, Keller creates deniability. His use of single quotes is defensible as directly citing Assange. The choice of the word “described” is accurate, as that is what Assange did by calling redaction a “harm-minimization policy.” The placement of the sentence immediately following the poisoning of the well with the passively constructed attacks on WikiLeaks is chronological. Again, as explained above and in chapter 1, deniability is the key to successful negotiation of implicit authority transactions, as Goodwin would remind readers here. Generally, in journalism, one does not find the use of words like describe, claim, or exclaim among others when reporters quote sources. Such words are considered to carry inherent bias. Suggesting a level of unreliability, these words open up the question of whether the person claimed such a thing when the opposite was true. The standard usage in journalism, because of ethical concerns, is said. “She said” or “he said” are considered so ubiquitous as to be invisible to the average reader, allowing the reader to move smoothly through the quote without being swayed by the reporter’s bias regarding its tone or veracity.

Finally, Keller gives some grudging credit to the volunteers at WikiLeaks (none at all to Assange) by stating “And there were instances in which WikiLeaks volunteers suggested measures to enhance the protection of innocents.” This, too, is a fascinating choice in terms of maintaining the position that Assange, and by extension WikiLeaks as an organization, was not and did not become anything but a source. Not only is the credit to non-journalists given with an
ambivalent “instances,” making the shape-shifting that led toward professionalization sound accidental, but the possibility that the improvement came as a result of Assange’s leadership, learning, or acumen is negated. He is not a volunteer. Additionally, the faceless term “volunteers” carries as much weight as and functions in tandem with the passive voice in the earlier quote about attacks made on WikiLeaks for not redacting sooner. Given some background knowledge and the ability to see the story from the points of view of The New York Times, The Guardian and Domscheit-Berg, one can see that, while WikiLeaks did fail to redact information in the beginning of the publication of the War Logs, by the time of CableGate, they had redaction fully under control, and the WikiLeaks team had even improved the process it had learned from the professional journalists. In this sense, Keller is—likely unintentionally—pointing out that WikiLeaks was learning as the work progressed; in other words, WikiLeaks was professionalizing, shape-shifting as needed, and thus seeking, if not gaining, auctoritas. Only because they were publishing could they be responsible for anyone’s life. Only as a media partner could WikiLeaks be held accountable to professional standards of conduct. Whether or not others held them accountable, as they learned, they began to hold themselves accountable. Once they knew what they were looking for, WikiLeaks technicians were able to write a batch script to automate most of the redaction—what Keller calls “robo-redaction software.” In fact, the software reveals anything but robo-thinking. As one of the WikiLeaks technicians pointed out, the number of spaces missing from any given missive could easily lead to the identification of an informer through a simple process of elimination. The software was thus set to automatically replace any redaction with twelve Xs (Domscheit-Berg). Yet the New York Times takes credit for this step: “A small number of names and passages in some of the cables have been removed (XXXXXXXXXXXXX) by The New York Times to protect diplomats’ confidential sources, to keep from compromising American intelligence efforts or to protect the privacy of ordinary citizens” (Keller, emphasis added). Here, what Keller fails to distinguish is the redaction work done by The New York Times’s staff from the insertion of exactly 12 Xs suggested—and later automated—by WikiLeaks’s staff. The differentiation, however, is key because both are necessary to successfully redacting the cables and maintaining security for informants’ lives. By so doing, Keller again negates the professionalism of WikiLeaks even after having discussed its learning curve and professionalization through the redaction process. Additionally, while the other two comments that marginally place WikiLeaks in the Fifth Estate
camps are set squarely in Keller’s comments about WikiLeaks’s overall effect on journalism (a question on which he claims to pass but answers evasively as discussed below) this particular judgment of WikiLeaks comes during the discussion of CableGate—by which time WikiLeaks has learned from the responses it got to the Afghanistan War Logs and the Iraq War Logs and has begun to act like a media outlet by no longer simply placing all documents, as received, online. This process of becoming a mediator of information for the Fourth and Fifth Estates, which involves both the circulation and transformation of information into knowledge and the use of authority and creation of auctoritas, will be discussed in detail below.

In discussing WikiLeaks’s overall effect on journalism, Keller says:

But while I do not regard Julian Assange as a partner, and I would hesitate to describe what WikiLeaks does as journalism, it is chilling to contemplate the possible government prosecution of WikiLeaks for making secrets public. . . . Whether the arrival of WikiLeaks has fundamentally changed the way journalism is made I will leave to others, and to history. Frankly, I think the impact of WikiLeaks on the culture has probably been overblown. Long before WikiLeaks was born, the Internet had transformed the landscape of journalism, creating a wide-open and global market with easier access to audiences and sources, a quicker metabolism, a new infrastructure for sharing and vetting information, and a diminished respect for notions of privacy and secrecy. . . . Nor is it clear to me that WikiLeaks represents some kind of cosmic triumph of transparency. (emphasis added)

Keller basically indicates that he will leave the judgment of WikiLeaks’s place in journalistic history “to others, and to history.” But he then answers the question himself, and although he does not explicitly say WikiLeaks has not changed the landscape, he calls the impact “overblown” and cites examples of how digital convergence had changed the journalistic landscape before WikiLeaks came about. Rhetorically, Keller has both demurred from answering the question and answered the question. This strategy allows him to hedge his bets by denying his judgment before making it, thus suggesting that the reader and “history”—a presumably greater judge than Keller or The New York Times—make their own decision, while still suggesting an answer to the puzzle based on his authority as based in the history of The New
York Times, which Seely Brown and Duguid explain is part of its institutional authority, as discussed in chapter 1. Thus, leaving the judgment “to history” brings it back to the institutional authority from which Keller draws his own authority.

This discussion of WikiLeaks as a possible game-changer for journalism in general takes place in The New York Times’s book’s section devoted to CableGate. Yet Keller and The New York Times have no real necessity to discuss WikiLeaks in the context of the CableGate leaks at all. The CableGate documents, 250 thousand reports filed by diplomats in the field from all over the world and some responses to them, included many sniping comments about world leaders and their behavior as well as pointing out misbehavior on the part of the Secretary of State’s office. The New York Times ran fifty-five stories from the original cache of documents, a cache it did not get from WikiLeaks directly, as Assange had, by then, “cut them off” because the paper had refused to retract a piece about him that he had found unflattering (Keller). But The Guardian shared its files, so The New York Times had the cables and, keeping with the terms of the original plan, the partners maintained the same publishing deadlines so as not to “scoop” each other unintentionally. In this way, The New York Times worked in parallel, if not in partnership, with WikiLeaks on CableGate. Given that the data The New York Times worked with for these stories did not come directly from Assange or WikiLeaks and given that by this time the cables also were in the hands of a third party (they had, ironically, been leaked by a WikiLeaks volunteer), Keller’s vitriol against Assange is clearest at this point of the book; yet his criticism of WikiLeaks is also at this point most cogently criticism of an institutional threat and not of a source. The question arises, therefore, why Keller is forced to deal with WikiLeaks beyond the role of source at all. Were Assange merely a source or even a source with “his own agenda,” Keller could simply use the information as a journalist would and then write about Assange as a topic as a journalist would. Keller’s and The New York Times’s authority binds them to dealing with WikiLeaks and its effects on journalism. WikiLeaks’s shape-shifting, meanwhile, makes it difficult for Keller to easily maintain the institutional authority’s argument that WikiLeaks at no time is anything more than a source. In order to maintain its position, The New York Times must use its position to reify its own institutional authority and undermine WikiLeaks’s auctoritas. Keller refers to WikiLeaks—and to Domscheit-Berg’s follow up group OpenLeaks—as online information brokers, a term that might serve for the mediators of Fourth and Fifth Estate information sharing role they enact were it not being used to suggest commerce, and not
knowledge makers. Additionally, in the beginning of the book, Keller discusses the *WikiLeaks* deal in these terms:

> Assange had provided us the data on the condition that we not write about it before specific dates when WikiLeaks planned to post the documents on a publicly accessible Web site. . . . *Such embargoes—agreements not to publish information before a set date—are a commonplace in journalism. Everything from studies in medical journals to the annual U.S. budget is released with embargoes. They are a constraint with benefits, the principle benefit being the chance to actually read and reflect on the material before launching it into public view.* Embargoes also, as Assange surely knew, tend to build suspense and amplify a story, especially when multiple news outlets broadcast it at once. The embargo was the only condition WikiLeaks would try to impose on us. What we wrote about the material was entirely up to us. . . . *The Times* was never asked to sign anything or to pay anything. For WikiLeaks, at least in this first big venture, exposure was its own reward. (emphasis added)

As discussed above and in chapter 1, in the implicit authority transaction, what is said is as important as what is not, and how it is said is key as well, as Goodwin suggests. A rhetor can use her position of dignity to force the auditor to make his choice based on what he believes her to mean without her explicit direction. This is an implicit authority transaction, which provides the rhetor with deniability. Her dignity is not on the line in an implicit authority transaction as it is in an explicit one, in which the rhetor specifically makes her preference clear and expects of her auditor that he will act accordingly because of her dignity. A recurring abuse of implicit dignity will cost the rhetor her dignity, but only if it is discovered. How, then, do Keller’s words create an implicit authority transaction with his readers in the above quote?

First, the question of explanations deserves further consideration. It is not a commonplace for authority to have to explain itself. Journalism does tend to do it more than most institutional authority, but much of this book is devoted not only to explaining decisions, but to doing so in such a way that maintains the institutional distance between journalism and *WikiLeaks*. To reprise, Keller’s argument throughout the book about *WikiLeaks’s* value as a source, *The New York Times*’s import as a newspaper, and the editorial positions as valid rest on his distancing
WikiLeaks from a journalistic position. By maintaining his argument that WikiLeaks and Assange were never anything but a source, he can maintain his argument as well as his newspaper’s authority position. While journalists tend to explain any steps necessary to maintain credibility, journalistic institutions rarely explain editorial decision making, and even more rarely do they explain the process by which whole projects are conducted. In this case, Keller and The New York Times have devoted an entire book to such an explanation. In doing so, The New York Times denies Assange’s and WikiLeaks’s authority, which serves to deny the medium, or WikiLeaks’s place in it any authority except that which is endowed by The New York Times.

So what, then, of his reasoning in the above quote? Keller explains that embargoes are a standard operating procedure, “a commonplace,” for journalists—that holding on to a story as the price of exclusivity is a norm, that such deals are beneficial, that “[e]verything from studies in medical journals to the annual U.S. budget is released with embargoes.” But there is something amiss: the U.S. Budget is not released by a standard “source.” Neither are studies that will be published in scientific journals. Both are publications about which the MSM writes stories, but the original publications are handled by separate publishing entities. And the entities that publish these documents are institutional, not individual. And so, while the Congressional Budget Office and the Lancet, for example, may not constitute the Fourth or Fifth Estate, they do constitute institutional publishing. Each therefore carries the authority of its respective institution and is thus part of the knowledge-making, culture-creation infrastructure. By comparison, therefore, WikiLeaks’s embargo is not a standard embargo. Rather, it is an agreement between publishing partners. Because WikiLeaks is not an institution and no longer a source (since it, too, will be publishing), it becomes something more by setting the terms for publication based on its publication timetables. Because it has the privilege of embargo and because of its publication of material, this “something more” can be seen as the mediator position between the Fourth and Fifth Estates.

Therefore, while Keller uses implicit authority in his rhetoric to maintain his position that Assange and WikiLeaks were no more than a topic and source, in the end analysis, his own rhetoric cannot but fail the argument because he cannot both maintain their non-professional position and demand professional behavior. Still, The New York Times, via Keller, works hard to keep WikiLeaks in the safe categories of topic and source, and for the most part 6 of every 7 times WikiLeaks is mentioned in the narrative, succeeds in doing so. Through its argument, The
New York Times reveals, rather than conceals, the threat WikiLeaks poses to its institutional authority. The New York Times’s position in this three-way relationship as having the greatest authority means it has the most to lose from that threat. It is therefore in The New York Times’s interest to use its authority to undermine WikiLeaks’s attempts at gaining auctoritas.

The Guardian: Wikileaks

David Leigh, editor of The Guardian, and Luke Harding, a foreign correspondent for The Guardian, wrote WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrecy. As the first of WikiLeaks’s partners, Leigh has a behind the scenes narrative from before the partnerships. In addition, Leigh’s book starts with a “Cast of Characters” lending it the feel of a play. The Guardian, however, is positioned in such a way that it has more room to present a flexible picture of WikiLeaks. Unlike The New York Times, a paper with a long history and worldwide circulation, The Guardian was a Manchester regional paper until fairly recently, and even in the last few years, its circulation numbers have landed it consistently in the bottom three of the list of eleven national dailies. In the U.K., it is normal for a paper to have a clear political bias, and The Guardian’s is left-leaning. Still, The Guardian was the perfect vehicle for WikiLeaks to get its massive dump of information noticed at the MSM level. Though its usual position in the dailies rankings was low, The Guardian was also home to Nick Davies, the investigative journalist who researched and broke the British phone hacking scandal at News of the World. The Guardian would have little to lose in publishing the Afghanistan and Iraq War Logs and CableGate; they fit into the kind of investigative and left-leaning publishing it was already involved in. And, according to David Leigh, an editor at The Guardian, Assange “seemed keen to engage in a collaborative project with a newspaper which had progressive credentials” (96). In addition, because of The Guardian’s progressive politics and middle standing as an institutional authority (since it was just barely a national paper in the U.K., as compared to the leading papers in the U.K. and U.S., which can be seen as having greater institutional authority), The Guardian and Leigh and Harding had little difficulty recognizing the challenges WikiLeaks presented to the MSM and the ways in which WikiLeaks eventually would take on and make use of auctoritas throughout the process, in particular through shape-shifting as WikiLeaks gained an understanding of and agency within the media sphere. Because the paper had less to lose in

55 While this made him just the kind of reporter Assange needed and was drawn to, it also was a drawback because Davies’s coverage of the phone hacking scandal was a sore spot for Assange, who referred to it as “insider muckraking” (Leigh and Harding, ch. 7).
recognizing WikiLeaks’s authoritative shape-shifting, The Guardian could openly discuss how WikiLeaks’s use of digital convergence helped it gain authority even as it challenged institutional journalism. Interestingly, as a leader in online news coverage, The Guardian also had much to gain from doing so. Having acknowledged that the organization is more than a source, but insisting through its narrative that it is less than a professional media partner, The Guardian needed to find a third way. Leigh and Harding navigate this territory by describing WikiLeaks as “a publisher-intermediary” (7), a descriptor that is generalized enough to cover both digital publication of information and the movement of it to institutional-journalistic enterprises, while simultaneously maintaining the limitation of information rather than knowledge-creation.

It is in Leigh and Harding’s introduction to their book that The Guardian’s outlook about the power of WikiLeaks and other Fourth to Fifth Estate mediator platforms on the Internet becomes clear: “Unnoticed by most of the world, Julian Assange was developing into a most interesting and unusual pioneer in using digital technologies to challenge corrupt and authoritarian states.” Here Leigh and Harding make clear that WikiLeaks’s use of digital technologies made challenging authorities possible. As Leigh and Harding discuss the interactions, they show how WikiLeaks became a publishing site and became more and more media savvy as it worked with different media outlets—theirs, The New York Times, Der Spiegel (the original partners), and others who were added on despite the original partners’ disapproval. While understanding that WikiLeaks challenges authoritarian states, Leigh and Harding also clearly recognize and openly state that WikiLeaks challenges the MSM: “The challenge from WikiLeaks for media in general (not to mention states, companies or global corporations caught up in the dazzle of unwanted scrutiny) was not a comfortable one” (Kindle file). Leigh and Harding use their analysis to allow for the Fifth Estate’s shape-shifting capabilities as a strength in challenging institution while attempting to limit its role in knowledge-making (the institution’s primary purpose). Although The Guardian’s institutional authority makes it necessary to limit WikiLeaks’s role in knowledge-making, a topic I discuss fully below, its position in the institution, so different from The New York Times, makes it possible for them to openly recognize and even laud—to some extent—that challenge. And it was Assange’s audacity, according to Leigh and Harding, that struck Davies’s curiosity before they ever met.

