A New Model for Collaborative Online News Production:

Open Park

Open Park – The Professional Practice

A Code of Ethics for Collaborative Journalism

Last night a stranger took my picture and then he, uh...
He asked if I'd buy it, huh
I said I guess I don't know how
“Old Friends 4 Sale”
Prince, Controversy Music – ASCA

I tried 2 tell them that I didn't want 2 sing
But I'd gladly write a song instead
They said okay and everything was cool
‘Til a camera tried 2 get in my bed
“Hello”
Prince, The Hits/The B-Sides


Prince’s pronouncements against the press taking liberties with privacy and ethical conduct may seem the trivial ones of a bored celebrity. And in the world of Hollywood news and light infotainment, they may well be. But for some concerned experts and observers of the U.S. media, sloppy, unprofessional and unethical journalism is no less than a crime.

At least, that is the take of former Washington Post correspondent and journalism professor at the University of California at Berkeley Neil Henry, who writes in American Carnival – Journalism Under Siege in an Age of New Media that, “In the absence of journalistic professionalism, our society can easily fall victim to two types of fraud. One consists of crimes of commission, including fabrications, stereotyping, and other transgressions in which misinformation is intentionally published or broadcast. This is, in essence, the profession’s capital crime, fraud in the first degree, committed with intentionality and disregard for the truth. The second consists of crimes of omission: intentionally withholding information from the public, ignoring
and suppressing news in order to serve some commercial or political interest judged by the news medium to be of greater value than the public’s right to know. In one form of fraud, the citizenry is informed by myth and falsehood. In the other, the citizenry is intentionally prevented from learning the truth. A distinct social harm results from each. In journalistic crimes of commission and omission, society suffers from an electorate motivated by myths in the former case and by ignorance in the latter.”

Those “crimes of commission and omission” that Henry defines are only two types of the many threats to journalists’ capacity to fulfill their role of serving the public and democracy. The plethora of problems, conflicts and questionable practices that can come in the way of a journalist’s overriding mission and obligation of seeking the truth as part of the public’s right to know is indeed extensive and little understood or even known by most people and media consumers.

Arguably, Henry’s entire study focuses squarely on the challenges and threats to journalism brought about by the shifting interests of the digital age, and he is highly critical of new media and the Internet and the instability they has imposed on the profession’s ethical foundations. He specifically denounces the shrewd use by government and advertisers of the latest technologies to disseminate lies and propaganda that pass for news in order to further their interests. However, Henry is right in calling for news organizations in this new media era to renew their commitment to time-honored values such as the search for truth and the willingness to speak it to power when needed, a dedication to independence and the basic moral principles of fairness and integrity, among others. He is right also in questioning the acts of deceit and dishonesty that unprofessional journalism fosters and that seem to have proliferated under the new economy and increasingly powerful commercial interests and business imperatives.

Political biases of all stripes and the frenetic drive to increase circulation and audience share through gossip and titillating celebrity or ‘human interest’ news, all aided by the technological advances of the advertising and public relations industries, further undermine the professional, responsible practice of journalism and an independent news industry - and by extension the basic relationship of trust that no so long ago existed between journalists and the communities they cover. Not only that, as the news industry responds to the new economic pressures by reducing newsroom costs and slashing the jobs of trained and experienced journalists, the practice of journalism suffers an even greater loss of professionalism and credibility, as those who were preserving the highest standards through their training and expertise are being eliminated one by one, before they could mentor the new generation, and leaving the door open to all sorts of unprofessional practices and ethical transgressions.

As Henry notes, the technological revolution in the news industry has inspired “numerous ventures by newspapers and other mainstream media to make themselves more accessible to the public and to host Web logs (blogs) and other forums for citizen-produced news and commentary.” However, he writes, this “maelstrom of information of all kinds, from all directions” is not based on a common professional foundation. As the industry grapples with “ethics and credibility issues presented by a changing news order filled with grassroots ventures that share no widely accepted standards of practice,” it is true that it has not found yet a way of responding in an
ethical and consistent manner to these changes and challenges that are affecting professional journalism and the functioning of a democratic society. So, he asks, “What is this New Media world is governed by few standards of professional journalistic practice, none of which are truly shared and widely accepted?”

In response to his question and for the purpose of my CMS thesis proposal, I would like to suggest that reconsidering the definition and role of the journalistic code of ethics and perhaps replacing it at a revised and more appropriate place at the center of the debate may hold the answer, and could be a first step towards producing ethically consistent and responsible news content online and in other digital and new media platforms. This unifying role of the code of ethics may well help rebuild the relationship of trust between the news media and a society in which, as Henry notes, “there are ever fewer arbiters who are trusted and recognized by a consensus of citizens – the professionals of information gathering, working according to highly evolved standards, skilled, fairly compensated, and charged with collecting hard news, contributing original content to the public record, and not merely reacting to events or pandering to political prejudice.”

We see clearly here that Henry is perhaps a little too distrusting of the people’s ability to learn reporting skills and cover their own news, and a little too keen on keeping the gates of the profession firmly closed but to the few selected professionals. But I would certainly see shared values and this desired consensus on the functions and principles of journalism as crucial to the success of the type of collaborative news production that characterizes Open Park, as well as to many other news ventures, as noted, but in an unstructured, unregulated and unprincipled way. I would thus initially argue in this introduction that the journalistic code of ethics may well hold some of the answer to the practical troubles of the industry, as well as the moral disarray of the profession.

In any case, Henry’s reference to crimes perfectly encapsulates the harm to individual citizens, to society and to democracy that a lack of established and respected ethical guidelines can cause. In their absence, the journalist’s task and duty to provide this vital public service of seeking the truth and informing of wrongdoing may prove very difficult, impossible even.

One of the simplest ways to make clear for the general public the importance that professional journalists and their news organizations attach to these issues in the context of their work and the consequences for violating these established guidelines is to look at Bloomberg’s own Code of Ethics – one among many journalistic codes established by an in-house committee of a news organization. In the introduction to its principles, it simply states:

“Bloomberg News has adopted this code of ethics to maintain the professional reputation of Bloomberg News (“BN”), to ensure accurate and unbiased news reporting, and to protect itself and its employees against accusations of partiality in reporting the news. As such, violations of this standard of conduct can result in suspension or dismissal.

Fears that the new media economy has unleashed an era of relentless ethical crimes and transgressions by news outlets, as the Doomsday tone of the descriptions in
American Carnival would suggest, may seem unfounded. But it is beyond question that recent years have seen a bewildering array of dubious new practices that confuse more than they inform us or enrich the news media landscape.

Of note in this category is former MSNBC chief Dan Abrams’s ethically questionable new media-strategy company ‘Abrams Research,’ a network of expert journalists and media insiders who offer corporate clients consulting on the workings of the media industry, which he founded last November. “Want good press? Hire a journalist,” wrote the Wall Street Journal on Nov. 19, 2009 in response to this new business model that flagrantly disregards journalistic codes of conduct.

The Ohio plumber Samuel J. Wurzelbacher - Joe the Plumber - turned war and Middle East correspondent for a moment earlier this year and the former Minneapolis stripper Diablo Cody, whose parodic Weblog was perhaps too hastily called ‘journalism,’ are direct products of a news media industry that has stretched its standards far beyond [or rather below] those of such organizations as the Society of Professional Journalists [SPJ] and the American Society of Newspaper Editors, which were formulated after decades of professional practice and evolution.

All this is happening on a background of stricken, falling and agonizing newspapers, a media massacre worthy of David’s battle scenes. Media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch have long made clear where their interest and values lie, as Newsweek’s Nov. 5, 2007 article on the News Corp. chairman’s deal to acquire MySpace, entitled “In Search of MyProfits,” attests. More recently, on April 3 this year, the Wall Street Journal reported that Murdoch announced that his company plans to invest in a mobile device for reading, which, the WSJ wrote, “he introduced as a potential solution to the problems ailing the publishing industry.” Not only this latest endeavor is further proof that Murdoch is a businessman, not a journalist, it also nullifies any possibility that an informed and ethically responsible public will emerge from consuming such media practices that value profits rather than professional expertise and principles.

As observed in my previous essays, the new models of online news networks, both the electronic versions of the traditional mainstream publications and broadcast operations, and the new alternative online-only ventures, show little regard for quality, fact-checked and multi-sourced original content – admittedly more expensive than celebrity news and personal opinions on health and decorating that pass for news. Investigative reporting, still more expensive yet desperately needed, is an even more endangered type of news reporting. As I noted in my analysis of existing news models, not only extensive un-fact-checked aggregation and reproduction of news from wires and other news outlets and personal blogs has become a widespread, unquestioned practice, it seems also that in cyberspace the barriers of professionalism have been lowered.

