



Ten Things Conservative About the Weblog Form in Journalism

Jay Rosen, PressThink, October 17, 2003

Retrieved July 29, 2006 from http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2003/10/17/conserv_ten.html.

By “conservative” I do not mean “affiliated with the GOP,” or “listener to Rush Limbaugh,” or coming from the right wing. To ask what’s conservative about weblogs as a form for journalism is to ask: what’s “old” about the new? Which known truths (about media, journalism, truth telling, life) tend to be verified by the weblog form— even with its radically different and transforming features? “Conservative” here says the old rules still apply, ancient wisdom is indeed wise, the authority of the ages holds— and that sort of thing. So in that sense, and only that sense, here are:

1. Weblogs deal in the golden rule, modified to read: link unto others as you would have them link unto you.
2. As an entrant in the marketplace of ideas, the weblog obeys—and does not repeal—the ancient laws of supply and demand. The “news” from some sites will be in demand more than the stuff from others. Just as most new businesses fail, most new weblogs fail. That’s the marketplace.
3. In the weblog world, charity—giving it away—leads to heaven.
4. Age has advantages over youth. People who have been at this a while know a lot, (so do their weblogs.) A wise move for newcomers is to learn from what’s been done, honoring those who have come before— your elders in Net time.
5. A weblog in revolt against journalistic authority will discover that it needs itself some kind of authority, (even if it’s among like-minded rebels) and thus the revolt is always a limited and partial one.
6. The quality of any weblog in journalism depends greatly on its fidelity to age old newsroom commandments (virtues) like check facts, check links, spell things correctly, be accurate, be timely, quote fairly. And as Roy Peter Clark says, if you’re telling a story and there’s a dog, *get the name of the dog*.
7. People still want to know: how do you know this? What expertise, body of knowledge, authority, or direct experience lies behind a weblog’s statements about the world?
8. As with all journalism, being first counts. Good weblogs break news, even if it’s just news of another good weblog born or a nugget of information newly available.

CRISIS EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATIONS (CERC)



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

SAFER • HEALTHIER • PEOPLE™



9. The weblog is continuous—not a revolutionary break—with five hundred years of print culture. It *is* the printed page, modernized, interconnected, made two-way, but still... “powered by movable type.”
10. Without faith in a higher power (some call it the blogosphere), an individual life of weblog freedom is impoverished.