Assange, by Leigh’s narrative, had been emailing the editor for months with story ideas, rants, and complaints. Leigh paid only scant attention, given that such emails are normal fare for
an editor, but he paid some attention nonetheless (1). When WikiLeaks published Collateral Murder, it garnered the attention of the majority of worldwide MSM publications, and The Guardian was no exception. But, as Leigh tells the story, his approach to get cooperation on Collateral Murder had yielded nothing, so he expected little to come of it when Davies asked to approach Assange about the documents (93).

Davies had been hooked when he saw a story in The Guardian’s foreign pages: “American officials are searching for Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, in an attempt to pressure him not to publish thousands of confidential and potentially hugely embarrassing diplomatic cables that offer unfiltered assessments of Middle East governments and leaders.” The story continued (quoting an online news source):

The Daily Beast, a U.S. news reporting and opinion Website, reported that Pentagon investigators are trying to track down Assange—an Australian citizen who moves frequently between countries—after the arrest of a U.S. soldier last week who is alleged to have given the whistleblower Website a classified video of American troops killing civilians in Baghdad. The soldier, Bradley Manning, also claimed to have given WikiLeaks 260,000 pages of confidential diplomatic cables and intelligence assessments. The U.S. authorities fear their release could “do serious damage to national security.” (91-2)

Davies chased the story down like the investigative journalist he is famed for being, with the help of a source, who confided that Assange would be at a press conference in Belgium, and a reporter for The Guardian, who assisted in getting Assange to talk. He then made his pitch to Assange, adding that the project would best be carried out with multiple MSM outlets, particularly The New York Times, participating in multiple countries. This would provide coverage from any single government’s injunction to block the story (as was likely in the U.K.) and would allow the First Amendment to provide legal coverage in the U.S. The multiple countries approach also would provide moral high ground by providing varied but consistent coverage across media. Assange agreed, pulled out his mini laptop, typed, scribbled on a bar napkin, told Davies it was the password and that he now had the files. The first contact seemed to lack much in the way of covert movement of documents by a source or of a challenge to auctoritas, but what it lacked in flash it made up for in the ease that digital convergence brings to
information movement. Davies remarked later to Leigh about the overwhelming, sudden simplicity of it (Leigh & Harding).

Ranging from considering WikiLeaks and Assange topics of description (both in discussing the lead-up to the WikiLeaks publications and in explaining Assange’s and WikiLeaks’s rise in the news) all the way to calling Assange an editor—clearly a classification of journalist—Leigh and Harding look at the plural roles WikiLeaks and Assange play and describe them as they weave in and out of each other. The Guardian’s book focuses on telling about the publishing ventures and does not include The Guardian’s stories. In this manner, The Guardian also opens space for discussion of authority. Because The Guardian has a less fixed space in the institutional authority of journalism, Leigh and Harding are open to considering fully WikiLeaks on the range of authority positions. Leigh and Harding’s book maintains a storyline that includes the interactions between the newsroom and Assange, while keeping the topic more squarely on Assange. In fact, the beginning and end are fully about Assange as topic, since they do not involve the newsroom directly at all. The data points, therefore, are more scant within the chapters specific to the three data sets and more clustered within the general commentary at the beginning of the book, in which Leigh and Harding discuss what the Assange story “would come to mean.” Because the leaks and Assange (as dark hero) are treated as the primary topic of the chapters, rather than the interactions of WikiLeaks and its MSM partners, the greatest consideration is given to WikiLeaks as agent in the introduction and commentary. It is in this reflection about the meaning of the exchanges that Leigh and Harding describe Assange and WikiLeaks in a way that can most meaningfully be used for this study. In the chapters dealing with the Afghanistan War Logs, the Iraq War Logs, and CableGate, Leigh and Harding concern themselves more directly with the actualities of publication. Still, a fairly clear pattern exists across this set of data points.

Leigh and Harding’s book opens in a manner that immediately places Assange in the Fifth Estate category, with a “Cast of Characters” that describes Assange as “WikiLeaks founder/editor.” The founder title is a matter of fact. But editor is a title Assange did not take on until later in the WikiLeaks story once he had already begun to act as a media partner and describe WikiLeaks as a publishing platform, not as a whistleblower platform. In the introduction, Leigh and Harding also remark that Assange’s behavior, and thus the choices he makes on WikiLeaks’s behalf, change over the course of his interaction with the MSM partners:
The Website’s initial instincts were to publish more or less everything, and they were—at first deeply—suspicious of any contact between their colleagues on the newspapers and any kind of officialdom. Talking to the state department, Pentagon or White House, as The New York Times did before each round of publication, was fraught territory in terms of keeping the relationship with WikiLeaks on an even keel. (8)

Not only are the members of WikiLeaks described as suspicious of officialdom, they are suspicious of their partners’ dealing with it as well, making The Guardian the authority in the situation, responsible for maintaining the peace: “keeping the relationship with WikiLeaks on an even keel.” Interestingly, The Guardian does not do here what The New York Times does in its “Bloggers” article discussed in chapter three or what Keller does above; The Guardian does not point out that calling “officialdom”—or any person/group on which one is reporting—to get a comment is standard journalistic practice; failing to do so would be considered inappropriate and even unethical. Thus, Leigh and Harding are not presenting The New York Times’s double standard of expecting professionalism while insisting WikiLeaks be seen as a source. Leigh and Harding do, however, discuss the proto-journalistic learning curve,56 as they experienced it, of WikiLeaks: “By the time of the CableGate publication, Assange himself, conscious of the risks of causing unintentional harm to dissidents or other sources, offered to speak to the state department—an offer that was rejected” (8). The offer and rejection are telling. Leigh and Harding show that not only had WikiLeaks come to learn journalistic practices such as these, but also that Assange’s proto-journalist group was rebuffed by governmental authorities, the same state department that was speaking with The New York Times—as a matter of journalistic course. Taken in conjunction with the complaints from the state department as explained by Keller, this situation forms an interesting view of the challenge WikiLeaks presented beyond journalism, one Leigh and Harding convey repeatedly. Though The Guardian recognizes WikiLeaks’s ability to shape-shift as needed to manipulate institutional authority and gain auctoritas, The New York Times and The U.S. Department of State both refuse to recognize any authority on WikiLeaks’s part, even as Assange attempts to shift his behavior to suit their expectations.

56 Here, I use proto journalistic to indicate the movement toward journalistic behavior. Whereas this movement is toward behaving specifically according to the rules of the established institution, proto-institutionalization, by comparison is a move toward self-authorization as a separate institution, a different space from which to gain the same level of institutional authority from without the specific institution.
However, in the introduction, in which Leigh and Harding comment about the overall interaction, they speak of Assange as a topic just as often as they speak of him or *WikiLeaks* in the Fifth Estate category, with ten mentions in each category in the commentary. This equality of presentation across categories suggests that the authors are aware of *WikiLeaks*’s shifts in use of *auctoritas*. The message is not only mixed rhetorically, but it is mixed in the telling. While speaking of Assange as a topic, Leigh speaks of his own perceptions of Assange before the media partnership, his perceptions of him overall, and of others’ perceptions after. Yet, while wrestling with these descriptions, Leigh and Harding turn repeatedly to descriptors that place Assange in the Fifth Estate role as well as describing him as a “media messiah,” “media baron,” “intermediary and publisher,” “publisher intermediary,” and “editor/source.” Leigh and Harding go even further, explaining that Assange played a “role not dissimilar to that of a conventional editor,” and more, in particular regarding the U.S. MSM: “[f]or some it simply boiled down to a reluctance to admit that Assange was a journalist” (12). In making these changes clear, Leigh and Harding show how *WikiLeaks* manages differing positions of authority across the spectrum. Additionally, while they do not place *WikiLeaks* in the freelancer/media partner and journalist positions in addition to the Fifth Estate category often, they do place it in those categories. In particular, when dealing with CableGate, Leigh and Harding place *WikiLeaks* in the Fifth Estate and the Freelancer/partner position four times each (Table 2). In the commentary, Leigh and Harding even refer to *WikiLeaks*’s other media partners as “their [WikiLeaks’s] colleagues.”

When faced with the full agency of *WikiLeaks* as a media actor with its own *auctoritas* separate from the institutional authority gained from working with *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, Leigh and Harding nonetheless limit that *auctoritas* by reverting to much of the same reification tactic used by *The New York Times* in its book and in its “Bloggers” article discussed in chapter 3. In the discussion of CableGate, Leigh and Harding present *WikiLeaks*’s growth into media *auctoritas* while undermining it, complaining of Assange’s repeated breaches of the original deal he had made with *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Der Spiegel*:

Assange breached the original compact, as Davies saw it, by going behind his back to *The Guardian*’s TV rivals at Channel 4, *taking with him all the knowledge acquired by privileged visits to The Guardian’s research room*. . . . But after the publication of the Afghan war logs, Assange proposed to change the terms of the deal once again, before the planned launch of the
much bigger tranche of Iraq logs. He wanted more television, in order to provide “emotional impact.” (136, emphasis added).

In describing Assange’s betrayal, Leigh and Harding highlight the WikiLeaks learning curve. Assange had “acquired knowledge” in The Guardian’s research room and taken it to The Guardian’s “rivals” (136). That knowledge, since it could not be the information Assange had provided The Guardian, nor was it information on how to practice journalism (given that Channel 4 were already rivals and thus were already part of the institution of journalism), must be awareness of the importance of context: research done at The Guardian that turned data into contextualized stories and made knowledge out of information. Assange was taking the very thing that journalists “make,” which is knowledge, with him and it was a betrayal. However, even though he may have taken some of what he had learned of the meaning of the files at The Guardian to Channel 4, he could not have taken the exact stories and context because they are not movable. Interestingly, much as when Keller treats Assange as a member of the Fifth Estate by expecting journalistic behavior of him in regard to redactions, here Leigh and Harding convey the same message. A journalist should know better than to “take” stories; it is unprofessional behavior. A source would never be allowed in the research room, but a journalist would.

Therefore, despite having avoided the double standard when speaking of WikiLeaks’s learning curve, Leigh and Harding have enacted it here. Though the reactions of The Guardian and The New York Times run parallel, they are not exact matches, and the difference is an important one; Leigh and Harding do not maintain that WikiLeaks functioned only as a source or topic of news. In their discussion of the Afghan War Logs, they refer to their “co-operation with WikiLeaks,” and in the Iraq War Logs of Leigh’s taking instruction from Assange on how maintain security while working on the data. In these moments, though not a full-fledged partner, WikiLeaks is portrayed as more than a source, whereas when Keller discusses Assange’s technical assistance he does so, as I discuss above, by referring to him as an “office geek.” Yet, here, Leigh and Harding also are enacting the limiting of WikiLeaks that their authority position mandates. Indeed, much like The New York Times, they are doing so through reification of institutional journalism’s authority. To accuse Assange of “taking with him all the knowledge acquired by privileged visits to The Guardian’s research room,” Leigh and Harding make clear that Assange is incapable of knowledge-making. Though he is more than a source and was therefore allowed in the research room, he is less than a journalist and therefore incapable of making stories from
information. This rhetorical move suggests that Leigh and Harding see *WikiLeaks* in a Fifth Estate position and maintains *The Guardian’s* distance in its authoritative journalist position of institutional knowledge-creator.

Leigh and Harding also discuss *WikiLeaks* as a media partner, mentioning that Assange spent time “arguing with the original partners” and that Eric Schmidt of *The New York Times* complained that he was “doing media deals with ‘riff-raff.’” However, their communication is not in a positive light, and they again limit *WikiLeaks’s* agency in relation to institutional media. In addition, they discuss TV deals with Al Jazeera and an investigative reporting group in London. Despite their willingness and ability to recognize *WikiLeaks* as more than just “a source,” they discuss *WikiLeaks’s* growing *auctoritas* in terms that clearly demonstrate the growing frustration they felt with Assange: “The founder of WikiLeaks had been rocketed to the status of a huge celebrity, *in large part thanks to the credibility bestowed on him by three of the world’s major news organisations [sic]” (137-38, emphasis added). This frustration comes directly out of a sense of the misuse of *The Guardian’s* authority. It reflects the ways in which Leigh and Harding see *WikiLeaks’s* challenge to *The Guardian* as a biting of the hand that feeds even as they openly discuss the positive impact of the *WikiLeaks* project. I discuss this apparent misuse further below in light of the three partners’ viewpoints as compared to each other.

While Leigh and Harding recognize *WikiLeaks’s* proto-institutional moves and growth into *auctoritas* over the course of their interactions, they do so while holding firm to some of the misgivings of institutional authority. These misgivings are part of the basic function of institution; the reification and reproduction of the means of production of institutional authority require that the institution be wary of incursions upon its authority and of attempts at new membership or change. Leigh and Harding describe Assange and *WikiLeaks* as being involved with media and being “more than” a source. This leads them to some of the struggles the MSM must resolve. They struggle to define *WikiLeaks’s* actual role. Publisher/intermediary is as close as Leigh and Harding can come to allowing for *WikiLeaks’s* existence and their own participation in the publication, while recognizing its status as institutional outsider. In their description of *OpenLeaks*, Domscheit-Berg’s “breakaway” organization, Leigh and Harding agree with Domscheit-Berg’s proposition that the MSM should be allowed “to publish leaked material first, in return for the time and effort spent in editing it,” and quote an unnamed source as calling *OpenLeaks* “what *WikiLeaks* is trying to do but without the drama” (244). By
following this descriptor with the comment that, if they are successful, *OpenLeaks* will have “many other mainstream editors . . . attracted to them” (244), Leigh and Harding put their mark of approval on this approach to the publisher-intermediary role, allowing for digital publication by the “publisher-intermediary” after the MSM publishes or if journalists choose not to publish. While allowing for the growth of *WikiLeaks* into the Fifth Estate, Leigh and Harding thus maintain overall journalistic *auctoritas* in traditional MSM institutions.

**WikiLeaks: Inside WikiLeaks**

In his book, *Inside WikiLeaks: My Time With Julian Assange at the World’s Most Dangerous Website*, Domscheit-Berg, Assange’s second in command, discusses the *WikiLeaks* projects at length from before the Afghan War Logs, as discussed at the opening of this chapter. Although Domscheit-Berg describes *WikiLeaks*’s ability to shape-shift as needed to meet the exigencies of interaction with the MSM, he places *WikiLeaks* most often in the Fifth Estate category. Nonetheless, he argues throughout the book that there is no place on this spectrum should be where *WikiLeaks* or any site like it belongs. Instead, Domscheit-Berg uses his book to argue that there should be a separation between those who empower actual whistleblowers and those who practice journalism and that such a separation can be made possible and anonymous through secure sites like *WikiLeaks*, sites he argues should function as a third space, a mediator between Fourth and Fifth Estates. He therefore sees *WikiLeaks*’s movement into the membership across the spectrum between Fifth Estate and journalist, those points at which *WikiLeaks* becomes a participant in the knowledge-making it was designed to assist, as an error. This is the error which he says lies at the root of *WikiLeaks*’s failure to accomplish its goals of total transparency (as well as his failed relationship with the group) according to Domscheit-Berg. The implications of this error play out in both *WikiLeaks*’s and Domscheit-Berg’s alternate site *OpenLeaks*’s failure to form and occupy a third space.