Even the best, most well-funded and professional endeavors raise some questions. Many claim adherence to the highest standards. Yet it is very hard to find among them original reporting – simply put, the actual voices of sources collected through personal interviews. To cite just one example, the recently launched Boston-based online network GlobalPost, like many of similar news initiatives, seem to – wittingly or not … - mix seamlessly straight news and opinion/analysis – without informing its
readers that it is doing so. For most of the stories I checked over the past few months, what is labeled as ‘news’ is in fact the opinion of the reporter/writer, the story reported from his/her own perspective. The whole news project ends up reading like a series of opinion pieces, very much in the vein of personal blogs – which is fair enough, were they labeled as such.

A headline on GlobalPost’s Homepage on which I randomly clicked on May 22, written in bright red letters and that clearly announces a news story, one which we may even consider as ‘hard news,’ - “Washington Reconsiders the UN Human Rights Council,” then reveals itself to be a pure piece of opinion. This is immediately clear from the lead of the article written by GlobalPost correspondent William Dowell, from the very first sentence even:

GENEVA — The Obama administration seems to be in the mood to start over with the U.N.’s Human Right Council after many years in which Washington viewed the forum as hopelessly anti-American and anti-Israeli.

Not only the very verb ‘seems’ alludes to a perception, the whole first sentence is in fact a personal hypothesis and opinion on what the Obama administration might do in its relationship with the U.N.’s Human Right Council – based presumably on a personal interpretation of its earlier interactions with it.

Virtually every news story on the site is peppered with such personal commentary. A straight news story, as is well known, just states the facts [country x and country to sign deal z] and its lead contains the famous 5 ‘w’s – who, what, when, where, why? – at least, this is the structure of the type of straight news stories that such a headline leads the online reader to expect when he/she clicks on it. Therefore to provide anything else than a news story in such an instance is misleading and amounts to misinformation.

This practice of GlobalPost of mixing news and opinion with no warning is even more confusing when one realizes that the site does have an ‘Opinion’ section.

Their foreign reporting is even more troubling. Reports from Russia and various countries in Africa that I checked on the day of their presentation at the C4FCM in April raise some questions as to their interview ethics. A typical story would feature a single source, quoted a single time, usually at the beginning of the piece, in the lead, and never reappear later on. The rest of the report would be ‘facts’ stated by the reporter without attribution or with attribution made by another news organization – in other words, without the GlobalPost reporter directly talking to his source and verifying the reported facts.

The practice of having a single source in the lead acknowledging and supporting the story’s and the reporter’s point [company x slashes jobs. “I’ve lost my job and it’s terrible,” said John Smith, an employee at the firm who has lost his job in the latest round of job cuts] is a common practice in news-reporting as a way of introducing and supporting one’s topic. Questions arise, however, when that source does not reappear later on in the story – as is the case for GlobalPost: why would the reporter go through all the trouble of finding a source and interviewing him/her to then use only a single quote/sentence of what he/she had to say? Why not use at least some of the other material from the interview? Didn’t he/she have anything else of interest to say? Did
the reporter ask? The best and most professional stories will quote that person further, in addition to other sources, and even may use him/her to conclude the piece. As editor of the Moscow Times Business Review magazine, I have seen however, the worst uses of this practice, usually from lazy reporters. Indeed, they would no bother asking any further questions nor look for additional sources for their story. I even had one case of a dishonest freelance reporter who actually made up those characteristic sources, which is quite easy to do since they persona and quotes are rather typical.

Taking these observations into account and the overly parsimonious use of sources and quotes in most of GlobalPost’s stories, it is hard to find the high-quality professional journalism it claims to deliver. Indeed, its online reports are a far cry from its own stated goals of creating “intelligent, original world news reports [that] engage viewers in the pressing international issues of the day” using “a community of in-country correspondents who adhere to the highest standards of journalism. They bring readers unique, in-depth, on-the-ground insights on important social, political and economic international issues. Our balanced, objective and accurate reports from the field help readers measure the impact of international events on their lives.”

And did I say that no code of ethics is to be seen anywhere on the website...

Significantly, GlobalPost is by far not the only electronic news initiative whose ethical and professional standards seem to come under question, as its published content does not match its purported mission. Those simple basic questions I asked about their reporter’s interviewing practices can be applied to many other online ventures – they will yield similar results revealing non-original content and unverified news aggregated from various sources and published as ‘facts’ and as original reporting. All this point to low, dubious even professional and ethical standards in the news we are reading in cyberspace, a problem, which the absence of a code of ethics for online news allows to proliferate.

Another crucial question, which is challenging today’s professional practitioners of journalism is what to make of the pervasive use of online social networks and communication services such as Facebook and Twitter: should their use in newsroom be regulated, and even officially included in the daily practice of news-reporting?

As Editor & Publisher reported in a May 15 report entitled “Newspapers Tweeting Like Crazy – But what are the Rules?” editors and heads of newsrooms are grappling with the explosion of such online services by their staff and designing various guidelines and codes of conduct for their proper use – mostly to avoid compromising their news organization’s name. The Wall Street Journal, the report said, was forced to expand its own code of conduct “to include a whole host of online-related restrictions, including warnings not to "friend" confidential sources or get into Web-related arguments with critics.” The New York Times, meanwhile, has been trying to deal with some internal controversy after several reporters posted items of an editorial meeting on their Twitter accounts.

It is not all about leaking Tweets and inappropriate use of personal accounts at one’s company of course, many newspapers have not only embraced these tools, they have also found a way of regulating their use with common sense. The Los Angeles Times, which with 144 Tweeter accounts among its news staff has adopted a long list of
“social media” guidelines, actually encourages its reporters to Twitter about their stories, but in a responsible manner that will not compromise their ability to do their job.

Still, even with these new guidelines, there is very little consensus on an appropriate code of conduct that could be applied to the whole industry, let alone a sense of vision in how to harness the powers of such services and embed them in the established practice of professional, ethical journalism. The phenomenon, E&P says, has so far produced “a mixed bag of reaction” over how to control - or not control - the use of new media services by newspapers’ employees.

This development is very interesting for my own thesis and proposal of a new code for the digital age that would take into account these online, mobile and collaborative activities in news-reporting. It is interesting because these attempts by news companies to regulate their reporting practices by introducing new rules specifically for the use of new social media betrays a dire need for a code of ethics for the profession designed specifically for such new media uses, and these efforts, although disparate, may well be seen as a first step in its creation. However, it is important that news media leaders, as they formulate these rules of conduct for the responsible use of Twitter and similar services, think beyond simply protecting the image and name of their company – as current efforts tend to focus on – and think of the larger ethical implications of welcoming new media technologies into the daily practice of professional journalism. To formulate such a new media-aware code of ethics is precisely what I propose to do through my Open Park project at the C4FCM.

To turn our attention to the collaborative nature of many of these online news initiatives, including the ‘hybrid’ aspect of their use of both staff stories and outside contributions from freelance journalists and experts, and how best they could be served by a code of ethics customized to their own needs, a project by The Boston Globe is worth mentioning.

Buried deep in the electronic version of the newspaper is a The Boston Globe’s Newsroom Resource section, a comprehensive listing of Boston Globe writers and editors who are linked directly with issues and topics that they cover. As the site explains, “Newsroom Resources connects national and regional media requiring a subject matter expert for a story or program segment with Globe editors and writers. This media-only section contains a directory of issues and topics covered by the Globe newsroom staff helping interested media quickly and easily make the link to the subject matter expert they need for their story.”

This initiative is interesting for its effort at sharing knowledge with outside journalists – and this is reminiscent of what Open Park is seeking to do with its platform for collaborative news production – however, the Boston Globe system seems to work only one way, benefiting only the requesting party with the help for his/her story – and on a different level the Boston Globe, in getting its name publicized. But there is no true joint, equal work by both side on a single story – as Open Park proposes to enable. Also, there is no mention of how ethical conflicts and other potential issues in the course of reporting or after publication are to be resolved under such a partnership. Neither is it mentioned on the project’s webpage, nor in The Boston Globe’s Code of Ethics.
Also slightly regrettable: the general public has no means of knowing about this collaboration, as the webpage of the project is very hard to find. This is also in sharp contrast with Open Park, one of whose core values is openness and transparency.

These new questions and challenges that we find in collaborative and digital news production only add up to the already extremely complex series of ethical dilemmas that characterize the journalism profession. Journalism itself is full of paradoxes, and journalists must simultaneously balance their obligations to tell the truth as part of the public’s right to know, respect their sources’ rights and remain independent. How to balance these sometimes conflicting obligations when covering morally complex events such as the Iraq War or the Katrina victims is a burning issue in both online and offline news-reporting situations.

The morally-charged long-standing problems of laws, taste and stereotypes that were intrinsic to the daily news-gathering process offline still require our attention today as they have made their way to the journalistic practice on the Internet. Even with the speed and pervasiveness of information distribution on the Net, such unethical acts as plagiarism still occur. The case of Moscow Bureau Chief for The Guardian, Luke Harding, comes to mind. Following observations by the Moscow alternative newspaper The Exile of reports by Harding in the course of 2007 strangely similar to stories by Moscow Times reporter Kevin O’Flynn, as well as to its own stories covering Russia, The Guardian was forced to publish an apology.