The movement Domscheit-Berg describes includes all the positions on the spectrum I have described, but it also includes the third space that Domscheit-Berg aims for and Leigh and Harding describe: “We had tried out a number of variations with leaks. We had simply loaded them onto the site without any fanfare; we had gotten individual journalists onboard; and we had held press conferences as a media organization” (Kindle file). In this one sentence, Domscheit-Berg shows *WikiLeaks*’s ability to shape-shift. The first instance is Fifth Estate—a simple publishing; the second instance is Media Partner—publication with assistance; and the third
instance is working through the MSM as journalist and source simultaneously. Yet the position of Fourth to Fifth Estate mediator never fully works in Domscheit-Berg’s analysis. As I discuss at the end of this section and as he explains at the end of the book, his solution was to create what he envisioned as the proper approach after he and Assange parted ways.

A shift from a non-journalistic to a journalistic organization and thus authority is clear over the course of the book. The third instance in the quote above, for example, is the launch of Collateral Murder. Having used MSM tactics to edit the video and then a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., to gain notice of its publication—along with calls to MSM reporters—WikiLeaks was beginning to act like a member of the MSM. But while WikiLeaks acted to achieve MSM authority by enacting the roles of an MSM source (e.g., the press conference), it lacked the auctoritas necessary to do so in a professionally recognized manner. The press conference was held outside the Press Club (PageOne). The distinction in placement of the press conference is an important one from an MSM and an institutional authority standpoint. Assange did not have the authority to call a press conference and gain entry to the Press Club. That space is regulated and would require auctoritas that WikiLeaks had yet to build. But the hallway outside the Press Club is impressive with its rows of flags. It makes a good rhetorical visual that suggests institutional authority. Assange seems to have had a sense of its importance. Domscheit-Berg’s quote, however, informs the decision to join with the MSM after the Collateral Murder release. “We had tried out a number of variations” he writes, making clear that each had its drawbacks. “But this time,” Domscheit-Berg continues at the end of the paragraph, “we were determined to do everything right.” Having tried other ways to attain the necessary auctoritas to gain the attention they felt their whistleblowers’ stories warranted, they settled on partnering with the MSM. As WikiLeaks shifted in and out of differing roles, the organization used authority in differing ways, sometimes as a bestowed institutional authority, leaning on its partners, and sometimes in an individual auctoritas, but Domscheit-Berg suggests that throughout, WikiLeaks was reaching for a different authority, a proto-institutional authority that would allow it to broker between the Fourth and Fifth Estates without having to take on the roles or authority spaces of either.

They had learned, Domscheit-Berg explains early on, that large, complex releases of information required more than simple “dumping” on the WikiLeaks site; rather, to garnish any interest, they “had to be published by traditional media in digestible chunks” (Kindle file).
Additionally, they specifically chose journalists who could “ensure that [WikiLeaks’s] news attracted maximum attention” (Kindle file), and not from the audience who would already be reading their publications on the site. The rhetorical implications here are important. While Domscheit-Berg insists on denying WikiLeaks’s position in journalism, he calls WikiLeaks’s publications “news” and discusses ways to garner that news “maximum attention.” Here, Domscheit-Berg is placing the information published by WikiLeaks into the knowledge-creation sphere, the sphere of institutions. In placing WikiLeaks in the position of a knowledge creator, Domscheit-Berg is claiming proto-institutional auctoritas for WikiLeaks. Even if he considers WikiLeaks not to be part of the institutional journalistic sphere, he sees its role as complementary to institutional journalism and, therefore, he sees it as authoritative. Domscheit-Berg seems to be seeking a third way, a place outside the range from topic to journalist in the news-consumer to news producer continuum.

The work on Afghanistan War Logs, as on the other data points, was coordinated out of The Guardian offices. While Assange and the editors worked in London on the files, Domscheit-Berg and the technicians were in charge of dealing with technical matters. But Domscheit-Berg reports, as did Keller, that the WikiLeaks team did not know about some of the things they were supposed to do with the material. As discussed in Keller’s book, the team was asked to redact names and information that could harm informants in Afghanistan. This request presented a challenge they had not expected: understanding military jargon. Domscheit-Berg states: “The hint about omitting the threat reports had come from our media partners. We hadn’t had any chance to familiarize ourselves with the content of the documents. That was the journalists’ job” (Kindle file). Here, again, the rhetoric of the response is as important as the demand, for Domscheit-Berg is demonstrating that, while he and his team are happy to take on the mantle of journalism at certain points, they are not prepared to do so at others. For instance, while the technical team had not “familiarized” itself with the reports, it did find a way to batch the removal of threat reports; still, the initial reaction is telling. “That was the journalists’ job” (emphasis added), Domscheit-Berg tells us, indicating that the team saw itself as a technical arm of the project, at this point, and not as a journalistic enterprise. For the WikiLeaks team, their job did not include the content of the files and, therefore, could not include context for that information. They were handling the computerized publication, but saw they themselves primarily as a source with benefits. Their movement into knowledge making, therefore, seems to
have taken the *WikiLeaks* team by surprise, but it also is presented by Domscheit-Berg as a response to an exigence presented by Fourth Estate demands. Had the journalists treated them as a source, Domscheit-Berg’s rhetoric implies, they would have acted as a source.

Still the *WikiLeaks* team did come to see itself at other times as a publishing enterprise in conflict with the MSM:

> Our own ideals of publishing material immediately and remaining independent in our decision making had become a joke. The media had us right where they wanted: *WikiLeaks* at their feet. They could market their exclusive stories while our hands were tied in terms of using the material as we would have liked. (Kindle file)

Here, the team is in the Fifth Estate position. In order to complain about their inability to “use the materials as we would have liked” and to publish in their own way, the team must shape-shift into a place of equal standing with journalism or at least a space of challenging institutional journalism. Without such *auctoritas*, they do not have the right to complain about what the MSM does with the information they have given because they would be a source and not a partner in publication. Having publishing ideals and hoping to remain independent are journalistic goals in and of themselves, yet Domscheit-Berg sees the MSM as the “other” in this equation. Assange, however, was pushing the team to move into a more authoritative position.

As the project came toward its publication date, Assange sent out a list of jobs that needed completion, which included such items as “the press team needs to be robustified [*sic*] and we need a list of talking heads who can speak sensibly about the issues” (Kindle file). Here, Assange is creating what does not yet exist: a publishing platform that acts both as source and publisher simultaneously while mediating from an anonymous whistleblower (actual) source of information to the MSM. Domscheit-Berg is, for the most part, the press team. He also becomes “the talking heads” and acts as intermediary with the media. But to do this, *WikiLeaks* had to see itself as both a publisher and creator of knowledge and as a source/topic of media interest. Taking on multiple roles, Domscheit-Berg here exemplifies *WikiLeaks*’s shape-shifting ethos in response to the demands of working with the MSM in an as-yet undefined role. News organizations do not generally grant each other interviews, though on rare occasions (as seen in chapter 3), they will. Journalism outlets attend press conferences; they do not hold them. Yet, Assange was already calling himself an editor at this point, had called himself a “scientific
journalist” (PageOne), and was pushing his team to act as journalists. By doing so, he created the atmosphere in which WikiLeaks shifted shape to conform to the demands made by it. In creating a shape-shifting organization, Assange was able to both use MSM authority and build WikiLeaks’s auctoritas through interactions with the MSM as a partner and as a topic/source. This auctoritas became the space between Domscheit-Berg and Assange had been reaching for, the third space.

Nonetheless, the WikiLeaks’s team was not necessarily certain about its choices. Furthermore, as it learned to meet the demands of the MSM, it also made mistakes. When all was said and done, Domscheit-Berg explains, “no one cared whether we had messed up the teamwork a bit and lagged behind our partners in publishing the material” (kindle file). These are clearly the attitudes of novice media partners, working with journalists to explain the material and publish as planned (or slightly after). Yet the fears, as projected here by Domscheit-Berg, also are the fears of a neophyte, hoping the experienced team members approve or at least do not judge the newcomer’s failures too harshly. In order to see WikiLeaks as a neophyte, Domscheit-Berg has to see it as being in the company of those whose peerage it hopes to achieve. While Domscheit-Berg personally pushes against this idea, the WikiLeaks rhetoric and ethos are clearly headed in this direction. Additionally, Domscheit-Berg refers to the MSM, here, as partners. They are not the people to whom WikiLeaks has given information who then do with it as they wish; they are the institutions with which WikiLeaks is participating in the creation of knowledge from the information it has shared. This highlights WikiLeaks’s learning curve as it shape-shifts into and out of authority positions as necessary to meet its goals. Though suffering from the fears of a neophyte, the team fights its way into partnership and past the limitations they see before them. Though they need not see themselves as media partners, seeing themselves as equals in a partnership to complete the project with the MSM requires auctoritas on the part of WikiLeaks. This flexibility is, essentially, a characteristic of digital convergence, which functions in a complex system, in which component are, by definition, mutually constitutive.

Domscheit-Berg and Assange split over ideological differences; those differences are an important part of his commentary. Domscheit-Berg uses the commentary section to discuss “what went wrong” with WikiLeaks, and for him, what went wrong was WikiLeaks’s entrance into the Fifth Estate. He explains: “The real problem with WikiLeaks is that it tried to do too many things at once. WikiLeaks encompassed the entire whistle-blowing process. The sources
uploaded the documents; *WikiLeaks* members erased the metadata, verified the submissions, and provided the context in additional texts. In the end, everything was put on the *WikiLeaks* site” (Kindle file). In Domscheit-Berg’s outlook, publication is only part of the Fifth Estate’s job in this description, the other part is central to a journalist’s job—providing context. And while *WikiLeaks*’s members did not write content, they did provide context for the information, creating a *mise en scène*. It was through providing context, often in the form of what *WikiLeaks* called summaries or introductions, that *WikiLeaks* helped to transform information into knowledge. It was through finding multiple avenues to draw attention to the information it published that *WikiLeaks* circulated information. The actions *WikiLeaks* took to make its whistleblower platform a source of news made it a topic of news as well, but required *auctoritas* and shape-shifting.

As the project progresses from Iraq War Logs to CableGate, the data points shift from primarily a source position to freelancer/media partner as the primary position. These shifts are important because based on totals alone, the midrange seems flat. That midrange total puts *WikiLeaks* in the Source, Fifth Estate and Freelancer positions with 12, 15, and 15 mentions respectively. It is only as an outcome of the changes over time that *WikiLeaks*’s movement into media membership becomes clear. As one follows the *WikiLeaks* story through this time period, the change makes sense both from the point of view of how *WikiLeaks*’s leaders saw themselves and their assumption of authority as it became necessary to do so. While at first, according to Domscheit-Berg, he and Assange primarily saw themselves as renegades fighting the big, bad MSM stereotype, as the *WikiLeaks* project grew, in Domscheit-Berg’s account, Assange became more savvy in his interactions with the MSM. Additionally, the MSM became more interested in *WikiLeak’s* publications. Domscheit-Berg found this troubling:

I thought back to the days when we weren’t so well known. When I had to contact the media to solicit their interest in good material. When they didn’t call me back or answer my e-mails. The majority of journalists viewed us with a critical eye during our first year of operation, and some wrote clever analyses of the problems our platform entailed. That was fine by me. Some of them changed their tune, however, when they realized how much attention our material could generate. They began to suck up to us. I found that quite strange. (Kindle file)
Here Domscheit-Berg’s complaint not only shows his position regarding what WikiLeaks ought to have been, it also highlights Assange’s position by contrast. At the time of this complaint, Assange has ordered the “press team” and for “talking heads” to be prepared. This step shows that for Assange, WikiLeaks is a both a source and a publisher; they need to interact with and manipulate the MSM. Domscheit-Berg clearly sees this approach as a bad thing because the MSM no longer views WikiLeaks critically, but as a topic of import and, simultaneously, as a resource and sometimes media partner. This range of roles clusters to create Domscheit-Berg’s “trying to do too many things,” an approach that for Assange is simply a matter of shifting shape as needed to meet the exigence of WikiLeaks’s goals of being a publisher and source simultaneously.

By contrast, Domscheit-Berg’s site, OpenLeaks, takes the role of Fourth and Fifth Estate mediator in a different direction. Because he believes whistleblowers and journalists should remain separate but also that whistleblower platforms are not media, Domscheit-Berg and the team member from WikiLeaks who defected with him—known only as “The Architect”—designed a site at which whistleblowers upload information anonymously in much the same way as they did to WikiLeaks. However, when uploading information, a whistleblower is given the option of choosing a reporter or publication to whom she or he would like the information leaked as a first choice. The named reporter or organization is given the information and a deadline. If the information is not used within the deadline, OpenLeaks provides the information to all interested the MSM. At this point, if the whistleblower has set a second deadline and that deadline is reached, OpenLeaks will publish the information as is. In this way, Domscheit-Berg says he believes he has removed all but the technical aspects of whistleblower protection from his site, allowing people who choose to leak information without individually contacting journalists to do so. Though this has been Domscheit-Berg’s move into third space, Assange’s personal problems have overshadowed what either organization has accomplished since.

WikiLeaks continues to publish stories on its site. The stories now have headlines and are edited in journalistic fashion. The site refers to itself as a “not-for-profit media organisation [sic].” The About page now refers to its auctoritas in the first paragraph:

We provide an innovative, secure and anonymous way for sources to leak information to our journalists (our electronic drop box). One of our most important activities is to publish original source material alongside our
news stories so readers and historians alike can see evidence of the truth. We are a young organisation that has grown very quickly, relying on a network of dedicated volunteers around the globe.

Having shape-shifted across the media spectrum, *WikiLeaks* has transformed itself into a member of the Fifth Estate, an independent, nonprofit media site. To the end of seeing his original goals achieved, Domscheit-Berg created *OpenLeaks*, a proto-institutional mediator between Fourth and Fifth Estate, having participated in the original project and watched the flexibility with which that shape-shifting occurred as well as the outcome of taking on *auctoritas* and proto-institutional roles as well as proto-authorized roles as the situation demanded.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have discussed *WikiLeaks*'s shape-shifting abilities, its space between the Fourth and Fifth Estates, its movement into proto-institutionalization, and the attitudes presented by its media partners. In light of the analysis above, it seems fairly clear that *The New York Times*, maintaining its institutional authority, as I have shown it to do in chapters 2 and 3, limited its presentation of *WikiLeaks*'s *auctoritas* to primarily source or topic positions, and while Bill Keller, *The New York Times* editor who wrote *Open Secrets: WikiLeaks, War and American Diplomacy*'s introduction for *The New York Times* does allow for *WikiLeaks*'s *auctoritas* at three points in his narrative, those points are limited, and the rhetoric he uses is designed to hold *WikiLeaks* to a double standard. By comparison, *The Guardian*, has more room to maneuver, institutionally. As a paper with less institutional gravitas, *The Guardian*, and by extension, David Leigh and Luke Harding who wrote *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrecy*, had a greater ability to present *WikiLeaks*'s as a shape-shifting entity capable of challenging the MSM. And they do so, though not without facing their own difficulties at what that means for their institutional authority, and not without attempting to limit the proto-institutionalization they recognize in *WikiLeaks*'s moves. Finally, while Daniel Domscheit-Berg presents a picture of a group of hackers attempting proto-institutionalization. His own struggle with *auctoritas* and the authority of the MSM, as well as his struggles with Julian Assange, make his telling, in *Inside WikiLeaks: My Time With Julian Assange at the World’s Most Dangerous Website*, reflective of how *WikiLeaks* struggled to shape-shift, and how crossing the porous boundaries between news producer and source led to conflict with *WikiLeaks*'s media partners.
In chapter 5, I discuss how the three different approaches to challenging the MSM via the use of digital convergence tools as presented in chapters 2-4 function in relation to each other as well as the MSM. I also consider ways in which this study of the changing meaning of rhetorical authority in the age of digital convergence is limited and suggest some further avenues for study.
CHAPTER 5

WHEN AUTHORITY AND AUCTORITAS COLLIDE

Summary

This dissertation specifically examines journalism as a primary case in which digital convergence threatens a specific Ideological State Apparatus’s (ISA) institutional authority—the Fourth Estate, also referred to as mainstream media (MSM)—and it engages three sub-cases as examples to accomplish the overall analysis of the following questions:

4. In the face of digital convergence, how and why does institutional authority respond, reshape, or re-appropriate in response to said challenges?