Covering a subpoena case on April 24, 1998, Felicity Barringer of The New York Times writes that news media lawyers are “Facing increasingly aggressive prosecutors and operating in an environment more hostile to the journalists.” And the editors of Doing Ethics in Journalism – a Handbook with Case Studies, Jay Black, Bob Steele and Ralph Barney, note that following the gulf war, “News people increasingly are perplexed about how to handle problems that until recently seemed black and white,” and ask “whether traditional rules still apply, and what, in a complex world, [journalists] should do to serve a critical society.”

My conclusion from these observations of news media outlets embracing the technologies and possibilities offered by the Net without adhering to a strict code of conduct, one that should perhaps be stricter and more exhaustive than those formulated for the traditional offline media, is that they reinforce my argument for establishing such a code. Such a new or revised code of ethics would take into account not only existing and still pervasive ethical dilemmas in the profession, but also the special needs and new behaviors among news reporters that the collaborative, mobile and online news formats have engendered.

In addition, there is a remarkable trend among news publications on the Net, both the electronic versions of traditional media and the ‘digital natives’ not to publish openly or make accessible online their existing codes of ethics or the few rules that they do observe.

Like GlobalPost, many new ventures do not publish any information regarding their news-reporting ethics. In addition, some of the giants of the traditional mainstream press are also silent on the principles that guide their news-gathering and writing. The New York Times Company website does include links to the codes of ethics that
regulate conduct for its CEO, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Senior Financial Officers and other directors, but nowhere can one find a code of ethics for The New York Times reporters and editors, thus leaving the readers of its print and online editions in the dark as to how its journalists cover the news and respond to issues that may occur in covering controversial stories.

Typically, it has to be said, these editorial codes are meant to instruct journalists – that is, the employees of a news company – and are thus very often in-house guides not meant to be consulted by the public. Bloomberg’s Code of Ethics, published in “The Bloomberg Way – A Guide for Reporters and Editors” by Matthew Winkler and David Wilson is in my possession through contacts.

Having said this, there are news companies that do post their codes online – and this is a model reflecting open publishing that I fully support and plan to replicate in Open Park. The Boston Globe, for example, is one such company, with its “Newsroom Ethics Policy” posted on one of its web pages, albeit one that is hard to find. It is worth noting here that the Globe’s code contains a point on “Web pages and Web logs,” but it by far does not cover the whole spectrum of new media services and resulting practices.

Another very important point, while we are on the code of The Boston Globe – although I assume it features in most news media codes – is its section on dealing with competitors: “With the exception of press pool arrangements imposed by news sources, staff members may not join teams covering news events for other organizations (unless their work is part of a duly authorized joint venture).” This is an extremely important consideration for my own formulation of a code of ethics for the Open Park project, since collaboration among reporters within a same newsroom, as well as among traditionally competing news organizations is its mission and raison d’etre. This informs us that a complete rethinking of certain established ethical values will be necessary while drawing the structure of my code.

As noted, there seems to be a certain lack of transparency among professional online news publishers regarding their news-reporting policy as few publish their code of ethics or make them easily accessible on their website. In that same vein, it seems that the process of drafting these codes itself is a closed one, involving only editors and top management. This is pure conjecture, but in my eight years of professional journalism I have never heard of news reporters telling about their experience in being recruited to draft or even discuss any of their newsroom’s editorial policies. This is also something I want to keep in mind when drafting the Open Park code of ethics: the need to keep the process open and open source – in the true spirit of collaboration. After all, Point Six of the Code of Ethics of The Society of Professional Journalists, “Pledge,” says that “The Society shall – by programs of education and other means – encourage individual journalists to adhere to these tenets, and shall encourage journalistic publications and broadcasters to recognize their responsibility to frame codes of ethics in concert with their employees to serve as guidelines in furthering these goals.” [my italics]

To adopt such a representative, democratic approach to formulating editorial guidelines and ethical conduct for Open Park users, one that will involve them in the process, will also require that I reverse the old top-to-bottom formula of the
traditional process of developing professional codes. I certainly agree with the SPJ that this should be an open, concerted effort. And the editors of Doing Ethics in Journalism are right also in saying that the public knows very little of this process and of the journalist’s social and moral role in a country’s democratic wellbeing.

Thus, I agree with them that a critical tool for designing a new code is “a greater understanding of the ethical role a journalist plays in making the wheels of a society turn.”

Ultimately, one of the most understated arguments for proposing a code of ethics for collaborative journalism is that the Open Park platform [website] – that is, technology – is by far not all that is needed. It is not just a question of embracing technology. The tools without a strong ethical foundation of values and principles adapted to the new challenges of today’s cyberspace-enabled news production will not lead very far. They will fail to instruct media professionals on how to respond when conflicts or other ethically sensitive issues arise with regards to a story that half a dozen reporters from three different news organizations have worked on, for example.

But in formulating, designing and – hopefully one day institutionalizing our code for collaborative journalism, we have to face and find answers to a host of pressing questions, some of the highest order: do we make an entirely new code or revise and adapt the old ones? Are existing rules and values still relevant in the digital age? And whose values? Those of news media leaders only or do those of reporters matter too? How closed/open should the deliberative process of drawing a code be? Is a ‘universal’ code for all print, online and broadcast news operations possible? Desirable? Who decides what is ethical journalistic behavior? Whose ethics? And - last but not least – what will this code be – a set of immutable rules to be strictly enforced with sanctions attached if violated, or a more nuanced and independent form of suggested responsible behavior based on personal moral character? Essentially, be it for traditional or collaborative journalism, what is a code of ethics?

2] My Core Arguments on Key Issues

As many, if not most of my arguments for a new, revised code of ethics for today’s collaborative and innovative online news publishing initiatives – including Open Park – have been cited and expanded upon in the preceding section that introduced my topic, I will summarize here my main argument – and what I am essentially calling for.

Collaborative is the way to go. As noted, many news networks have embraced such models. But ethical collaboration is what I am advocating and hoping to demonstrate through my thesis. Teams of cooperative, willingly non-competitive, and fully technologically-equipped reporters will do little to produce quality content, that is accurate, objective and devoid of political or commercial messages. Today’s reporters need a code of ethics whose principles are grounded in the history and philosophy of their craft. Its most inspiring thinkers, those who have defined the role of a free press in a democratic society, are mentioned in my ‘Methods & Materials’ section. Today’s digital reporters, alone or in teams, need this code for dealing with moral integrity to
the common ethical dilemmas of the profession: accuracy, fairness, diversity, deception, plagiarism, issues with pictures and graphics, invasion of privacy, and the journalist-source relationship, among others – all of which are made more complex by the collective non-competitive approach to news-gathering. As these dilemmas spring up, reporters need to have this code within hand’s reach so that they can respond fast and be able to make the right decisions on deadline.

This is the ideal formula for success that I envision for online professional journalism: ethical collaboration. But as noted here and in earlier papers, current electronic news publishing initiatives [both traditional and digital natives] are keen to pour out their content online but without a new media-customized code of journalistic conduct and clear guidelines on how to deal ethically with fast-changing developments such as the use of Twitter. The resulting disarray among editors is resulting in poor-quality journalism, just as Manuel Castells notes in his book *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*:

“In spite of the pervasiveness of the Internet, its logic, its language, and its constraints are not well understood beyond the real of strictly technological matters. […] Taking advantage of this relative void of reliable investigation, ideology and gossip have permeated the understanding if this fundamental dimension of our lives, as is often the case in periods of rapid social change. […] The media, keen to inform an anxious public, but lacking the autonomous capacity to assess social trends with rigor, oscillate between reporting the amazing future on offer and following the basic principle of journalism: only bad news is worthy news.”

In addition to failing to fully understand and respond in a principled manner to the possibilities and challenges of news production on the Internet, many electronic publications have also failed to preserve the inalienable right of free speech in their discussion forums and comments sections, excising from them controversial or unpopular views. As I have documented in a paper for Pr. William Uricchio, the protections guaranteed to these rights and freedoms under the First Amendment have not been transferred to cyberspace for the large part, and a uniform, dominant voice often emerges from debate around online news. Taking into account my earlier note on the political and commercial pressures being applied to new media, this stifling of free speech is of course also happening amidst the news coverage itself, with some of the biggest news organizations acting as complicit partners.

With Bills now in Congress to criminalize free speech on the Internet via the ‘Cyberbullying Act,’ which will make it a felony to hurt someone’s feelings, there is good reason to believe that free speech on the Net is under threat, and that it could benefit from new provisions for conduct and expression online in a revise journalistic code. As Andrew Hughes wrote on www.globalresearch.ca in a May 25 article, “Americal’s Nightmare: The Obama Dystopia – Manipulation, propaganda, imagery & PR wizardry,” Just like the Patriot Act, this will morph in to a criminalization of political free speech and any criticism of the Government.”

As for the crucial question of ‘What is a journalism code of ethics’? that I asked earlier, it first should be noted that an enormous amount of ink has been understandably spent on defining such elusive concepts as ‘truth’ and ‘morality.’ The

The whole field of ethics itself and what eventually makes for thoughtful, powerful and principled news-reporting can and has been argued from a myriad standpoints and could provide me with topics for research for half a dozen theses.