4. How and why does the individual or group of individuals use digital convergence to design, generate, and position authority as agents in a networked system, allowing reinforcement, resistance, and change in institutional authority?

5. What are the effects of digital convergence regarding the creation and circulation of information as well as the transformation or manipulation of information into knowledge?

Digital convergence, by creating a space in which auctoritas—individual authority—emerges in a complex information exchange system changes human information exchange by such a great amount that a difference of amount of information exchange becomes a difference of kind—a new kind of personal auctoritas practiced on the Internet. This difference of kind of information exchange challenges institutional authority’s claim on knowledge creation. The journalism ISA, as an ideological arm of a culture, is most clearly open to this threat from the rise of auctoritas because of its position as a cultural information dissemination tool. As such, journalism acts to inform this dissertation in three sub-case studies, but begins with an exploration of different ancient conceptions of authority.

I use the exploration of the differences between Aristotelian authority and Ciceronean auctoritas, the former built on the dignity of station and the latter on the dignity of one’s history,
as a means to define and differentiate institutional and individual authority. Aristotle’s beliefs centered both on the social class into which one was born and the understanding of one’s “breeding.” While he acknowledged that there would be men (since for Aristotle there was no question of women as rhetors or leaders) born to high stations in life who would not be ethical in character, he also believed that the education afforded to the higher classes would counteract any evil leanings of those few who might not be born of good character despite their high birth. Likewise, he recognized that men of lower classes might be born with high capacity for leadership and ethical decision making, but wrote that their lack of time to study properly would keep them from developing such talents and that such men, in his views were few. This reality led Aristotle to develop a view of authority based primarily in class. As Western culture changed through the Roman Republic and Empire, into the Roman Catholic Empire, and later into the humanist movement, that notion of social class became translated into institutional authority—though institution has not removed class from the equation, as I discuss in full in chapter 1. The primary form of authority as understood in in Western culture rhetorics has come through this Aristotelian outlook.

In contrast, I conceptualize individual authority through Ciceroian auctoritas, an approach to authority that is based in a person’s dignity as earned through action and decisions made in his (for Cicero, it was also always a male rhetor) past. To understand how a rhetor’s auctoritas is gained and used, I considered Jean Goodwin’s analysis of Cicero’s defense of Sulla, in which Cicero explicitly places his own auctoritas on the line by asking the judges to find Sulla innocent of the charges—not because any proof can be found that he was not part of the coup attempt, but because he, Cicero, as the man who unmasked the members of the Catiline circle, would have known if Sulla had belonged. In suggesting that his own dignity be the defense of Sulla, Cicero is placing more than just his good name on the line; he places his personal experience in the particular matter in question in the hands of those judging Sulla. In this manner, Cicero creates a version of auctoritas not based in his standing as Consul, but based in his personal experience and history. While his experience in this case is directly tied to his standing as Consul, he does not ask that his standing be considered so much as his work. In addition, Cicero’s personal history is not one of high birth, but of middle lineage. Cicero is known for having worked up to his current position, making his auctoritas one of individual achievement even if one takes it as part of the institutional authority. These two approaches
enable me to more clearly theorize the conflict created by digital convergence causes auctoritas to emerge in the complex system of information exchange as technological changes create a difference of degree of information exchange so great that it becomes a difference of kind.

Having thus demarcated the difference between institutional authority and individual auctoritas, I continue with a discussion of digital convergence, exploring its roots in network theory and complex systems, while applying that work to understandings of rhetoric, in particular to John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid’s explanation of the difference between information and knowledge, Henry Jenkins’s and Clay Shirky’s work on participatory culture and power law, Thomas Rickert’s reconception of kairos in light of complexity, and Axel Bruns’s work on produsage, a term designed to take into account the constant (re)creation of artifacts from artifacts through multiple forms of editing, mixing and (re)vision of other’s work online. Produsage is a reconstruction of Alvin Toffler’s term, prosumer, designed to take the networking of information into account and thus apply what had been intended as a manufacturing-centered idea and apply it to information centered, Internet-based behavior. These theorists and their work point the way toward understanding how information exchange in a scale-free, networked, complex system takes on such a great difference of degree as to become a difference of kind. Thus, while humans have been exchanging information for as long as humans have lived in social groups, the ability to exchange massive amounts of information via the Internet, a network I describe using Albert-Laszló Barabási’s and Neil Johnson’s work, has not only made that exchange possible at great speeds and high levels—which is a difference of degree—but those speeds and levels have become so great that the outcome of information exchange is different—which is a difference of kind.

Understanding how complex systems work, one can see how the Internet inherently creates a space in which a Ciceronian approach to auctoritas is not only possible but often necessary. Indeed, whereas the Fourth Estate relies on the institutional authority of credentialed journalists for their authority, the new Fifth Estate inherent to Internet-based information exchange relies on one’s personal experience and history of achievement for the credentialing, so to speak, that grounds one’s authority to write and expectation of having what one has said be taken seriously.

Chapter 2 answers my first research question: how and why does institutional authority respond, reshape, or re-appropriate in response to said challenges? The primary response of
institutional authority to the challenges of emergent *auctoritas* is seen in proto-authorization, while the why is tied to the issue of the long tail of the Power Law. The long tail of the Power Law is how theorists like Shirky, Benkler, and Barabási account for the 80 percent of produsers who are responsible for approximately 20 percent of the content created or information sharing done through digital convergence. As a group, they do not account for a great deal of the produsage that challenges institutional authority. As I discuss in chapter 1, the group doing the majority of the work are the 20 percent percent of produsers who contribute approximately 80 percent of content and information sharing. However, the long tail points to what, according to Mark C. Taylor and Thomas Rickert is the most important consequence of complex systems; the boundary between institution and individual is porous, and complexity makes it far more so. The long tail makes that porousness more obvious. Those produsers in the long tail move in and out of produsage behavior often with no intention or identification as produsers, and by doing so highlight the very fragility of the institution’s boundaries, challenging its defining walls.

I begin by considering sub-cases that illustrate how the proto-authorization approach to *auctoritas* takes shape in hybrid spaces with some produsers as other produsers seek to express online identities separate from the MSM in proto-institutional spaces—a response to institutional proto-authorization. I then consider sub-cases of produsers who are either unaware of their movement into or do not choose to identify as members of a Fifth Estate. Produsers’s identity choice is important because members choosing proto-institutionalization seek to be members of a form of Fifth Estate and represent the rising end of the long tail. This is seen, for example, in the comment left on the iReport page by one produser seeking more agency for fellow international produsers:

> My candid advice to CNN Management is to create a forum of credible, well-experienced 'iReport Group of Journalists' across the various continents-starting from United States as back-check on stories earlier submitted by iReport for authenticity; such that after verification, more engaging, fact-bound, true, investigative and timely scoop being submitted by iReport become visible on CNN broadcast. (“How CNN iReport Works”)

This produser is actively seeking a greater level of proto-authorized involvement in iReport’s information validation process from produsers’s creation through to vetting by CNN’s
professional producers. The same is also seen in the way in which iReport and GuardianWitness interact with produsers. Both iReport and GuardianWitness ask for stories or photoessays by posting “assignments,” a term designed specifically to graph the lexicon of the newsroom onto the proto-authorizational space of the hybrid-project-produser. Because produsers are given assignments, the terminology indicates a journalistic role, and because there is an opportunity for publication and broadcast on CNN, a major MSM member or on Guardian, another MSM member, participants who choose to participate in these spaces choose a Fifth Estate identity. But, as discussed in chapter 2, many of the 80 percent of produsers who are responsible for 20 percent of content creation neither choose the identity nor readily identify as produsers; they merely see themselves as enacting their personal choices. These types of produsers include Feidin Santana, who filmed the shooting of Walter Scott. Santana makes clear that he sees himself not as a produser but as a barber who now must suffer the consequences for his choice—a choice he says he would make again. Proto-institutionalizers with such organizations as the CFAPA and the ACLU, on the other hand, actively seek to make use of digital convergence to create tools that will allow produsers to readily cross the porous boundary between news consumer and news producer positions. But both sets of tools, whether press credentials from the CFAPA or the smartphone app from the ACLU, require a preconceived notion of the self as an agent who may cross such a boundary. And what connects all these long tail users is technology. The ready availability of technology makes the voices of these 80 percent members of the long tail of the power law a valid enough threat that the MSM must respond. And the MSM responds by reshaping, re-appropriating, and proto-authorizing, so as to maintain its position as authority.

On the other side of the Power Law lie the 20 percent of produsers responsible for 80 percent of content creation. In chapter 3, I examine one such group of produsers to answer the second question posed in my dissertation: How and why does the individual or group of individuals use the digital convergence to design, generate, and position authority as agents in a networked system, allowing reinforcement, resistance, and change in institutional authority? The 20 percent are dedicated bloggers and users of other platforms who not only see themselves as members of a Fifth Estate but also often actively see themselves as members of a collective seeking to correct what they see as MSM flaws. In this category of the 20 percent, many bloggers and social platform users dedicate a great deal of their personal time to their online identities, and in doing so they use the lessons they learn from dealing with the MSM to create
new tools within digital convergence to better accomplish their goals. As such, the 20 percent challenge institutional authority by aiming their output at the MSM through corrective produsage. This corrective produsage often takes the form of direct engagement, but it also takes the form of counternarrative. In produsing large amounts of content, building highly linked hubs that compete with MSM hubs, and directly challenging MSM content, this 20 percent makes itself the more visible of the Power Law produsers in challenging the MSM. Because of their high visibility, the 20 percent are able to make use of the tools they design, as I discuss in chapter 3, to build bigger audiences and to both empower and engage the 80 percent.

Therefore, this chapter analyzes the particular case of Charles Johnson, a blogger who, after being part of a successful MSM corrective, uses what he has learned to create a blogging collective that functions to counteract the directional nature of the Internet. Johnson’s tool, which I call *interblogging*, created a single, powerfully linked node out of several sites. Johnson also took part in the creation of an independent media hub site designed to make use of such tools as interblogging but primarily to make use of hub design and high linking on the Web in order to empower right-leaning political blogs. The creation of new tools to answer new challenges in complex systems is one of the primary characteristics of digital convergence that lends it the power to turn a difference of degree into a difference of kind. In the first MSM corrective in which Johnson participated, the MSM responded after weeks. In the second one, the MSM responded within 18 hours, demonstrating the increased power Johnson and his cohort had found in designing interblogging as a tool of digital convergence. I accomplish this specifically by looking at the difference between the corrective that does not use interblogging, the corrective that does, and the bridge to the MSM enacted by Pro-Ams, professionals who in their off-duty time to use their expertise to build *auctoritas* on the Web, and finally, by considering the institutional response of the MSM.

Finally, I consider the third of my research questions: What are the effects of digital convergence regarding the creation and circulation of information as well as the transformation or manipulation of information into knowledge? Information exchange, as I explain in chapter 1, is something that all humans in social groups do. However, the complexity provided by digital convergence brings affordances to the fore that push information exchange to ever greater amounts, finally reaching a tipping point that changes it from a difference of degree (more information exchanged more rapidly) into an difference of kind (information exchange as
emerging *auctoritas*). Information circulation and the manipulation of information into knowledge, therefore, is not a new behavior, but digital convergence allows individuals to move into and out of roles previously played primarily by institutions (or individuals acting on behalf of institutions)—that of knowledge creator. While individuals move into and out of these roles, institutions attempt to respond.

I therefore consider in chapter 4 the case of *WikiLeaks* and the challenge its ability to shape-shift brought to the MSM. The interactions of the three primary players *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *WikiLeaks* as reported by each of the three in books each group published, reflect the attitudes and behaviors emergent *auctoritas* brings to the fore in each. Throughout, as *WikiLeaks* shifts shape across a gamut of *auctoritas* positions from source to media partner and back, it builds *auctoritas* and in some ways creates a proto-institution. However, after struggling with Julian Assange’s personal issues, *WikiLeaks* becomes an independent media agency, which perhaps was not its original shape or intention. Whereas, for Daniel Domscheit-Berg, its former second in command, *OpenLeaks*, a competing site, becomes the outlet for a proto-institutional approach; he starts this new venture with the other primary member of *WikiLeaks*, known only as “The Architect.” As a proto-institutional movement, *OpenLeaks* works only as a mediator between Fifth Estate whistleblowers and Fourth Estate journalists, seeking only to ensure anonymity so that journalists need not worry about the lack of federal shield laws and sources need not worry that journalists might face the choice between revealing names or being jailed. *WikiLeaks* functioned in this manner for a time, and its ability to move into and out of this role is an example of the use and design of *auctoritas* across digital convergence space.

**Implications**

What, then, is the effect of the emergence of *auctoritas* as brought about by digital convergence? In sum, this case study of journalism at the point of change between a difference of degree and a difference of kind in the information sharing of humans by virtue of digital convergence, and the effect that change has on institutional authority, shows that institutional authority—an Aristotelian, institutionally-based dignity—is in conflict with Ciceronean *auctoritas*—which is grounded in a personal, temporal, sense of dignity and history of

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57 As noted earlier, *WikiLeaks* is here represented by Daniel Domscheit-Berg who was its second in command well into the partnership because the Assange book has been disclaimed by Assange and his co-author and does not deal with the interactions.
credibility. This conflict demonstrates a clear need to gain a better understanding both of the conflict between the types of authority and our own rhetorical definitions of authority. A better understanding of the conflict between authority and auctoritas will help scholars in many fields to understand what effect digital convergence is having and will likely have on not only authority but also on institutions, social structure, and digital convergence itself. A more nuanced definition of authority will allow rhetoricians to better recognize and assess enactment of authority and authority transactions as well as allow the field to better consider the role of authority in rhetorical interactions.

Institution, as discussed above, has to find a way to respond to the challenges brought about by digital convergence. That the Fourth Estate has begun to respond with proto-authorization is proof that the challenge posed by digital convergence is a viable threat to institutional authority. But proto-authorization thus far has proved insufficient. While iReport and GuardianWitness and other hybrid sites like them have many positive aspects for those users who are interested in the particular participatory role such a space allows them, still many others have no interest in membership in the Fifth Estate, as discussed in chapter 2. Indeed, many see themselves in terms of working counter to the Fourth Estate, as seen in chapter 3, and still others see their space as belonging somewhere outside and between the Fourth and Fifth Estates. How then, can the Fourth Estate respond to Fifth Estate challenges if proto-authorization is not a fully viable option and if, as seems to be the case, Internet models of information sharing also threaten journalism’s long-held business practice?