For the sake of concision, I should perhaps mention here one definition that I quite like and find comprehensive, one found among a list of several items in the Introduction of *Doing Ethics in Journalism*: “Doing ethics in journalism is reasoned, principled and consistent thinking about how journalists can maximize the truth-telling obligation while minimizing harm to vulnerable news sources and consumers.”

Another of the book’s listed definitions that, as developer of Open Park I fully embrace, is the one comparing the practice of ethical journalism to ‘a craft’ or ‘a skill,’ very much like good writing, editing and photography are. It also says, “Doing ethics in journalism must be both learned and developed.” As the plan for Open Park [as will be discussed further here bellow] is to initially start the platform for use by professional journalists, but eventually put it out there in the communities so that it can be used by citizen journalists and non-trained people, one major feature of the website is that it will come with tools for learning not just the technical skills of news-reporting and writing but also the rigorous and critical thinking and principles needed to practice ethics in covering the news – and this, in the shape of the Open Park Code of Ethics for Collaborative Journalism. In other words, the OP Code will be one of the ‘skills’ that the project will teach its users, very much as the authors of *Doing Ethics in Journalism* envision the role and nature of ethics in journalism.

What is helpful to remember here is that not only ethics is a vast and complex field itself, but the plethora of codes that have been produced ever since American journalists started to evaluate themselves when they were colonists in the 18th century, is staggering. As documented by John C. Watson in *Journalism Ethics by Court Decree – The Supreme Court on the Proper Practice of Journalism*, the history of the creation of ethics codes to establish and enforce professional standards for the press includes early codes, modern codes, older traditional journalism codes, codes revised following advice by lawyers, internal codes of news organizations [such as AP’s], codes for print journalists, for broadcast journalists [such as the Code of Broadcast News Ethics], for photographers [of the National Press Photographers Association], and of course those of the United States’ leading organization of working professionals, the Code of Ethics of The Society of Professional Journalists [SPJ], and all this in addition to a multitude of policies and directives from news media councils and commissions, such as the Hutchins Commission.

It goes without saying that my thesis must include, in addition to a basic, focused study of the most relevant points in ethics for journalists, some precise definitions and examination of the most influential of these codes. A very motivational aspect of this exercise is that many of these codes and directives, including current ones, have proved defective in some ways. As Watson writes, “Codes of ethics have been the tool most widely used by the professional media to improve journalism practices,
though their effectiveness has been questioned frequently. The systematic
development of ethical standards for journalism, as indicated by the creation of codes,
was spurred by the public expression of concerns about issues of professionalism and
self-evaluation at the start of the 20th century." This certainly makes a strong
argument for my proposed Open Park code for today’s collaborative journalism.

Following this study of historical and influential code, the plan for my thesis is to
select the best elements of existing codes and mixing them with my own added
considerations to formulate a tentative, ‘ideal’ code of ethics for collaborative
journalism – the Open Park Code. I also plan to use the flaws I detect in existing
codes to inform my own formula of ethical journalism. With regards to what is meant
by ‘the best’ in current codes, I should stress that although the plan is to make the
Open Park project fully open source upon completion of my time in the C4FCM, it
will remain focused on specific case studies and research goals while I am working on
it as part of my Research Assistantship and for credit [through my thesis and courses
assignments]. Therefore, I will be, for the time being and as the author of the project,
the Code and this thesis, the one making the final decisions on what qualities are
defining ‘best’ or ‘high-quality.’ It is temporarily ‘top-to-bottom’ – although I will at
all times welcome and consider advice, comments and contributions to the code’s
draft.

With regards to the codes themselves, given that my study of them has been so far
superficial, I cannot at this point make a decision on what kind of codes for the news
media will have the most influence on my decisions and choices for the OP code. But
I can already say that I have a liking for those that reveal the most their roots in the
field of law – both its practice and the formation of normative systems. Not only do I
find the process of some ethical matters being transformed into law fascinating, as
well as the ways in which the law can be used to encourage ethical conduct by
journalists – or, when needed, to permit punishment when they acted unethically –
and of course to guarantee the protection of their rights. But also, my own deepest
commitment to the values that form the basis of the Open Park philosophy – freedom
of speech and its protection on the Net – has been strongly informed by the thoughts
of law professionals – American attorney Mike Godwin and former Harvard Law
School Professor and White House regulatory office chief Cass R. Sunstein being key
influences. This, in addition to my own experience of living and working as a
journalist for eight years in a lawless country, or more correctly, that has no respect
for the law, have reinforced my devotion to the field. Thus, I expect to delve perhaps
more deeply into legal theory and the effect of the law on journalism ethics than into
other spheres of methodological studies. Save for a general overview and definitions
of media ethics and ethics codes, I propose, however, to focus on the study of
journalism, the law and morality that directly relates to my case studies for Open
Park, described here below. These areas of knowledge are extremely broad and the
law can all at once punish, mandate or protect journalistic practices depending on
whether it seeks to promote or require ethical behavior by new media professionals,
depending on the case. Thus, focus will be key.

Watson in his book draws attention to another intricacy: the need to make a clear
distinction between journalistic practices that are legally permissible and those that
are ethical. "Law and ethics are normative systems that affect how journalism is
practiced, but law delineates minimums of behavior while ethics establish behavioral
ideals that journalists should strive toward, according to journalism ethicists Jay Black, Sandra Davidson and others. Merging journalism ethics and journalism law, blurring or eliminating the distinction between them, arguably could cause confusion about how journalism should or must be practiced and whether its norms are those established by lawmakers or journalists.”

Indeed, as noted earlier, morality and a sense of right and wrong can vary wildly depending on the case, its context and the perceptions surrounded them.

Ron F. Smith in *Groping for Ethics in Journalism* writes that the study of ethics in journalism goes far beyond simple philosophical distinctions between right and wrong. “Professional ethics is more specific. Most professions place ethical demands on their practitioners,” he writes, citing lawyers, physicians, priests and psychologists and the professional codes that regulate their practices. Smith fails, however, to mention the fact that the practice of ethics in journalism does not equate with the practice of regulation. As our three authors-ethicists of *Doing Ethics in Journalism* explain, “When we speak of journalism ethics, we speak not of regulated behavior, the phenomenon most familiar to us as we look at the activities of doctors, lawyers, plumbers, and others who follow professional codes. In journalism, we speak of the far more important concepts of ‘reasoned’ and ‘principled’ behavior.

In *Journalism Ethics by Court Decree*, Watson explains that the law has not been used to impose ethical standards on the news media on a wholesale basis. “The United States does not have a code of journalistic responsibility enshrined in law or an agency to oversee the practice of journalism, nor are journalists required to be licensed or otherwise accredited. Journalists would likely condemn any such regulation of their conduct as inimical to the First Amendment.”

Thus, this absence of professional discipline and documented restrictions make journalistic codes more advisory than mandatory. As Black, Steele and Barney conclude, “That is in sharp contrast to the enforceable codes of the legal and medical professions, and a source of concern to those who see a need to ‘control’ anyone who possesses the kind of power the media are perceived to have. But it also means that journalists, individually and collectively [my italics], have a greater need for an articulated sense of ethics than do the more regulated professionals.” I should add that these ethics experts’ awareness of the special needs of journalism done collectively is especially to the point for our own Open Park project.

What all this means is that journalists must define for themselves their social role and moral obligations based on a personal sense of responsibility and principled reasoning, itself inspired by the values of the free and democratic society they are serving. Journalists, and the profession, are on their own to make informed and principle-based moral judgments on the ethically sensitive stories they cover. This is what keeps them independent from the restrictions that apply to other professions, and ultimately help guarantee a free press.

Thus journalism codes are not professional codes, and ethics is not the same as law. Rather I would place a code of ethics for journalists at the intersection of personal and social values, and the law.
All these observations are very useful to keep in mind when drafting my own code for Open Park, since the project, by definition, would not be compatible with the speech and press restrictions than the stricter professional codes recommend.

On this last point, I must add that I would like to stay clear from the approach prevalent in Kovach and Rosenstiel’s yet very influential The Elements of Journalism precisely for its too – to my taste - arbitrary tone. Their very precise, not to say constrained definition of what ethical journalism is has some autocratic overtones already palpable in its sub-title “What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect,” and chapter titles such as “What is Journalism For?” Even in its revised 2007 edition, their understanding of what journalism “should be” seems to fail to take into account the latest changes in the media landscape and to make room for the participatory and otherwise engaging opportunities that new journalism offers today. Both authors seem intent on keeping the profession squarely in the hands of an elitist, closed group of professionals, a tendency that Axel Bruns, author of Gatewatching – Collaborative Online News Production has also identified, as he analyzes their criticism of the “Mixed Media Culture” and deliberative open news, both of which I expect to draw from to write the draft of my OP code.

“Kovach and Rosenstiel suggest that ‘these new characteristics of the Mixed Media Culture are creating what we call a new journalism of assertion, [in which] diversity, debate and discussion is equated unquestionably with ‘cultural civil war’ while presumably homogeneity and uniform agreement would spell ‘peace’ in their view. From the preceding discussion, however, it should be well evident that debate and discussion are highly necessary in the coverage of a complex world, even if they occasionally border on all-out civil war; the ‘peace’ of homogeneous agreement, on the other hand, would be little more than graveyard peace.”

Bruns puts his finger on another problem in their stance: “Deliberative journalism and open news clash markedly, however, with Kovach and Rosenstiel’s suggestions for public journalism, and it is worth engaging with their views at some length in order to point out their misunderstandings of the open news project. Notably, they too, call for journalism to ‘provide a forum for public criticism and compromise,’ but simply cannot imagine this forum to operate effectively without a trained journalist’s guiding influence.” Such a forum, they say, would lead to “a debate steeped in prejudice and supposition only inflames. For this reason, journalists must continue to be present to watch over the debate.”

In both these analyses, we find important points for my own concept of a code for collaborative journalism: although I myself will initially write the structure as part of my thesis and research for the C4FCM, and that the code, together with the Open Park project is aimed at journalists and media professionals, I do plan to design it so as to be able to include at a later stage the participation of non-professional users such as citizens’ journalists. Therefore, both the OP platform and its code of ethics should be open to outside contributions, and eventually be ready to be used by other non-professionals by offering them the tools they need to be trained in and practice ethical news-reporting in their communities.

For this reason, I reject much of Kovach and Rosenstiel’s rigid approach to what is or is not journalism and how it should be conducted, and want to make sure I do not
apply it to my conception of a code of ethics for Open Park. As Black, Steele and Barney write about helping journalists make ethical decisions, we need “to resist moralizing, and to recognize the limits of blind obedience to customs and codes.” Writing on the limitations of codes and the danger of seeing them as “the panacea,” they add, “At worst, codes have short-circuited individual journalists’ ability to act as independent decisionmakers.”

Having said this, I do support Henry’s more subtle and informative critical comments on new media, which denounce a world “governed by few standards of professional journalistic practice,” “computer-generated newsgatherers taking the place of human editors,” content providers and bloggers “merely reacting to events,” and the false belief that “anyone can do it.” I agree with him that “This concept is misguided. Professional journalism is anything but simple, and technology itself is no substitute for the human rigor required to seek out and report the news fully, independently, and accurately.”

I will most likely place my own code at a more balanced intersection between a blind embrace of all things new media and extreme criticism of them. In any case, the elaboration of the OP code of ethics, just like the use of the OP platform, by being open source and collaborative in essence, will offer an educational element, a little like Dan Gillmor’s We the Media: Grassroot Journalism by the People, for the People is a how-to text for concerned citizens and creative people interested in news events to learn the writing, social and technical skills intrinsic to the new media age to become self-publishing journalists.

Thus, the overall framework for developing the OP code will be open, collaborative, initially drafted by myself, but gradually opening its gates to non-professionals to eventually become a fully democratic bottom-up initiative. Such an approach sees the journalism code of ethics as a ongoing, open-ended project, a living, breathing document open to contributions, changes and improvement, and not a set of fixed and rigid rules directly borrowed from traditional codes. For this, I am sure that I can learn from the experiences of the Center for Social Media at American University, which creates codes of best practices for media producers that are informed by their own experiences.

In view of the OP code’s open source nature and in an attempt to respond to the question of what it means to generate a code of ethics, I would like to suggest that my drafting of this code might help:

1] **redefine the journalistic code of ethics as a living document**, one that reflects the open publishing practice and is directly inspired by its open source, participatory nature, in contrast to the fixed systems of rules of existing codes.

2] **redefine the process of generating codes of ethics** by including representative, democratic participation and collaboration into the process, rather than entrusting it to a small elite group of professionals.

The Open Park case studies to be implemented in the fall with journalism students will inform the elaboration of one of the code’s sections, the one dealing with media biases and stereotypes in news coverage.
These two missions are likely to end up being natural processes. In any case, they emphasize the central location that my proposed code of ethics for collaborating reporters and editors holds in the overall Open Park project – as one item of the OP news-reporting toolbox.

3] My relationship to My Topic

I am developing the code as part of my research work for the C4FCM and coursework for CMS, specifically through my thesis, but also in papers for CMS courses, in which I have written about the theoretical foundations and the methodologies for the Open Park project. The code is one part of the three-element new model for collaborative online news production. Open Park is:

. a professional practice – the new social and cultural practice of non-competition, which necessitate a new code of ethics for co-located and remote collaboration.

. a technology – or a new media toolbox for news-reporting in the digital, collaborative age

. a business plan – a new method for engaging users and the journalism, communities in a sustainable way

My thesis thus squarely deals with the professional practice, and within it, the code of ethics for collaborative journalism. In a future paper, such one for the fall class CMS.801 Media in Transition, it would perhaps be interesting to study the history of codes formation, as the ethical considerations that engage journalists today and have done so for the past century may not have seemed essential to the press of the American colonial period. The rise of objectivity as an ethical standard during the Industrial Revolution could also tell us about the roots of the principles that form the basis of the OP code.

In terms of my own professional contribution to my topic, I bring to the project my long-time interest in collaboration, which despite having majored in print journalism at Boston University, I could explore through radio and TV team work at the BBC World Service and in CNN’s Moscow Bureau respectively. As editor of The Moscow Times Business Review for several years, I faced many at times difficult ethical decisions and issues, from plagiarism from a dishonest freelancer to dealing with businesses unhappy about their coverage and preserving the safety of high-risk sources in a restrictive country like Russia, such as dissidents, human rights activists and the political opposition: how could we interview them and give as much as possible information about them without compromising their safety?

As noted earlier, my role as the initiator of the idea for a code for collaborative journalism and as the author of its first draft for the purpose of my thesis’ requirements call for my drafting of the main structure of the code mostly on my own. It is only at a later stage, once the platform is ready to be used by external users that the development of the code will be made fully open source.

Since my work on the formation of a code of ethics for collaborative journalism will be in great part informed by my case studies [one specifically], and that all of them deal with the ethical issues of bias, stereotypes and giving a voice to the voiceless, my main goal – and research question for my work on this code and my thesis is: How to provide more balanced and multi-perspective coverage of voiceless communities? It is this goal of improving current media coverage of these unfairly and/or under-represented people that will guide all other questions and sub-questions in this specific category.

Although I will focus on and ‘specialize’ in this area, and thus will develop the section of the code dealing with it more extensively, I still plan to write the basis structure and guiding principles of ethical journalism so as to produce a complete version of the code. My more extensive work on the section of fairness and balance will then amount to laying the first stone of this open source collaborative drafting of the code as part of the OP project.

In view of these plans, I will divide my research questions into four categories: 1] those dealing with basic reporting principles, 2] those depending on the type of beat, 3] those that relate directly to the case studies – on bias, taste, taboos and stereotypes, and the law, and 4] those related to the online and collaborative nature of the Open Park project and new media in the digital age.

These categories will be first of all introduced by a section defining ethics and ethics codes, itself divided in four parts: 1] ethics, the law and journalism, 2] early codes, 3] modern codes, and 4] the process of generating codes, from concept to draft, and from institutionalization to enforcement. Special attention will be given to the different ideologies behind codes formation, including the top-down authoritative model produced by professional organizations and the bottom-up approach of the open source collaborative initiatives that are informed by potential users’ contributions.

Here in this ‘Definitions’ section, the questions will first of all deal with the essential dilemmas of contemporary American journalism: what are the limits – if any – of the public’s right to know? Who decides? Does it have the right to know everything? And if so, how does this right square with the right to privacy? – among other basic questions of morality in journalism.