First, the business practice must be changed. Print journalism does not rely on subscriptions to meet the costs of production. Publications make approximately 82 percent of the production cost of a print publication from advertising. The other 18 percent is made from a combination of subscription and special issues and newsstand sales (Meyer 37). This financial reality is why newspapers and magazines are willing to have such low subscription costs and provide extreme discounts for customers willing to subscribe. A subscription does not pay for print space, but it does add to circulation numbers, and circulation sells ads. Advertisers pay for eyeballs, a term used in the industry to refer specifically to how many people will see an ad, as opposed to how many people will pay for a paper. Most newspapers track not only their subscription and newsstand sales, but how many newspapers “disappear” from racks. In the case of an industry heavily reliant on advertising, the money lost to removal of multiple copies from a
news bin when one has put in change for one copy still equals multiple copies of circulation to advertisers. Unfortunately for print publications, the same does not hold true for online publication. Online advertising does not pay by how many people click on to a page on which one’s ad appears, but by a combination of the average clicks onto a page and how many click-throughs the ad receives (Edmonds). Thus, a New York Times advertiser can expect to pay a premium rate for advertising in the online publication, but that rate changes based on how many users click on the ad. The same ad appearing in a less-read online publication will have a lower base ad rate, but it potentially could have the same click-through or even a higher click-through rate. And that is where journalism’s centuries-old model fails. It can no longer base ad sales, 82 percent of its revenue, on ad sales because ad sales cannot be based purely on circulation. Click-throughs, unlike minimal circulation, cannot be guaranteed. The second issue is tied to the first. While journalism is not a high-paying field, money is a concern. Paid journalists are dedicated to covering things others may have no interest in—like a small-town school board that might be corrupt and otherwise go unnoticed for years. Paid journalists also are dedicated to investigative and overseas journalism, which often requires resources. While Benkler, Cooper, and Bruns point to several situations in which crowd-sourced investigative reporting successfully functioned on a large scale, such crowd-sourced investigations are not the norm and Fifth Estate “journalists” often are not interested in, connected to, or cognizant of issues for which paid journalists are charged and compensated.58 These two issues couple to form the concerns most journalists voice when faced with the challenges digital convergence brings to institutional authority.

However, by fully understanding the underlying structure and tools of digital convergence, the Fourth Estate can transform itself and its business model such that its functions of maintaining a space for the citizenry to remain informed while remaining solvent can be attainable goals that do not come into conflict with Lessenberry’s ideals of every citizen’s right to commit journalism. To take full advantage of the scale-free, networked, complex system of information exchange, journalism would have to shift from an institution focused on meaning making to one focused on providing tools and context for agents to use in meaning making. By using the network to provide access to tools that help produsers to contextualize information and

58 The opposite also holds true. Paid journalists are often not in touch with issues that Fifth Estate members find compelling and have access to avenues of coverage.
form meaning from information as well as by providing contextualized information for further produsage, the Fourth Estate can recreate its relevance as a toolkit of produsage-based agency in a scale-free, networked, complex system. I cannot specify these tools because digital convergence requires that the tools be malleable and designable. However, I can suggest a paradigm and a metaphor for understanding the work of a toolbox for produsage. Together, they will help to create a picture of what this new journalism might look like.

One of the paradigms of journalism is known as refrigerator journalism. This is for the sorts of stories that are designed to be useful in a daily manner. While the news story might be of someone who saved a life by registering for CPR classes, the refrigerator journalism part of the piece would be a pull out box next to the story, designed for the reader to cut out of the newspaper and literally attach to the refrigerator for ease of reference. This piece might include step-by-step instructions for CPR, with a guide of what to do while waiting for emergency services for those who do not know how to perform CPR. Regardless, the paradigm is about context and utility, keys to transforming information to knowledge as Seely Brown and Duguid explain and I discuss in chapter 1.

Online, such a paradigm would involve making information available for produsage. The Berkman Center for Internet and Society does some of this by providing how-to instructions on freedom of information letters (Berkman). But one needs to be aware of the Berkman Center at Harvard to find the information, or one needs to know one is looking for freedom of information letters. If The New York Times had a section providing details on how to get free access to government information, including Freedom of Information Act letters and links to the laws of different states—information designed to empower produsers in taking artifacts from The New York Times and produsing them into artifacts—many more people would be able to access information they might otherwise not know was available to them. In a sense, the Fourth Estate would use the Network to network context for produsers seeking to network information. A networked context creates the institution as a space of contextualization, which brings the locus back to the institution for knowledge-making tools while leaving the actual making in the hands of agents.

To return for a moment to the idea of kairos on the network willing the rhetor, in chapter 1 I used the idea of a traffic jam. In a traffic jam, each driver is both caught in the gridlock and one of the causes of the congestion in which she is caught. But, given that traffic jams happen
daily in every major city in the U.S., most cities include in their morning and afternoon radio and local news broadcasts a traffic report. In addition, many GPS systems now map traffic along with options for routes when a driver plugs in an address for directions. Given this information, the driver now has options. She can choose to take the interstate, knowing she may face a delay, or she may choose to take a back road, knowing she may face construction. She also can, after several weeks, months, or years of traffic frustration, make an informed decision about a metro system based on her own likelihood of using such a system and her belief that others might was well. In this way, the network of traffic and the network of information have functioned together to provide the driver with a set of options from which to form her own decisions. Thus, one network has taken advantage of information about another constitute a complex system.

A value and implication of this dissertation is the insight it provides into the paradigm of refrigerator journalism and metaphor of traffic jams, both of which are designed to create the stage upon which the Fourth Estate can reimagine itself as a context-based networking space that provides tools for agents in a complex system to make sense of information by contextualizing it for themselves and others through produsage. Simultaneously, while making such tools for produsage available, the Fourth Estate can, by taking down the cultural barriers to produsage, also benefit from the peer production made available through such produsage. As agents use contextualizing tools to create prodused artifacts for journalism, the Fourth Estate can use prodused artifacts to assist in investigative journalism. If, as journalism trains its professionals to believe and practice, the goal of journalistic work is an informed citizenry, such a citizenry would be best served in this manner rather than by being kept from empowerment. Hence, protoinstitutionalization would be shifted into a form of partnership.

**Limitations Of The Current Study**

Despite the insights it offers into digital convergence and authority as well as into the Fourth Estate at a moment of transition, this study of the challenges to institutional authority as caused by individual auctoritas as an outcome of digital convergence, as do all studies, has some limitations in discerning the nature of all authority interactions. These limitations are grounded in the need to select one type of case from among many possible ones as a research lens for understanding the emergence of a phenomenon. The first and greatest limitation is the limitation of journalism. Using Louis Althuser’s term, I chose the ISA of journalism primarily because it is an ISA that is fairly open to the public and can be tracked—and researched—in many ways. For
example, *The New York Times* is relatively open for scholarly investigation because it is the paper of record for the U.S. and must therefore be kept on file at the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress now keeps many newspapers on file, a job made lighter (metaphorically and physically) by digital convergence. In addition, as the paper of record, its opinion, and court decisions based on cases brought against *The New York Times* provide insight into the workings of some of journalism. Because I chose only one ISA, the ISA of journalism, this study looks only at what digital convergence practices of *auctoritas* mean for the field of journalism. However, not all of journalism and journalistic activities can be tracked; certainly, not all of the MSM is covered in this study. Additionally, the study is restricted to the MSM, which does not account for all of journalism as an institution. It is limited specifically to some of what is reported and what is discussed by those participating in journalistic activities. Within those limitations, the study and what can be generalized from it is limited to my data sets, which I chose for specific reasons. The *WikiLeaks* data set, for example, is limited to the data provided by the main players, and for public consumption. The documentary evidence provided by other journalists about the goings on at *WikiLeaks*, are not considered here. This limitation allowed me to carefully analyze the rhetorical presentation of the interactions—an authority interaction between author and public audience in itself—rather than attempt to analyze the interactions of *WikiLeaks* with its partners from outside sources. But while it provided the ability to analyze one rhetorical authority interaction, it cut off other avenues of research. And so, even within these data sets, the data is limited to the interactions I chose to analyze. Such limitations are the cost of research. No project can be infinite and no picture complete. My questions do not suggest complete answers, and my chapters seek to provide avenues toward beginning to answer the questions through case study approaches, rather than seeking to finalize the answers through empirical research methods.

In addition, the Internet is an evolving complex system and all evolving networked systems are real-time phenomena. As such, a still photo of conditions of digital convergence is impossible, and such a moment in time leaves out many facets of any phenomenon. The time taken to study any part of the networked public sphere leaves much of the networked public sphere unstudied. Indeed, even in the relative permanence of the Internet where one might track some of an occurrence’s history, backward linking is not generally possible, and not all sites are archived. And so it is possible to lose a significant piece of that history. For example, I had
planned to analyze what had been Harvard’s Citizen Media Law Center, but its history was significantly damaged by the deletion of its website when the center was transformed into the Berkman Center’s Digital Media Law Project website. The evolution of the Internet means that it preserves some things and not others, skewing any research in some way. That the Internet is not as permanent as researchers tend to believe and that produsers are spread and designing new tools at a fast pace, coupled with the pressure these new tools put on the MSM to respond, means that researchers must also respond by archiving, studying, and mapping digital convergence and its effects not only on authority but on rhetoric and social structures writ large.

**Avenues For Further Study**

What appears is a conflict between two approaches to authority that force questions to arise about authority, institution, society, and culture. This study can only raise some of these questions, and it cannot answer all of them. What is the role of institutional authority in a digital culture? Can institutional authority and individual *auctoritas* coexist in a digitally converged society? How would such a cultural sharing of authority transpire? As such, there are some things this study does not take into account, but to which it can point. The MSM is not alone in being challenged by digital convergence. Institutional authority per se is being challenged by the tools of digital convergence. Thus, this project can be enriched and its insights tested via additional case studies. Education, for example, faces this problem not only in online educational issues but also in questions over the need for credentialing and in the challenges posed by mastery education programs like Coursera and Khan Academy. In particular, education faces this challenge as global communication makes global education possible and college level education and mastery education is made available for free across the globe. Religion also faces the digital convergence challenge although not only in the ways Western culture seems to think it does from the availability of scientific knowledge; such things as online worship communities pose problems of proto-institutionalization in that online congregations and online services present new forms of community; forms religious leaders have yet to create institutional structures for—and the questions of identity online are always heightened when money comes into consideration, which in some religious practice it does. There are even online Alcoholics Anonymous and other theoretically “anonymous” communities making use of digital convergence and changing the ways these organizations operate through meetings that gather at all times, but do not require one to leave one’s home or have face-to-face fellowship. TV is
responding to challenges of digital convergence by trying to make live TV exciting again, attempting to bypass TiVo and the trend toward Hulu or Amazon-purchased episodes which undercut advertising-based business models. Because of issues related to digital convergence, the music industry is changing its model from album-release-based to streaming, and musicians are responding to the challenge by changing theirs as well. But communication systems face these challenges in every area from television to internet service to music to telephones. For example, the phone system has been revolutionized; I remember not being able to call the other side of the Sun Valley, where I grew up, because it was expensive. Now I can call Israel via the Internet for free. And this year, 2015, was the year that Congress considered questions of Net-neutrality, which posed for the Federal Communications Commission the issue of whether all surfers had the right to travel the Internet at the same rate or whether there should be a way for Internet Service Providers to provide a fee-for-service system that allowed them to charge those who used more data higher prices. From one side of the equation, this looked like a free commerce issue, but from the other, the question was whether all would have equal access to what many see as a utility or whether companies would have the right to grant more access to those wealthy enough to pay for it. Even the nature of government is being challenged by digital convergence, and not just as seen in chapter 2 with phone filming of police brutality or more recently in phone filming of people abusing officers in supposed vindication for police brutality, but also in the Arab Spring, and just as much in the ways ISIS is recruiting. These are but a few interesting examples of the challenges presented by digital convergence that cannot be addressed in one dissertation but that would enhance the understanding of the intersection of digital convergence and authority. It is not a stretch to say that all institutions now face the challenge of individual auctoritas, not because individuals did not have auctoritas before digital convergence, but because digital convergence has taken that auctoritas and placed it in direct conflict with institutional authority and allowed for a difference of degree to become a difference of kind. Digital convergence makes it possible for agents in the networked information system to build their auctoritas and use it on a scale that directly calls institutional authority to answer for its failings, as demonstrated in chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this dissertation. By virtue of the Power Law, digital convergence makes it possible for a great many agents—the 80 percent—in the system to take minor roles, invest very little time and effort, and at a very low personal cost, contribute to large projects that change the paths of institutions. Individuals also may, if they wish, be part of
the 20 percent who invest large amounts of time, design new tools for new problems, create stronger communities, and command faster response from the institution. But this shift is not a revolution of *auctoritas* over institutional authority. If one were to consider authority/*auctoritas* on a spectrum, the spectrum has merely shifted. The shift is noticeable as individual gain the ability to enact *auctoritas* in online spaces, but Aristotelian definitions of institutional authority still function within Western culture and Ciceronian definitions of *auctoritas* have not become the dominant authority trope.

It is clear from this list of additional research opportunities that authority and *auctoritas* must be studied in relation to other institutions to enrich the rhetoric field’s understanding of ethos in a scale-free, networked, complex system. As agents in such a system, scholars’ understanding of other rhetorical issues—especially of *kairos*, audience, and delivery—will be affected by this new understanding of *auctoritas*. However, this study of institutions also must be done and is being done in other areas including social critical scholarship and other humanities fields. How institutions respond will have deep ongoing effects on the life-span of late capitalist era Western culture. This is more than just a matter of changing a market approach or business model, though that is the example used with the recording industry in chapter 2. The Internet is not limited to Western culture, and digital convergence not only brings Western ideas to the non-Western world, but it also brings the ideologies of the non-Western world to the West. We speak of Globalization in the U.S. as if only Western culture practices hegemony, as if only Western culture attempts to spread its ideas. Yet, if one looks at information exchange on the Web, one can find how all cultures and all perspectives function in a proselytic, or regularly recruiting, manner. Social critics must gain an understanding of *auctoritas* as social capital and digital convergence as a toolbox of *auctoritas* if they are to understand how these interactions occur in a complex system.

There are, I am certain, multiple avenues for further studies, and the above are only some of many critical approaches to digital convergence challenges to institutional authority. Certainly, institutions should be involved in thoughtful study of networks and information exchange for many reasons, *auctoritas* being only among them, if they wish to survive. Agents would be wise to do the same. To that end, scholars like Jenkins, Shirky, and Gillmor have contributed a great deal through their active work as shown in Jenkins’s books and the MIT center that studies agency and participation on the Internet, Shirky’s books and work on the
Internet, and Gillmor’s most recent book *MediActive*, which seeks to encourage those who do not see themselves as produsers to, at the very least, educate themselves in information filtering skills and participation at the lowest levels. These three scholars have contributed a great deal, but a great deal more is needed, which opens avenues to scholarly research of many kinds. This dissertation constitutes a single step in that direction.

**Rhetoric and Complexity Meet in a Rigid World**

As always, there are challenges/difficulties/complexities inherent in any undertaking. In my endeavor to look at the possible outcomes for what may happen as institutional authority grapples with the effects of personal *auctoritas* in the age of digital convergence, I have come to realize that my original belief that this moment of complexity, as Mark C. Taylor calls it, is an important one in part because it tests John Stuart Mills’s conception of a truly free marketplace of ideas at a time when there are nearly 7 billion souls on the planet. A marketplace where all are hawkers of wares and and non-buyers would not be a marketplace at all; to address that possibility, I had to try to understand how agents positioned themselves as both consumers and producers of information in the network. That, however, turned out to be the least of my challenges in sorting through the data presented by journalism and its sub-cases. By bringing together Bruns’s work on produsage, Jenkins’s work on participatory culture, Shirkey’s explanation of agents’ behaviors in a power law-driven system and the work of Barabási, Niel Johnson and Benkler on networks and complex systems, I have found that there is something manageable to the mass of complicated, networked, directional, scare-free but modular, preferentially-linked and fitness-driven emergent system we call the Internet. Because the boundaries between the social and the individual become more porous through the moment of complexity, the movement in *and* out become more fluid. Produsers easily and regularly identify in either role, and only 20 percent see their identities as belonging primarily in a hawker space. The majority—the long tail of the Power Law—share information merely as a social behavior, simply as a way of interacting, and only occasionally as produsers.

The real problem that I discerned, then, was not how a true marketplace of ideas functions, but whether our social structure is designed to withstand one. That is the question I have not yet answered. This question is not, I believe, answerable at this point. The answer will emerge over time from the ways institutions and individuals respond to the changes in the complex system in connection with digital convergence. Those changes, by definition, will
include chaos and order and will require a flexibility our culture has not, yet, been designed to integrate. Therein lies the problem. Institutions, by their nature, are not designed to be flexible. They are designed to be rigid, to survive the whims of generations. They are designed to carry cultures across multiple generations. Complex systems, by their nature, work in the obverse. The two now meet, and the result for rhetorical research is a rich intersection of as yet unknown interactions, from which will emerge many possibilities.
APPENDIX A

THE CONSTITUTIONAL JOURNALIST’S PLEDGE

The CFAPA Constitutional Journalist’s pledge melds the traditional Journalist’s Creed of 1914 with some phrasing from the more recent Associated Press News Values Statement, along with some key amplifications of our own.

As a condition of membership in the Constitution First Amendment Press Association (CFAPA.org), I do hereby pledge:

1. That I will comport myself in a manner worthy of a position of public trust.
2. That I will report news honestly, thoroughly, accurately, fairly, and forthrightly.
3. That I will let the facts and photographic/audio recording evidence speak for themselves.
4. That I will speak, write, produce, and publish the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
5. That I will uphold and defend the Constitution and all of the Bill of Rights.
6. That I will not abuse my position as a journalist or accept bribes.
7. That I will be stoutly independent, and will not bow to threats or coercion, even under Color of Law. If confronted by authorities who are not knowledgeable or disdainful of my Constitutional Rights, then I will politely inform or remind them of my rights and then press on with my news-gathering and reporting.
8. That I will be unmoved by pride or greed of power.
9. That I will be constructive but never careless, self-controlled, patient, always respectful of my readers but always unafraid.
10. That I will be quickly indignant at injustice and unswayed by the appeal of the privilege or the clamor of the mob.
11. That I will strive to avoid inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortions.
12. That I will not knowingly introduce false information into material intended for publication or broadcast; nor will I alter a photo or video content. Quotations must be accurate, and precise.
13 That I will always strive to identify all the sources of my information, shielding them with anonymity if they request it and when they provide vital information – not opinion or speculation; when I know the source is knowledgeable and reliable.

14 That I will not plagiarize. I will give credit where credit is due, attributing quotes prominently.

15 That I will not pander or bow to party politics, pressure groups, agenda pushers, conspiratorial cabals, statist lackeys, censors, or those who seek to hatefully divide us.

16 That I will avoid behavior that compromises my ability to report the news fairly and accurately, uninfluenced by any person or action.

17 That I will not misidentify or misrepresent myself to get a story. When I seek an interview, I will identify myself as a journalist.

18 That I will not pay newsmakers or celebrities for interviews, to take their photographs, or to film or record them.

19 That I will be objective and not speculate or promote any unsubstantiated gossip, rumors, or urban folklore–always being mindful that extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof.

That I will be fair. When mistakes are made, they must and will be corrected – fully, quickly and ungrudgingly.
APPENDIX B

CFAPA MEMBER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF USE

You are about to accept membership in the Constitution First Amendment Press Association (CFAPA). These Terms of Use relate to your use of the CFAPA web site (www.CFAPA.org–henceforth the “Site” and your acceptance and use of CFAPA Press Credentials–one of our key services.)

Your use of the Site and the CFAPA services are governed by the following terms and conditions (the “Terms of Use”). You must read and accept all these Terms of Use. It is recommended that you read through these Terms of Use carefully as your acceptance of these Terms of Use (by clicking the “I Accept” box below) constitutes a legally binding agreement between you and CFAPA.

1. General

1.1 Interpretation

1.1.1 In these Terms of Use, the following terms and expressions shall, except where the context otherwise requires, have the following meanings:

“CFAPA Member(s) means anyone who voluntarily accepts or otherwise gains press credentials from CFAPA. Members are volunteers and not employees of CFAPA.

“CFAPA Service” means the services provided by CFAPA through the Site that facilitate the gathering and publication or broadcast of news, in any medium.

“CFAPA Press Credentials” or “Press Credentials” or “Credentials” means any printed or electronic document that includes “CFAPA” or “CFAPA.org”

“Third Party” or “Third Parties” means any other individual or entity, other than CFAPA and a Member.

“End User(s)” means the readers and consumers of news products.

1.2 Using CFAPA Service, Site, and Credentials.

1.2.1 You may not use the CFAPA Service or the Site, or Credentials if you are under the age

59 Though formatting has been changed for ease of reading, the content and numbering have not been edited in any way.
1. of 18, insane, mentally incompetent, or if you are otherwise not able to make legally binding contracts.

1.2.2 CFAPA does not guarantee the accuracy or truth of the information provided by Members and/or the services they purport to offer. CFAPA is not responsible for any omissions or inaccuracies contained in the news reports or other media produced by Members.

1.2.3 If you are registering with CFAPA as a business entity, then you represent that you have the authority to legally bind that entity.

1.2.4 Your CFAPA press credentials are a gift from CFAPA and have no cash or barter value and cannot be bought, sold or transferred. Because they have no cash value, the loss or cancellation of CFAPA press credentials does not constitute grounds for any civil or criminal action.

1.2.5 Your use of CFAPA press credentials is voluntary and they may be revoked at any time for any reason by CFAPA, with no remedy or recourse whatsoever.

1.3 Technical Support

1.3.1 You may contact CFAPA if you encounter any technical problem with the Site or the CFAPA Service.

1.4 Restrictions on Use

1.4.1 While using the Site, you will not:

1.4.1.1 upload, save, share, print or otherwise process any inappropriate, offensive, blasphemous, defamatory or illegal content, documents or items or any that infringe any intellectual property right;

1.4.1.2 infringe any third party intellectual property rights;

1.4.1.3 breach any part of these Terms of Use;

1.4.1.4 distribute viruses or any other technologies that may harm CFAPA, or the interests or property of CFAPA members or users;

1.4.1.5 copy, modify, adapt, alter or distribute CFAPA’s intellectual property, including its copyrighted works or trade marks, or any other content from the Site; or

1.4.1.6 send unsolicited messages to other Members, Third Parties, and end users.

1.5 Liability

1.5.1 You accept sole responsibility for the legality of your actions under laws applying to
you and the legality of any items you upload to the Site.

1.5.2 CFAPA is not a party to business conducted between Members and Third Parties, and/or End Users. For the avoidance of doubt, CFAPA is in no way associated with, or liable for the actions of Members using the Service.

1.5.3 CFAPA has no control over and does not guarantee the quality or accuracy of the services offered by Members. CFAPA will in no way be liable for any failure by a Member to provide a service as advertised.

1.5.3 CFAPA has no control over and does not hold any liability for libel or slander by Members.

1.5.7 If you become aware or suspicious of the activities of a Member or are lied or misrepresented to in any way, we ask that you notify CFAPA immediately by contacting us using this contact form. Your communication will be treated in the strictest confidence.

1.5.8 CFAPA cannot guarantee continuous or secure access to the Site or the CFAPA services. The operation of the Site and/or the CFAPA services may be interrupted or interfered with by numerous factors outside of CFAPA’s control. CFAPA will use its reasonable endeavors to ensure there is uninterrupted access, but cannot guarantee this and no promises or warranties (whether express or implied) are given regarding the availability of the Site or the CFAPA services. There will also be occasions where scheduled maintenance is required to the CFAPA Service or Site.

1.5.9 CFAPA and any of its Associated Members, affiliates, officers, directors, agents or employees shall not be liable to you in contract, tort or otherwise for any business loss (including loss of data, profits, revenue, business, opportunity, goodwill or reputation), business interruption, costs incurred or any other loss or damage suffered, whether or not foreseeable, arising out of your use of the Site or the CFAPA Service.

1.6 Disputes

1.6.1 Where a dispute arises between a Member and Third Party or End User, CFAPA should be informed of this immediately via e-mail using this contact form.

1.7 Site Maintenance

1.7.1 The CFAPA Service and the Site are intended to be always on and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

1.7.2 However, there will be occasions where scheduled maintenance is necessary. Where
this is the case, the CFAPA Service or Site may not be available, or only have limited availability.

1.7.3 Scheduled maintenance normally takes place between 1a.m. and 7a.m. PST every Sunday. CFAPA will use its reasonable endeavors to publish any changes to scheduled maintenance on the Site at least 72 hours in advance.

1.7.4 In exceptional circumstances scheduled maintenance may take longer than 2 hours or unscheduled maintenance may be required to take place outside of the hours listed at paragraph 1.7.3 or before 72 hours notice can be given. CFAPA will use its reasonable endeavors to prevent this from happening and to give as much notice to you where this is required.

1.7.5 CFAPA does not accept liability arising from the CFAPA Service or Site not being available at any time, for any reason.

1.8 Indemnity

1.8.1 You agree to hold CFAPA harmless and indemnify CFAPA and its Associated Members, affiliates, officers, agents, employees, advertisers or partners from and against any third party or End User claim arising out of or in any way related to your use of the CFAPA Service, Credentials, or violation of the Terms of Use including any liability or expense arising from all claims, losses, damages (actual and consequential), litigation costs and attorney’s fees and any other costs.

1.9 Access and Interference

1.9.1 You agree that you will not use any robot, spider, scraper or any other automated means to access the Site for any purpose.

1.9.2 You agree not to:

1.9.2.1 do anything that imposes or creates an unreasonably large load or generates repeated demands on the Site or the CFAPA service;
1.9.2.2 interfere or attempt to interfere with the proper working of the Site; or
1.9.2.3 bypass our automatic exclusion headers or other measures we may use to prevent or restrict access to the Site.

1.10 Privacy

1.10.1 CFAPA keeps no records on its Members whatsoever. Membership is entirely voluntary and anonymous.
1.11 Force Majeure

1.11.1 We will not be liable or responsible for any failure or delay in the performance of any of our obligations under the Terms of Use caused by a Force Majeure Event or where the Force Majeure Event impacts any third party service providers over whom we have no control (including Members, third party service providers, data center or network providers).

1.11.2 A Force Majeure Event includes but is not limited to any act, event, non-happening, omission or accident beyond our reasonable control and includes in particular (without limitation) the following:

1.11.2.1 strikes, lock-outs or other industrial action;
1.11.2.2 civil commotion, riot, invasion, terrorist attack or threat of terrorist attack, war (whether declared or not) or threat or preparation for war;
1.11.2.3 fire, explosion, storm, flood, earthquake, subsidence, epidemic or other natural disaster;
1.11.2.4 impossibility of the use of railways, shipping, aircraft, motor transport or other means of public or private transport;
1.11.2.5 impossibility of the use of public or private telecommunications networks;
1.11.2.6 the acts, decrees, legislation, regulations or restrictions of any government; and/or
1.11.2.7 failures by third party service providers over whom CFAPA has no control.

1.11.3 The Site and the CFAPA Service will be deemed to be suspended for the period that the Force Majeure Event continues, and CFAPA will have an extension of time for performance for the duration of that period. We will use our reasonable endeavors to bring the Force Majeure Event to a close or to find a solution by which our obligations under this License may be performed despite the Force Majeure Event.

1.12 No Agency

1.12.1 No agency, partnership, joint venture, employer and employee or franchisor and franchisee relationships is intended or created by these Terms of Use.

1.13 Notices

1.13.1 All notices given by you to us must be given to CFAPA using this contact form. We may give notice to any member by name via e-mail or via posting to a Banned List.

1.14 Waiver

1.14.1 If we fail at any time to insist upon strict performance of any of your obligations under
the Terms of Use, or if we fail to exercise any of the rights or remedies to which we are entitlement under the Terms of Use, this shall not constitute a waiver of such rights or remedies and shall not relieve you from compliance with such obligations.

1.14.2 A waiver by us of any default shall not constitute a waiver of any subsequent default.

1.14.3 No waiver by us of any of these terms and conditions shall be effective unless it is expressly stated to be a waiver and is communicated to you in writing or via public notice.

1.15 Severability

1.15.1 If any of the terms of the Terms of Use are determined by any competent legal authority to be invalid, unlawful or unenforceable to any extent, such term, condition or provision will to that extent be severed from the remaining terms, conditions and provisions which will continue to be valid to the fullest extent permitted by law.

1.16 Third Party Rights

1.16.1 Except as may be expressly set out in these Terms of Use, a person who is not a party to these Terms of Use has no rights to enforce any term of these Terms of Use.

1.17 Entire Agreement

1.17.1 The Terms of Use and any other documents or policies referred to therein, including but not limited to the Privacy Policy constitutes the entire agreement and understanding between CFAPA and you.

1.18 Member’s Own Terms and Conditions

1.18.1 When using any services from a Member, you may be subject to a Member’s Own Terms and conditions. These may vary, so it is important that Third Parties reads the Members’s Own terms and conditions carefully. The Member’s Own Terms and conditions will govern the relationship between the Member and Third Parties. CFAPA is not responsible for the content or nature of the relationship between any Member and Third Parties.

1.18.2 The articles and videos on the Site may be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed, but only in accordance with the terms specified by the Own Terms of individual journalist Members.

1.19 Amendments

1.19.1 We may amend the Terms of Use at any time. Where an amendment is to take place, a notice will be published on the Site. Please visit this page regularly to check for updates.
1.20 Governing Law
1.20.1 these Terms of Use shall be governed by and in accordance with the laws of the State of Idaho.
1.20.2 You agree to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of Idaho courts in the event of any dispute relating to or arising out of these Terms of Use, including its formation, validity, binding effect, interpretation, performance, breach, or termination.

2. Members
2.1 Free Service
2.1.1 There is no fee or charge for you to join CFAPA and there are no ongoing subscription fees.
2.1.2 Your CFAPA press credentials are a gift from CFAPA and have no cash or barter value and cannot be bought, sold or transferred. Because they have no cash value, the loss or cancellation of CFAPA press credentials does not constitute grounds for any civil or criminal action.
2.1.3 All donations to support the CFAPA are voluntary, not tax-deductible, and non-refundable.
2.1.4 CFAPA accepts the following forms of payment for donations: PayPal – to: james@rawles.to and cash, checks, Forever U.S. postage stamps, or silver coins, mailed to: Robert Henry Rawles P.O. Box 303 Moyie Springs, Idaho 83845

2.2 Inappropriate Material
2.2.1 You must not use the CFAPA Service or your Credentials to procure, congregate, upload, store, share, print or send any material that is inappropriate, offensive, blasphemous, libelous, or illegal in the United States or in the country where you are accessing the Site.
2.2.2 If you are found to be in breach of paragraph 2.2.1, CFAPA will immediately place you on the Banned List and reserves the right to inform the relevant authorities.
2.5.2 CFAPA may at any time and for any reason, including a breach of the Terms of Use, terminate your membership.