With regards to the study of codes, the questions will include: what can be learned from them early codes, how have they evolved, what can be learned from those currently being used, what has been the public’s response to these codes, and how have the media been using them to deal with issues of conflict and morality, what are their limits and weaknesses, what lessons can we draw from these observations and apply to our own OP code – more specifically, what elements of these codes can we apply to OP code with or without adjustments?
The questions regarding how to cover the news ethically to be considered in the four previously mentioned categories will include such considerations as listed here below:

1] Basic Reporting Principles:
   . What is News?
   . Who decides?
   . Digging for information [databases, public records, newsrooms resources,..]
   . The influence of owners
   . Investigative reporting [dangerous assignments,..]
   . Accuracy
   . Appropriate style
   . Rewriting the wires
   . Quotes & Attribution
   . Limitations of the story
   . Finding, cultivating, using sources
   . Anonymity, confidentiality
   . Interview Practices
   . Stereotypes
   . Race, gender, religion
   . Feelings

2] Types of Beats:
   . News
   . Breaking news
   . Business reporting
   . Local government
   . Heath
   . Education
   . Sports
   . The Courts
   . Accidents & disasters
   . Obituaries
   . Foreign news
   . The police beat/crime
   . ‘New’ beats

3] The Law and Codes of Ethics on Bias, Taste, Taboos and Stereotypes
   . The Fist Amendment
   . The Reporter’s rights
   . The sources’ rights
   . The public’s interest
   . Privacy
   . Grounds for libel suits
   . Avoiding the dangers
   . The Court Acts [precedents]
   . Defining tastes
   . Changing tastes and standards
   . Codes of conduct [morality of journalism]
   . Guiding values
   . Dishonesty
. The pose and the disguise
. How to use the Freedom of Information Act
. Publishers’ responsibility
. Dilemma [abused by the system,...]
. Omission
. Obscenity and the law
. pictures/photographs, graphic artwork

4) Ethical Dilemmas for Online Collaborating Media Professionals
I expect the questions and problems addressed in this category to be among the most difficult ones to answer as in many cases there are no precedents yet. Should my journalism students encounter some difficulty that is somehow related to today’s new online social tools and practices for example, they may not have anything to fall back on and to instruct them how to deal with it, but on the other hand, they will have an opportunity to formulate what they think might constitute a solution. For this reason, the questions in this section are also the most relevant to the Open Park project and its innovative nature.
Here is a tentative list of research questions that we may address:

. Do existing codes adequately cover the circumstances that online journalists and media professionals are likely to face? If not, how can they be adjusted and improved?
. To moderate or not moderate online forums? Traditional professional codes of ethics urge us to protect and practice free speech, such as the Society of Professional Journalists, which tell reporters and editors “to support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.” And the revised versions of professional codes encourage journalists to make the most of technology to foster public dialogue online. But what these editors and the web masters of news organizations to do in the face of hate speech and other disruptions to the smooth and courteous functioning of a debate around the news coverage for example? How much monitoring, editing and online gatewatching is appropriate?
. What does the ease of access of information on the Internet mean for the quality of news coverage? How can reporters and researchers evaluate the credibility of this content, how can they evaluate the trustworthiness of the sources they find online? Do we need Net-trained fact-checkers? What about already written news account and the ease of finding them on the Internet? Are we reporting or re-purposing?
. How to avoid conflicts of interest with sponsors in the digital age – an age of hyper-targeted advertising and other digitally sophisticated business pressures. While traditional ethics codes cover the conflicts of interest that may arise between journalists and advertisers, they do not deal specifically with the design, placement and labeling of advertisements, all of which differ sharply on Web pages than in print publications.

It should be noted that this list of research questions is very tentative and flexible so far. I expect that the case studies will inform us on the most pressing issues. Much will depend on the problems the journalism students encounter in the course of working on their case studies and covering their assigned community, and on their needs and experiences as they report on one or more problem[s] these people are experiencing.
Some questions may not get answered at all, many may remain unaddressed, as obviously no single story will present the whole range of ethical issues that are common today, such as conflicts of interest, threats of libel suits and unreliable sources. It is even unlikely that our journalism students will be faced with such situations that will call for considering the real possibility of having to deal with the law – that is, legal authorities, directly. But getting them to think how their case might present or develop these difficulties and how they would respond to these hypothetical ethically sensitive situations may help inform a solution for such problems and a proposed course of action to be included in the OP code.

Similarly, some new questions or unanticipated dilemmas may appear, as it is impossible to predict the way the stories of our case studies will evolve and all the obstacles that our students reporters may be faced with.

All in all, the questions that I will attempt to address in more depth in my thesis will most likely be those that were encountered on the course of working on the case studies, described here below.

But as the OP platform and code are open source, it is very much my hope that future users will add their own questions, issues and dilemmas as they go on about their news-reporting tasks in their communities, and hopefully also their answers and proposed solutions to them.

This is what makes the Open Park code of ethics for collaborative journalism a truly collaborative tool and practice.


First, to answer the key question of 'to what extent my thesis will about the code of ethics and the process of its drafting, and to what extent will it be about the case studies to be covered by journalism students through the Open Park platform: as mentioned earlier, I expect that the case studies will provide much of the material that will inform the ethical topics and issues to be included in the code.

I would give an initial estimate of 50 % for the part of the thesis that will be directly inspired by the case studies, and 50 % for the part that will emerge from my own observations and analyses of related texts, as well as from outside contributors – meaning anybody interested in the field but not involved in the case studies, such as journalists or experts met through the C4FCM and other research institutes.

#### a Study of Codes of Ethics

The first task to be performed will be to analyze the pros and cons of codes, as well as their strengths and weaknesses through a study of early and existing codes. The success of a code depends not only on its content and principles, but also on how it was viewed by those for whom it written for. Thus, studying the history of codes, their power and legitimacy in the eyes of their users, as well as defining what makes a successful and effective code – as I described in this paper earlier - are a crucial step in elaborating the OP code of ethics.

The primary texts are thus the codes themselves, both professional and open source-voluntary, with a special emphasis on their revised versions to see if they include...
mandates or additions dealing with new media practices and the ethical issues that may arise in the digital age.

To name a few of these texts and sources: The Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics [1987] is the broadest in scope among other codes from professional organizations and the most widely used in newsrooms across the nation. Similarly, the AP Stylebook is held with as much regard across the country and beyond. But I will also be looking at lesser-known codes of conduct and style guides, such as Bloomberg’s in-house guide, etc. The codes of successful, quality news sites such Slashdot, are also worth consulting.

As this study of codes of ethics cannot take place in a vacuum, as I explained earlier, we need to study at least the immediate context of morality and the law and how they reflect on the journalism profession – that is, the sphere of ethics itself. The bibliography here below is more eloquent about this, but to cite a few texts and other sources: among the key texts are The Journalist’s Moral Compass - Basic Principles, Edited by Steven R. Knowlton and Patrick R. Parsons and Digital Dilemmas – Ethical Issues for Online Media Professionals by Robert I. Berkman and Christopher A. Shumway. Studies and surveys of codes with varying degrees of formality will also be examined. Here I plan to examine the open, bottom up standards being developed by the Center for Social Media at American University, and perhaps interview some of the people who worked on them. Among formal studies I should cite Bob Steele’s analysis of the media codes of 33 newspapers which he conducted in 1999 – a must read. His ethics column for the Poynter Institute should also be interesting. The Institute has also developed two checklists for journalists, “Guiding Principles for the Journalist,” and “Ask Good Questions to Make Good Decisions,” which will also be core material.

Finally, our study of ethics and codes would be incomplete without a study of the latest trends and developments in this digital era and the new practices and behaviors they have encouraged or created. I do not expect, however, to find easily codes of ethics specifically revised for the digital age or extensive material related to them. As Steele’s study revealed, only a few of the 33 codes he analyzed “addressed the Internet in any fashion.” But some of the texts I cited, such as Berkman and Shumay’s Digital Dilemmas should prove useful.

. b Theoretical Methodologies

As mentioned in the course of my presentation, I will be using a range of methodologies and academic studies to inform the theoretical foundation of my code’s structure and first draft. These represent three distinct schools of thought:

. Study of the theorists in the spheres of politics, philosophy and economics, who have defined the concepts of truth, liberty, and the role of the press, and laid the foundations of the basic moral principles of contemporary American journalism.

Among the political authors and texts to draw inspiration from to elaborate the principles of Open Park’s code of ethics, we can cite Thomas Hobbes’s Leviathan, John Locke’s “On Civil Government: The Second Treatise,” Tunis Wortman’s “A Treatise Concerning Political Enquiry and the Liberty of the Press,” and John Stuart Mill’s “On Liberty.” For the large part, most of these texts address individual freedom
as the foundation for everything else – and this is very much what the guiding values and principles of Open Park subscribe to, with its absolute devotion to freedom of expression and of the press and to journalists’ independence amid various pressures.

Among the philosophers, Warren Breed’s “Social Control in the Newsroom” and Walter Lippman’s “Public Opinion” will be of direct use to the OP code’s ethical foundation. The latter for example writes in Public Opinion that the “troubles of the press” can be traced back to “the failure of self-governing people to transcend their casual experience and their prejudice, by inventing, creating, and organizing a machinery of knowledge.” Let us hope that the main case study of Open Park, which deals with bias and stereotypes, with the support of its code of ethics, may help OP reporters and users of the platform produce news coverage that transcends these prejudices and create an independent and self-trained community of news publishers – as this is the OP project’s ultimate goal.

Among those who wrote on the press and the marketplace and relevant economic theories, John C. Merrill’s “The Imperative of Freedom” is self-explanatory. But Ben H. Badgikian who denounced the concentration of ownership and of media power and the threat they pose to the diversity of viewpoints and voices and the democratic dialogue, is certainly worth to consult through texts such as “The Lords of the Global Village” from The Nation for example.