3.1 Member Obligations
3.1.1 Upon joining CFAPA as a Member, you agree to:
3.1.1.1 Comply with the terms of the Constitutional Journalist’s Pledge.
3.1.1.2 Comply with these Terms and Conditions
3.1.1.3 Destroy your press credentials, if ordered to by CFAPA in writing, or via posting of you name (or pseudonym) on the Banned List.

3.2 Non-Liability

3.2.1 CFAPA is in no way liable for the actions of any Member. CFAPA is not a party to the transaction between Members, Third Parties, and End Users.

3.2.2 The articles and videos, on the Site may be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed, but only in accordance with the terms specified by the Own Terms of individual journalists.

3.2.3 CFAPA will not be held liable for any delays, inaccuracies, errors or omissions therefrom or in the transmission or delivery of all or part thereof or for any damages arising from any of the foregoing.

3.3 Termination

3.3.1 You may discontinue your use of the CFAPA Service at any time, without notice.

3.3.2 If you are terminated from membership by CFAPA for any reason, then you agree to immediately destroy your CFAPA press credentials and cease mention/publishing any association with CFAPA. Failure to do so will be considered grounds for civil suit for damages and any legal costs.
APPENDIX C

CODING FOR CHAPTER 4 TABLES

CODE: 1=topic, 2=source, **NEUTRAL CALLED FOR**? 3=fifth estate, 
4=freelancer/partner, 5=journalist

1 - 10 times, 2 - 12 times, 3 - 3 times


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<th>2=source</th>
<th>3=fifth estate</th>
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INTRODUCTION /AFGHAN WAR LOGS

“The Guardian had suggested — both to increase the impact and to share the labor of handling such a trove — that The New York Times be invited to share this exclusive bounty. The source 2 had agreed. Was I interested? I was interested.” (Kindle Locations 31-33).
“As if that was not complicated enough, the project also entailed a source who was elusive, manipulative and volatile (and ultimately openly hostile to both The Times and The Guardian), an international cast of journalists, company lawyers committed to keeping us within the bounds of the law, editors wrestling with some potent ethical questions and an array of government officials who sometimes seemed as though they couldn’t decide whether they wanted to engage us or arrest us” (Kindle Locations 35-38).

“We have included an expanded profile by our London bureau chief, John Burns, and his collaborator Ravi Somaiya of Julian Assange, the man who set this curious story in motion” (Kindle Location 42-3).

“…how we would ensure an appropriate distance from Julian Assange. We regarded Assange throughout as a source, not as a partner or collaborator, but he was a man who clearly had his own agenda” (Kindle Locations 56-57).

“On the fourth day of the London meeting, Julian Assange slouched into The Guardian’s office, a day late. Eric took his first measure of the man who would be a large presence in our lives” (Kindle Locations 68-69).

“Assange, slipping naturally into the role of office geek, explained that they had hit the limits of Excel” (Kindle Location 77).

“The reporters came to think of Assange as smart and well-educated, extremely adept technologically, but arrogant, thin-skinned, conspiratorial and oddly credulous” (Kindle Locations 78-80).

“Eric told me that for all his bombast and dark conspiracy theories, Assange had a bit of Peter Pan in him” (Kindle Location 87).
“Assange had provided us the data on the condition that we not write about it before specific dates when WikiLeaks planned to post the documents on a publicly accessible Web site” (Kindle Locations 95-96).

“Such embargoes — agreements not to publish information before a set date — are a commonplace in journalism. Everything from studies in medical journals to the annual U.S. budget is released with embargoes. They are a constraint with benefits, the principle benefit being the chance to actually read and reflect on the material before launching it into public view. Embargoes also, as Assange surely knew, tend to build suspense and amplify a story, especially when multiple news outlets broadcast it at once. The embargo was the only condition WikiLeaks would try to impose on us. What we wrote about the material was entirely up to us. Much later, some American news outlets reported that they were offered last-minute access to the WikiLeaks documents if they signed contracts with financial penalties for early disclosure. The Times was never asked to sign anything or to pay anything. For WikiLeaks, at least in this first big venture, exposure was its own reward” (Kindle Locations 97-104).

“An air of intrigue verging on paranoia permeated the project, perhaps understandably, given that we were dealing with a mass of classified material and a source who acted like a fugitive — changing crash pads, e-mail addresses and cellphones frequently. We used encrypted Web sites” (Kindle Locations 108-110).

“Assange was always ‘the source.’ The latest data drop was ‘the package.’” (Kindle Location 111).

**IRAQ WAR LOGS**

By this time my paper’s relationship with our source had gone from wary to hostile. I talked to Assange by phone a few times, and heard out his complaints. He was angry that we declined to link our online coverage of the war logs to the WikiLeaks Web site, a decision we made because we feared — rightly, as it turned out — that their trove would contain the names of low-level informants and make them Taliban targets. (Kindle Locations 159-162).
The final straw was a front-page profile of Assange 1 by John F. Burns and Ravi Somaiya, published Oct. 24, that revealed fractures within WikiLeaks, attributed by Assange’s critics to his imperious management style. (Kindle Locations 166-167).

Assange had been transformed by his outlaw celebrity. The derelict with the backpack and sagging socks now wore his hair dyed and styled, and favored fashionably skinny suits and ties. He had become a kind of cult figure for the European young and leftish, and was evidently a magnet for women 1. (Kindle Locations 168-170).

I had come to think of Julian Assange as a character from a Stieg Larsson thriller — a man who could figure either as hero or villain 1 (Kindle Locations 172-173).

CABLEGATE

Besides, we had come to believe that Assange was losing control of his stockpile of secrets2. An independent journalist, Heather Brooke, had obtained material from a WikiLeaks dissident, and had joined in a loose alliance with The Guardian. 1

**** In the end, both Alan and Georg Mascolo, editor in chief of Der Spiegel, made clear that they intended to continue their collaboration with The Times. Assange could take it or leave it. Given that we already had all of the documents, he had little choice. Over the next two days the news organizations agreed on a timetable for publication 2. (Kindle Locations 189-192). ****

For its seeming indifference to the safety of those informants, WikiLeaks was roundly criticized, and in its subsequent postings it has largely followed the example of the news organizations and redacted material that could get people jailed or killed. Assange described it as a “harm-minimization policy.” In the case of the Iraq war documents, WikiLeaks applied a kind of robo-redaction software that stripped away names (and rendered the documents almost illegible). With the embassy cables, WikiLeaks posted mostly cables that had already been redacted by The Times or its fellow news organizations. And there were instances in which WikiLeaks volunteers
suggested measures to enhance the protection of innocents. 3 (Kindle Locations 317-322). (55 CG Stories)


As for our relationship with WikiLeaks, Julian Assange has been heard to boast that he was a kind of puppet master, who recruited several news organizations, forced them to work in concert, and choreographed their work. This is characteristic braggadocio — or, as my Guardian colleagues would say, bollocks. Throughout this experience we have treated Julian Assange and his merry band as a source. 2 I will not say “a source, pure and simple,” because as any reporter or editor can attest, sources are rarely pure or simple, and Assange was no exception. But the relationship with sources is straightforward: You don’t necessarily endorse their agenda, echo their rhetoric, take anything they say at face value, applaud their methods or, most important, allow them to shape or censor your journalism. Your obligation, as an independent news organization, is to verify the material, to supply context, to exercise responsible judgment about what to publish and what not, and to make sense of it. That is what we did. 2 (Kindle Locations 334-341).

But while I do not regard Julian Assange as a partner, and I would hesitate to describe what WikiLeaks does as journalism 3, it is chilling to contemplate the possible government prosecution of WikiLeaks for making secrets public, let alone the passage of new laws to punish the dissemination of classified information, as some have advocated.(Kindle Locations 341-344).

Whether the arrival of WikiLeaks has fundamentally changed the way journalism is made I will leave to others, and to history. Frankly, I think the impact of WikiLeaks on the culture has probably been overblown. Long before WikiLeaks was born, the Internet had transformed the landscape of journalism, creating a wide-open and global market with easier access to audiences and sources, a quicker metabolism, a new infrastructure for sharing and vetting information, and
a diminished respect for notions of privacy and secrecy. Assange has claimed credit on several occasions for creating something he calls “scientific journalism,” meaning that readers are given the raw material to judge for themselves whether the journalistic write-ups are trustworthy. But newspapers have been publishing texts of documents almost as long as newspapers have existed — and ever since the Internet eliminated space restrictions, we have done so copiously. Nor is it clear to me that WikiLeaks represents some kind of cosmic triumph of transparency. 1 (Kindle Locations 348-355).

It’s possible that the creation of online information brokers like WikiLeaks and OpenLeaks 3, a breakaway site announced in December by a former Assange colleague named Daniel Domscheit-Berg, will be a lure for whistle-blowers and malcontents who fear being caught consorting directly with a news organization like mine. But I suspect we have not reached a state of information anarchy. At least, not yet. (Kindle Locations 357-359).

(CABLEGATE CONT.)We agreed to continue the redaction process, and we agreed we would all urge WikiLeaks to do the same. But this period of intense collaboration, and of regular contact with our source 2, was coming to a close. (Kindle Locations 362-363).
Back in the days when almost no one had heard about WikiLeaks, regular emails started arriving in my inbox from someone called Julian Assange. It was a memorable kind of name. All editors receive a daily mix of unsolicited tip-offs, letters, complaints and crank theories, but there was something about the periodic WikiLeaks emails which caught the attention.

Another day this Assange person would be pleased with something we’d done.

This Assange, whoever he was, was one to watch.

Unnoticed by most of the world, Julian Assange was developing into a most interesting and unusual pioneer in using digital technologies to challenge corrupt and authoritarian states.

In the intervening 11 months Assange had gone viral.

It is that story, the transformation from anonymous hacker to one of the most discussed people in the world— at once reviled, celebrated and lionised; sought-after, imprisoned and shunned—
that this book sets out to tell. Within a few short years of starting out Assange had been
catapulted from the obscurity of his life in Nairobi, dribbling out leaks that nobody much
noticed, to publishing a flood of classified documents that went to the heart of America’s
military and foreign policy operations. From being a marginal figure invited to join panels at
geek conferences he was suddenly America’s public enemy number one. A new media messiah
to some, he was a cyber-terrorist to others 3. As if this wasn’t dramatic enough, in the middle of
it all two women in Sweden accused him of rape. To coin a phrase, you couldn’t make it up (2-3).

That made Assange a very powerful figure. The fact that there were grumbles among his
colleagues about his autocratic and secretive style did not allay the fears about this new media
baron 3 (4).

All this meant that Assange was in many respects – more, perhaps, than he welcomed – in a role
not dissimilar to that of a conventional editor 5 (4).

[he was a] mysterious Australian nomad – and whatever his elusive organisation, WikiLeaks,
actually was. That much never became very clear. Assange was, at the best of times, difficult to
contact, switching mobile phones, email addresses and encrypted chat rooms as often as he
changed his location. Occasionally he would appear with another colleague – it could be a
journalist, a hacker, a lawyer or an unspecified helper 1 (4-5).

Once redacted, the documents were shared among the (eventually) five newspapers and sent to
WikiLeaks, who adopted all our redactions 3 (5).

More than one writer has compared him to John Wilkes, the rakish 18th-century MP and editor
who risked his life and liberty in assorted battles over free speech 3. Others have compared him
to Daniel Ellsberg, the source of the Pentagon Papers leak, described by the New York Times’s
former executive editor Max Frankel as “a man of incisive, devious intellect and volatile
temperament” 2 …those who saw Assange as a new kind of cyber-messiah and those who
regarded him as a James Bond villain (BUT Paragraph as a whole is about what other people have said and is therefore 1) (6).

****(ON BAIL CONDITIONS) It was as if a Stieg Larsson script had been passed to the writer of Downton Abbey, Julian Fellowes 1 (6).

Assange’s status as a sometimes confusing mix of source 2, intermediary and publisher 3. Encrypted instant messaging is no substitute for talking. And, while Assange was certainly our main source for the documents, he was in no sense a conventional source – he was not the original source and certainly not a confidential one. Latterly, he was not even the only source 2. He was, if anything, a new breed of publisher-intermediary 3– a sometimes uncomfortable role in which he sought to have a degree of control over the source’s material (and even a form of “ownership”, complete with legal threats to sue for loss of income) (7).

The ethical issues involved in this new status of editor/source 3 became more complicated still when it was suggested to us that we owed some form of protection to Assange – as a “source” – by not inquiring too deeply into the sex charges levelled against him in Sweden 3 (here made more obvious by tone and word choice “suggested”) (7).

The challenge from WikiLeaks for media in general (not to mention states, companies or global corporations caught up in the dazzle of unwanted scrutiny) was not a comfortable one 3

****(LOOK AT THIS COMMENT FOR ANALYSIS)(8).

****(THE GROWTH AND LEARNING PROCESS, PROTO-JOURNLISTIC AUTHORIZATION) The website’s initial instincts were to publish more or less everything, and they were – at first deeply – suspicious of any contact between their colleagues(LOOK AT THIS COMMENT FOR ANALYSIS) on the newspapers and any kind of officialdom. 3 Talking to the state department, Pentagon or White House, as the New York Times did before each round of publication, was fraught territory in terms of keeping the relationship with WikiLeaks on an even keel. By the time of the Cablegate publication, Assange himself,
conscious of the risks of causing unintentional harm to dissidents or other sources, offered to speak to the state department – an offer that was rejected (8).

(GENERAL COMMENT) It was surprising to see the widespread reluctance among American journalists to support the general ideal and work of WikiLeaks. For some it simply boiled down to a reluctance to admit that Assange was a journalist. 5 (10-12).

AFGHAN WAR LOGS

The real story only emerged from the text of a leaked military log obtained by WikiLeaks three years later, and published worldwide by the Guardian and its partners the New York Times and Der Spiegel. 2 (p. 117).

The Guardian summed up in an editorial the purpose of its co-operation with WikiLeaks: 3 The fog of war is unusually dense in Afghanistan. When it lifts, as it does today…a very different landscape is revealed from the one with which we have become… (126).

IRAQ WAR LOGS

The increased confidence that the public can have in these numbers can be presumed to be directly due to the whistleblowing of Manning and Assange 2, along with the dedication of IBC researchers, and the hard work of journalists from three news organisations (130).

Assange had launched the publication of the Iraq logs in the grandiose ballroom of the Park Plaza hotel on the Thames, with Iraq Body Count, Phil Shiner of Public Interest Lawyers, and a TV documentary team all in attendance 1 (134).

It was as if the Australian were a rock star with his entourage 1 (134).
But the question in the Guardian and New York Times journalists’ minds, as they watched the adulation, was would Assange be prepared to honour his undertaking, and hand over “package three” for publication? 2 (134).

David Leigh had listened patiently to Assange, who had instructed him 3 that he must never allow his memory stick to be connected to any computer that was exposed to the internet, for fear of electronic eavesdropping by US intelligence (135).

**CABLEGATE**

It had been a struggle to prise these documents out of Assange 2 back in London (136).