Also, as explained in earlier email correspondence, I feel an affinity for writers and thinkers such as Ithiel de Sola Pool and his theories on the evolution of the press and the American communications systems, and some thinkers from the so-called Frankfurt School, including Andrew Feenberg and Herbert Marcuse. Although not directly applicable to the development of Open Park code of ethics for collaboration or the online news-reporting tools available through the OP platform, they certainly inspire the basic principles on which they are based – those of free, open and independent journalism. In Technologies of Freedom, de Sola Pool identifies the issue of handling the electronic media as “the salient free speech problem for this decade,” – and I would add for those beyond. Especially astute are his observations of how regulatory norms and legal system can act to restrict the use of technology, especially when efforts from all sides are made for the control of an emerging technology.

Feenberg’s analysis of Bruno Latour’s delegation theory in Questioning Technology could directly be relevant for my work on the OP code, as it looks for norms, obligations and other constraints that are embedded in new technologies and thus infringing on their users’ free use. Even more interestingly, Feenberg shows how Latour draws a direct connection between the design and use of technology and the core ethical values that one should keep in mind when using them. He quotes him as saying, “I will call... the behavior imposed back onto the human by non-human delegates prescription. Prescription is the moral and ethical dimension of mechanisms. In spite of the constant weeping of moralists, no human is as relentlessly moral as a machine... We have been able to delegate to nonhumans not only force as we have known it for centuries but also values, duties, and ethics. It is because of this morality that we, humans behave sp ethically, no matter how weak and wicked we feel we are.”
Generally, I find Feenberg’s own assessments, like those of Marcuse, very useful in thinking about how the political and economic power struggles for control of technologies and innovations have at times impeded free debate and people’s participation in public affairs.

**Study of the legal basis for the OP code**

As also mentioned in an earlier section, legal theory is my field of choice for building the theoretical arguments for a free, open platform and code of ethics for collaborative news-reporting. Mike Godwin’s *Cyber Rights – Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age* and Cass R. Sunstein’s *Republic.com 2.0* are two core texts for my thesis, because they capture my chief concern of protecting free expression in online debate forums and news events and coverage discussions, as well as the diversity of viewpoints in those forums. But these are not the only material to be consulted.

Watson’s *Journalism Ethics by Court Decree* is also a key text to include in our list as it adds an additional voice to the debate: that of the law in practice, which often clashes with journalists’ goals and behaviors. As Watson explains, “Journalists say they have chosen to serve the public interest and do so by following their codes of ethics. But this is neither true service nor true choice because the profession has chosen to retain the freedom to ignore the codes because freedom is a more cherished value.” As a journalist, this is for me hard to hear. Are we failing to enforce our diligently designed codes? Are they too strict? This constructive criticism, however, is very useful to make us rethink our ways and how we generate and enforce these codes of ethics for the journalism profession, starting with the OP one.

**Study of the ‘technologists’**

This is one of my least developed and informed areas of study, as I have only recently started to look at computer-aided co-located and remote collaboration and collective intelligence, or CSCW, recently, through Prs. Iroshi Ishii and Pattie Maes’ class “New Paradigms for Human-Computer Interaction” at the Media Lab.

The term computer supported cooperative work (CSCW), first coined by Irene Greif and Paul M. Cashman in 1984, focuses on the study of tools and techniques of groupware as well as their psychological, social, and organizational effects. And it is this inclusion of the larger societal component that I find the most interesting and possibly instructive for my elaboration and application of a code of ethics for collaborative journalists. Could such systems be used to generate and ease enforcement of a code within a newsroom or several remote newsrooms?

Among the texts and papers to be consulted here are those of Hiroshi Ishii, Minoru Kobayashi, and Kazuho Arita on Iterative Design of Seamless and Collaboration Media, and Douglas Engelbart, more specifically his research and tool-development for online collaboration and interactive human-computer interfaces.

Terry Winograd’ and Fernando Flores’ book *Understanding Computers and Cognition*, which is concerned with the design of computer-based systems to facilitate human work and interaction has an especially revealing chapter, “A Direction for Design,” as it explains how computers can be used as tools for conducting networked conversations and an open-ended collaborative design process for the technologies and services being used.

Finally, Dr. Charles Findley’s concept of collaborative learning-work, which he presented in 1987, may have especial significance for the various OP initiatives,
including its formulation of a code of ethics, since all are to be used by working professional journalists, but also serve as an open learning ground offering the tools to lean the technical skills of newsgathering and writing, as well as the value-based foundation of ethical decision-making for reporters and editors.

Here I must add that on top of this technological foundation for collaboration among virtual newsrooms, it would be recommended to add the perspectives of the new media theorists that we studied in our CMS classes over the past two semesters, namely, those dealing with participation, engagement, and self/user-generated collective action and organization facilitated through online environment. Since collaborative news-reporting and the open source collaborative generation of the code of ethics for Open Park will all take place through its website, the studies of such organizational activities by groups in online environments, including social networks such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter [since all of these might be used as news-reporting tools as well] is also called for. The analyses of young people’s participatory behavior in new digital media environments found in the MIT-Harvard Good Play Project, or in the observations of Robert A. Heverly and LSE researcher Sonia Livingstone can also most likely be applied to the collaborative endeavor or drafting a code of ethics with the input of its users. But even Bill Nichols’ analysis of cybernetic systems in “The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems” is informative for our own OP system, as in it he extols the “liberating potential” in “seeing ourselves as part of a larger whole that is self-regulating and capable of long-term survival.”

Finally, my own research last semester that identified the strengths and weaknesses of existing online collaborative news productions networks should certainly be consulted. Its current format, a list of ongoing news web initiative, both from traditional media outlets and from the digital natives, can also serve as the start of a database of case studies and models that future users of the OP platform can keep adding to, as they come across interesting applications.

. c Applied Ethics - the Open Park Case Studies

As said, I expect the field work that is part of the Open Park project and that will be conducted with journalism students from selected schools around the country to inform significantly the theoretical basis for a code of ethics for collaborative journalism, as well as guide its ethical foundation: the dilemmas encountered during these real-life news-reporting assignments, together with the solutions participants proposed following collaborative decision-making discussions may well form the basis for establishing certain mandates or other entries in the OP code. To stay true to its open source nature, these recommendations from users, even if they find their way into the code, should not be fixed in stone, but rather be open to amendments and additions as users find out more about the best way to deal with ethical issues in this digital age.

Similarly with regards to the open publishing nature of the Open Park project, many different experimental case studies, as well as actual news coverage can take place on the OP platform. It is certainly not my goal to close the doors to outside suggestions for good topics to cover, be it through a research case study or actual news-gathering
and writing for a news event happening in a community. But for the purpose of scalability and meeting the well-defined requirements of my CMS program and work as a Research Assistant at the C4FCM, I have decided to zero in on one major case study for the elaboration of the code of ethics for collaboration and for the OP project as a whole. I have added three smaller-scale case studies-exercises, one of which is meant to act as a preliminary test for the work on the main ones due to start with the students this fall.

One important common feature of all four case studies is that they are all concerned with giving a voice to the voiceless and those ethical issues related to biases, taboos and stereotypes and matters of diverse, multi-perspectival coverage of these communities. These issues all refer to the main area of concentration for my work on the OP code of ethics – as the first section in a list of sections to be added by future users of the site. Thus, I expect all four case studies, but especially the main one, to inform the formulation of my selected section of the code.

Last but not least, I should stress that the type of collaborative reporting that Open Park seeks to promote is multi-perspectival – presenting various angles and viewpoints on a topic. One of the main ways I will seek to achieve this is by covering a national issue – this case the case studies - from the perspective of various states, cities or towns, with student reporters covering the issue from their home location. This method can certainly be applied to the development of the code of ethics itself, since the input and experiences from these students-reporters, with their vastly varying journalistic educational background and experiences, are likely to generate different approaches to solving the ethical dilemmas their assignment may present.

**Descriptions:**

**The Russian Diaspora & US-Russia July Summit**

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has invited US President Barack Obama to a Summit on US-Russian relations in Moscow in July. What are the thoughts of Boston’s many Russian dissidents and intellectuals? What should Obama’s Russia policy be like? What is the future of US-Russia relations? These themes and questions will serve as basis for initial tests of the OP platform’s functionalities. The main planned activity will be a roundtable of Russia experts giving their thoughts on the Summit and Obama’s reception in Russia, as well as their prognosis for the future of cooperation between the two countries. Other activities will be planned around this live discussion, such as a preliminary debate on US-Russia relations one week prior to the event, and video footage of public opinions and responses from Russian citizens filmed on location [in Moscow] and viewable on the OP website. This would be a great way to give a voice to ordinary Russians who may not be able to do so through their own Russian state media. Depending on their availability, we may also interview some Russia-based experts.

Depending on journalism students’ availability and interest this summer, there will likely be opportunities for them to be involved in this coverage of the US-Russia summit. So far there has been interest in participation from Russia-based students who may provide us with on-location interviews.

**The US Exotic Dance Industry & Media Ethics**

I have selected this topic to be OP’s main case study because exotic dancers, both
male and female, in the US nightclub industry is a group of professionals that offers a
perfect media ethics case study as a community to report on as it is continuously
being covered in biased and manipulated ways by the media. By covering it
collaboratively, we can do a more balanced, better job. I plan to demonstrate this
argument through a single major or several smaller-scale news-reporting projects –
again, depending on where the students-participants’ interests lie.