Assange was keeping the three news organisations dangling, despite his original agreement to deliver all the material for publication 2. He willingly passed on the less important war logs from Afghanistan and Iraq, but talked of how he would use his power to withhold the cables in order to “discipline” the mainstream media 3 (136).

Assange breached the original compact, as Davies saw it, by going behind his back to the Guardian’s TV rivals at Channel 4, taking with him all the knowledge acquired by privileged visits to the Guardian’s research room. Davies at the time said he felt betrayed: Assange simply insisted there had never been a deal 4 (136).

But after the publication of the Afghan war logs, Assange proposed to change the terms of the deal once again, before the planned launch of the much bigger tranche of Iraq logs. He wanted more television, in order to provide “emotional impact”. He had by now made some new friends in London – Ahmad Ibrahim, from the Qatari-funded Al Jazeera, and Gavin MacFadyen from City University in London 4. MacFadyen, a veteran of World in Action, one of Britain’s most distinguished investigative TV series in the 1970s, had recently helped set up an independent production company based at the university. Called the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, it was funded by the David and Elaine Potter Foundation. Elaine had been a reporter during the great days of London’s Sunday Times, and her husband David had made millions from the development of the Psion computer. There was a distinct prospect that the wealthy Potter
Foundation might become patrons of WikiLeaks: the Florentine Medicis, as it were, to Assange’s Michelangelo. Rapidly, the “Bureau” was drawn into Assange’s new plans. He demanded that print publication of the Iraq war logs be postponed for at least another six weeks. This would enable the Bureau, under Assange’s guidance, to sell a TV documentary to Channel 4’s well-regarded Dispatches series. The Bureau would also make and sell a second documentary, of a more wide-ranging nature, to be aired on both Al Jazeera’s Arabic and English-language channels, which could be guaranteed to cause uproar in the Middle East. Both documentaries eventually got made, and Assange sensibly hired a respected NGO, Iraq Body Count, to analyse the casualty figures for the TV productions. (136-137).

Assange’s side deal with the Qatari also angered the original partners. Al Jazeera English was to break the agreed embargo for simultaneous publication by almost an hour, leaving the other media organisations scrambling to catch up on their websites. Leigh found it hard to disagree with Eric Schmitt of the New York Times when he protested that Assange seemed to be doing media deals with “riff-raff”. The founder of WikiLeaks had been rocketed to the status of a huge celebrity, in large part thanks to the credibility bestowed on him by three of the world’s major news organisations. But was he going out of control? Leigh tried his best not to fall out with this Australian impresario, who was prone to criticise what he called the “snaky Brits”. Instead, Leigh used his ever-shifting demands as a negotiating lever (137-138).

It was one that threatened to derail the entire WikiLeaks enterprise. “Julian’s about to be arrested in Sweden!” he said “He’s being accused of rape” (144).

**_DESCRIPTOR OF OPENLEAKS IN LEIGH AND HARDING:**

WikiLeaks No 2 Daniel Domscheit-Berg unveiled OpenLeaks, a rival platform. Domscheit-Berg had fallen out with Assange, accusing him of imperious behaviour. Assange’s personal control of the organisation had additionally created technical “bottlenecks”, he argued, with data not properly analysed or released. At a presentation in Berlin in December, Domscheit-Berg promised OpenLeaks would be more transparent and democratic. He offered to work systematically alongside mainstream media, with a relatively modest and logical goal for his own
“transparency organisation”. He said that OpenLeaks.org could confine its technical activities to
“cleaning” leaks so that they could be submitted safely and anonymously online. That specialised
task performed, the leaks would be turned over to newspapers and broadcasters, who would then
do what the traditional media was good at, bringing resources, analysis and context. Finally,
there was publication. Domscheit-Berg argued it was realistic that the mainstream media should
generally be allowed to publish leaked material first, in return for the time and effort spent in
editing it. The breakaway organisation was described by one technology website as “hoping to
do what WikiLeaks is trying to do but without the drama”. If Domscheit-Berg, or indeed other
imitators, could develop workable clones of WikiLeaks, then there was little doubt that many
other mainstream editors would be attracted to them (243-244).

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AFGHAN WAR DIARIES

We had tried out a number of variations with leaks. We had simply loaded them onto the site without any fanfare 3; we had gotten individual journalists onboard 4; and we had held press conferences as a media organization 5.

We wanted to remain in control of decision making and find reliable partners 4.

Marcel Rosenbach, Holger Stark, and John Goetz are three experienced journalists who work in Der Spiegel. The magazine had already reported about WikiLeaks in 2008. But only with the publication of the “Collateral Murder” videos were we finally interesting enough for them to personally contact us for the first time at the Republica 2010, a web 2.0 conference in Berlin 3.

We wanted to cooperate with a number of media outlets and let more than just those three publications in on what we had 4. But journalists are like dogs jealously guarding a bone when they think someone is trying to take a story away from them 3. The publications we already had onboard all wanted exclusive rights to stories.
Although we had begun by saying we would never give up our ultimate authority over the details of how and with whom we cooperated, we already gave in. 3

For me, Thörner was nonnegotiable, and I had said so to Der Spiegel, but the Guardian and the Times piled on additional pressure. As confrontational as Julian often behaved toward us, he was completely tame with the journalists from those two newspapers. I know, of course, that it’s difficult to get your way with the media, and there was no doubt that these guys had more experience than we did. What had we been thinking? Getting exclusive, hot news was their stock in trade. We should have known that they would try to impose their rules on us. 2

Nothing worked out as planned. Julian flew to London by himself, refusing offers of assistance from me and the others on our core team. I later heard that our colleague from the New York Times made it known immediately that he wanted to work in his own home office and took off back to the Big Apple as soon as he had copied the documents onto his laptop. Even documents about the Iraq War, which had never been part of the deal, ended up on his hard drive. Then he hopped a plane. That violated all the agreements we had made. 2

David Leigh from the Guardian took over the job of coordinating. The guys from Der Spiegel told me that Julian often appeared at meetings looking completely exhausted or immediately submerged himself in work on his computer. Soon, it became clear that we were no longer in control of the process. We were completely swamped by the task of technically processing the documents. Our technicians were working round the clock to put the documents into a readable format. 3

They had agreed with Julian, Rosenbach reminded me, that we would black out all the names from the documents. That was a condition all three publications had set. It was essential before the material could go online. I didn’t know anything about it. It sounded logical to delete the names of innocent parties, and I didn’t have any personal objections to it. But during this phase, Julian only ever told me crucial details very late in the game. That often put me in a difficult position with journalists. It was entirely possible that this was the explanation this time as well. 3
There was nothing we could do. Thankfully, our media partners handed us a solution. They recommended that we sort out 14,000 of the documents and hold them back for the time being. 3

12. the people [journalists] who worked on the data all need to be interviewed about their approach and the qualities/limitations of the data. 10 to 20 mins each. no prep is needed. i have this assigned at the london end, but we also need to do berlin and new york. this is a fast way of producing a “guidebook” for the material, and also elevates WL into a clear working-in-partnership with these three major players J: 4

13. the press team needs to be robustified and we need a list of talking heads to can speak sensibly about the issues (not just us) J: 4

The hint about omitting the threat reports had come from our media partners. We hadn’t had any chance to familiarize ourselves with the content of the documents. That was the journalists’ job. 2

Naturally, the night before we were scheduled to publish, we still weren’t finished. The Guardian simply went online without us. The New York Times waited because they were afraid of being the only ones in the United States with the publication. And the people from Der Spiegel called me every hour, asking when we were finally going to put the leak on our site. It was utter chaos. But once the media machine had revved up, no one cared whether we had messed up the teamwork a bit and lagged behind our partners in publishing the material. 4

And we still had 14,000 documents containing even more explosive stuff. Most of the reports published by Der Spiegel, the Guardian, and the Times were based on the latter. It was ultimately very much worth our three media partners’ while to get to exploit this material exclusively, while the competition had to make do with the leftovers. Naturally, it would be unfair to attack individual journalists for wanting exclusive access to good stories. I personally had good relationships with most of the reporters I knew. But the way the media functioned—the addiction to information possessed by no one else, the constant desire to squeeze as much as possible out of a story, the mix of permanent curiosity and friendly arrogance—disgusted me
sometimes 2. I thought back to the days when we weren’t so well known. When I had to contact the media to solicit their interest in good material. When they didn’t call me back or answer my e-mails. The majority of journalists viewed us with a critical eye during our first year of operation, and some wrote clever analyses of the problems our platform entailed. That was fine by me. Some of them changed their tune, however, when they realized how much attention our material could generate. They began to suck up to us. I found that quite strange. 2

The third and most significant reason for our focus, though, was that by homing in on the United States, we were seeking out the biggest possible adversary. Julian Assange had no time to tussle with lightweights. He had to single out the most powerful nation on earth. Your own stature, it has been written, can be measured by that of your enemies. 3

The biggest problem we had in conjunction with the publication of the Afghan War Logs was that Julian had gotten ahead of himself and showed the journalists our additional material. 2

That tied us to our existing partners. 4

Our plan of remaining masters of our own destiny had become a farce. The New York Times, for instance, did not give a link to our website as a source of the linked material, not presumably out of concern that the link might bring them into conflict with the law. But they already had the material on Iraq. It would have been nearly impossible to stage the next leak without them. 2

We already had agreements with the other three periodicals, he told me, and there was no undermining them. 2

He himself would later break his promises of exclusivity with our media partners anyway, for instance, by giving the Afghanistan documents to Channel4, the British TV station. 4

On the other hand, I didn’t want to damage WikiLeaks’s reputation by making myself look unreliable in our partners’ eyes. 4
Our own ideals of publishing material immediately and remaining independent in our decision making had become a joke. The media had us right where they wanted: WikiLeaks at their feet. They could market their exclusive stories while our hands were tied in terms of using the material as we would have liked. 3

An example was the diplomatic cables. Julian simply handed them over to one of the Icelanders, who should never have been given sensitive tasks, so that the guy could “think about how they could be worked up graphically.” This guy, in turn, passed the cables on to the press— among others, to the reporter Heather Brooke from the Guardian. He later justified his action by saying he had asked himself how best to optimize the political effect of the material and had no choice but to “talk it over with a couple of people.” We were all acquainted with this sort of human factor, the desire to share one’s secret knowledge and bolster one’s own self-esteem, if need be, with the help of the press. 2

IRAQ WAR LOGS

On October 22, 2010, WikiLeaks published 391,832 documents about the Iraq War. These were US military files dating from 2004 to 2009. As had been the case with the Afghan War Diaries, the Guardian, the New York Times, and Der Spiegel once again enjoyed the privileged position of being able to examine the material weeks in advance and write their articles. They had been in possession of the documents since Julian had set up shop in London. The material was also posted on the WikiLeaks site on October 22, making it available to everyone. 2

Although Julian had told me that exclusivity deals made it impossible to involve the Washington Post or freelance journalists, there were in fact other partners onboard this time around, including the TV stations Al Jazeera and Channel4. 4

Its journalists were presumably interested in working together with WikiLeaks for the sake of a good story and perhaps the publicity that any association with WikiLeaks might generate. 2
The question of rights had already arisen with the “Collateral Murder” video. That had given Julian the idea of using the videos to tap a further source of income. 

Julian would later fall out with the Guardian, when the paper wanted to publish some of the diplomatic cables without consulting him.

According to an article by Sarah Ellison in Vanity Fair, Julian and his attorney stormed into the Guardian’s offices, claiming that the information in the documents was personal property, and that any publication would affect him financially. That raises the question: if Julian can apparently be so open about his financial interests with his media partners, why can’t he make them transparent to the general public?

The media deals weren’t the only new thing about the Iraq leaks. Technologically, the Iraq release also marked a departure from previous practice. The publications were hosted by an Amazon server in the United States and in Ireland, as well as on servers in France. Julian and the technician had clearly not been able to get the organization’s own infrastructure back up and running to the point where it could cope with a publication of that kind. As of this writing, it is still impossible to send documents directly to WikiLeaks. The submission system is offline.

CABLEGATE

The publication strategy was obvious, and I understood why Der Spiegel was taking it easy at the start. The 250,000 cables in total would only gradually appear on the Cablegate site. The journalists were in no hurry to make them public. The newspapers and magazines— Der Spiegel, the Guardian, El País, and Le Monde— wanted to exploit the material at their leisure, and if the publications continued at this pace, WL could live off them for months.

Without doubt, it was correct to edit submissions out of the cables that contained information that could endanger individuals— our media partners had insisted we black out revealing details before documents could be published.
As later reported in the media, the head lawyer of the US State Department had answered that the United States did not negotiate with people who had acquired material illegally. 1

WL’s five chosen partners enjoyed a privileged position and could exploit the cables to attract more readers. That meant considerable stress for the world’s remaining media outlets. 4

The formulations on the WikiLeaks website have also become more cautious. Where we used to claim “Submitting documents to WikiLeaks is safe, easy and protected by law,” he now only says “Submitting documents to our journalists is protected by law in better democracies.” 5 The submissions category now also includes the statement “WikiLeaks accepts a range of material, but we do not solicit it.” In addition, the word “classified” has disappeared from the “most wanted” list of materials. 3

Someone who criticizes the fact that secrets always remain in the hands of a chosen few with power must answer the question of whether this publishing strategy truly makes them accessible to everyone. Is it not the case, as Münkler asked, that with the cables only the guardians of the secrets are being replaced? Confidential information once kept under wraps by the US State Department and the American military is now in the hands of five large media companies and Julian Assange. They decide what is of public interest and what is not. The recent Cablegate publications are a far cry from the original ideas behind WikiLeaks. I think they stray much too far from those basic principles (266-67). 4

COMMENTARY

The real problem with WikiLeaks is that it tried to do too many things at once. WL encompassed the entire whistle-blowing process. The sources uploaded the documents; WL members erased the metadata, verified the submissions, and provided the context in additional texts. In the end, everything was put on the WL site. 3

Every selection process involves a kind of censorship, and every instance of censorship has a political component. It begins with the people involved agreeing to solicit public attention for a
certain topic. And no one would deny anymore that WL attracts public attention. 1 Because one 
person, Julian Assange, held too many of the strings, WikiLeaks became a global political 
player— something it was never intended to be. 4 That spelled the end of our pledge to maintain 
strict neutrality—one of WL’s most important principles. 3

The conflicts with journalists have left behind a lot of scorched earth. It shows clearly that this 
sort of approach doesn’t work. 1

For a long time I had asked myself whether any single platform could ever meet the needs of all 
the various sources concerned. WL received documents from all over the world about the most 
diverse subjects; everything from American foreign policy to the liberation movement in East 
Timor on down to corruption in the mayor’s office in a small town. Was the solution really to 
have a single platform for all of this? We had become a five-and-dime store or, even worse, a 
giant supermarket for secret documents. But in terms of our expertise and resources we were 
more like a small specialty IT firm. 3

Unlike WikiLeaks, OpenLeaks is not a publishing platform. 3

WikiLeaks’s prominence— which was due mostly to Julian, but also to all our hard work— 
made the topic of whistle-blowing socially acceptable. 3

We see ourselves as technological engineers, not as media stars or global galactic saviors. 1
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Leah Frieda Cassorla holds a Bachelor degree in English, journalism track, from Valdosta State University, a Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Composition, from University of South Florida, a Master of Fine Arts in Fiction and a graduate certificate in editing and publishing from Florida State University. She is currently completing a third Master of Arts, this one in Religions of Western Antiquities, at Florida State University. She has worked as a writer and editor in the US and Israel, the country of her birth. Her research and writing interests involve the crossroads of identity, networked information systems, language and belief.