**Latin/Spanish-Speaking Chefs & Cooks in US Upscale Restaurants**
This is a topic for a smaller-scale collaborative news-reporting, but one also
presenting an investigative angle, as all the facts of the story are not known yet. It
involves Spanish-speaking and other Latin immigrants who make up a very large
percentage of the chefs and cooks in mostly high end restaurants in the US, regardless
of cuisine, which is a group of professionals who are often underpaid and
unrecognized, even though they make up the backbone of the U.S. restaurant industry.
How many cases are there of such abuses? Where are these professional cooks? In
which cities? In which restaurants? Why don’t they speak up? This is an investigative
story par excellence.

**Russia’s African Communities**
This multimedia documentary project in collaboration with a Moscow-based
photojournalist covers the lives and issues of African migrants in Moscow and other
cities throughout Russia. Coverage opportunities include a comparison between
reporting on African-American’ and African-Russian communities. Another possible
collaborative news-reporting exercise is to cover the linguistic difficulties that African
immigrants in the United States experiment when they first arrive here and later on. It
would then be useful to compare how these communities here in the US and their
counterparts in Russia are dealing with these issues of adaptation and what each
country offers them in terms of help and support.

**Tasks:**

Once participating students have familiarized themselves with the four case studies,
assignments will be made on a voluntary basis – that is, they are free to choose which
case study to work on, as well as determine the extent to which they want to
contribute. They may opt to produce one article only, or several pieces in a larger
series. They may choose to join an already formed group of reporters, form one, or
initiate an idea that they are initially alone to cover, and once it has taken some shape
already, see if someone or several people can contribute to it by reporting on it from
their own bases/locations. I will still present the main case study as such – as this is
the one I have selected as my strongest one to support my argument for a
Collaborative approach to journalism and code of ethics to support it. But the format is
intentionally flexible, and it is part of the assignments themselves to encourage
students’ initiative and creativity.

Once they have selected a case study, students will be asked or encouraged to do the
following tasks:

- Define an issue or aspect of the community you have chosen to cover.
- Define the multiple locations or angles you plan to cover that issue or aspect.
Identify the people in these locations or likely to provide these different perspectives and approach them regarding collaborating on your story/project [most likely these will be other journalism students, but should you find freelance journalists interested in contributing to your project on a voluntary basis, they are welcome to join. In addition to students in other colleges, you may also team up with your own classmates.

Once you have formed your group of collaborating journalists, organize yourself – define tasks and feel free to designate an editor in your group, perhaps a researcher, etc.

Discuss and select with your team or reporters the format your report will take and the tools you will be using [a single long article, a photo-essay, a series of Twitter reports, etc.]

Write down the ethical dilemmas your selected story or community presents or may present. These may not be immediately obvious or perhaps cannot be anticipated. But write down what aspects of the story or of the communication with sources that may pose problem from an ethical point of view. Write down possible solutions or back up plans.

Select collectively a professional code of ethics and a professional style guide to be used for reference throughout the course of the assignment. As you go about your news-gathering tasks, take note of when and for what you are consulting them, if they meet your requirements and answer your questions, is there anything missing or not covered by the code?

Discuss these ethical dilemmas with your teammates, as well as the angle from which you and the group as a whole will cover the story.

Research if in your own area there have been coverage by the news media of similarly ethically sensitive stories – perhaps precisely on the same topic or community as yours. Keep a record of them.

Similarly, study the coverage of your topic/community by the media at large [in your own city, state, in the US, as well as by foreign English-language media outlets outside the US. Is there any prevalent voice, tone or focus in this coverage? Any recurring trends or treatment? Write down any problems of an ethical nature you may find with it, and ways to improve this news coverage.

Identify and contact your sources. Interview them. Make sure you give a voice to all sides in the story. Think of ways you could include other people, with different views and ideas on the subject/issue you are covering. Who are those likely to be most affected by your news coverage? What are their claims and how legitimate are they? Here, one interesting question to ask your sources is their opinion of the news coverage they are receiving [if any/if it applies]. Are they happy with it, if not, why not? What are their thoughts, praises or complaints? How can these be addressed ethically? What can you do, with the new media tools you have and the human resources you have to address their concerns and improve coverage of that community?
During your news-reporting activities, write down, individually and as a group, all difficulties or doubts of an ethical nature that occurred. Ask yourself “what are my ethical concerns?” These may take the form of an actual problem [conflict with a source, or an interesting discussion you had with your news-reporting team or editor. What was the outcome, how did you solve the difficulty or address the problem? Did you consult your code of ethics, was it of any help? If not, what would you add to its clauses? What other organizational policies and professional guidelines could you consider? These questions can be asked for both actual problems that occurred or hypothetical ones – so you are encouraged to take note of potential difficulties too.

Write down, individually and as a group, your conclusions on your assignment. In what ways do you think it has improved the coverage of this topic/community? Did you manage to make it more ethical than it usually is? How? In what ways did the new civic media tools help this multi-perspectival news coverage? When was the code of ethics useful and when was it lacking? Would it have been more useful if it took into account the new media tools you were using [ex: Twitter, Facebook, etc]? What are the possible effects/consequences of your new kind of coverage? How does the finished news product and its impact differ than if you have been using traditional media format, rather than a digital one?

If you were to write your own code of ethics for collaborative journalism, using the one you chose as basis, what would you change or add in order to improve and address the issues you encountered covering your specific case study?

This is an initial list, by all means not complete or fixed in stone, and participating students are encouraged to submit their own suggestions for ways of covering assignments or for questions to be addressed.

Also, the case studies and the whole Open Park platform have been designed with flexibility of use and the users’ freedom and preferences in mind, so that should a journalism professor at a participating university or college could turn his students’ work on a case study into a class assignment for credit. He/she could assign the proposed tasks or adapt them to his/her own pedagogic needs and interests and those of the class. The case studies and tasks I am proposing are very specific, but the philosophy behind the project is quite open and flexible.

Finally, a couple of important notes should be made regarding the methodology of applied ethics for these case studies:

Concerns have been voiced with regards to developing standards of ethical journalism using students rather than working professional journalists – since the latter group is essentially those for whom those standards will eventually apply in real life situations. It is a perfectly understandable concern since the developmental ‘test’ phase of the project within the walls of MIT presents a much different scenario than once the OP platform is in the hands of communities of journalists, media producers and interested citizens to cover the news in their regions. The current developmental status of the project puts it under certain constraints related to the successful completion of one case study for the C4FCM and of the first formulation of the code of ethics for my CMS thesis, as well as protects it from the real life consequences of daily news-reporting.
However, I would like to stress that even under those special circumstances, the essential core values of Open Park and of principled, ethical journalism that it promotes remain unchanged and apply to all users, present and future, student and trained expert. The journalism students who will be engaged in working on the case studies will be held to the same standards of freedom of speech, responsibility, independence, integrity, accuracy, and all the other qualities that make for ethical, professional journalism. Thus, the same rules, standards, ethical principles and expectations of adherence to them apply to all, regardless of professional status. The OP code and its principles are meant to be universal – like all professional codes of ethics. An uneven application of standards is reminiscent of authoritarian regimes, which tend to apply the law selectively.

The only difference I anticipate in my use of students for these case studies is that I will make the conscious decision not to send them on potentially risky or dangerous assignments or those likely to entail legal complications. This is of course the nature of investigative journalism and covering controversial issues such as stereotypes and taboos. But I will do my best to minimize the risk of legal implications for them. Sending them off to cover the dealings of the Russian mafia in Boston and other U.S. cities, which I hear is quite active in the country, would be irresponsible for safety reasons. Of course I cannot foresee all the twists and turns their collaborative story assignments will involve and the difficulties they may entail. But I would think it extremely unlikely that any of the proposed case studies would lead to dangerous situations or legal complications such as a lawsuit. Students would be well advised to inform me and their supervising teachers of any such complications arising in the course of their assignments.

This special caution in exposing my project participants to such legally problematic situations is the only essential difference I anticipate in working with students versus professionals.

The beauty of practicing ethical news-reporting using Open Park’s case studies and ‘doing ethics’ in a classroom context is that in the secure zone of their academic environment, among their peers and under the guidance of their teachers, journalism students can take the time to explore the various nuances of ethical decision-making and can make mistakes, analyze them, and try again by reproducing their piece news coverage from a more ethical perspective – and all this, without penalty. This is a luxury that media professionals do not have. As they study and discuss their mistakes and have a second go at their assignment, students can use hypothetical situations, revisit even real case studies, leave some questions unanswered or issues hanging with impunity – without running the risk of breaking a promise to a source, offending one’s audience, or running into trouble with the authorities.

This will be achieved in great part by telling very clearly all the sources used in the case studies the terms and nature of the students’ news coverage. Any disagreement or concerns on their part should be addressed before news-gathering starts.

Students are due to start working on their selected case studies at the beginning of the fall semester. There are no specific deadlines for them yet, as this will depend very much on what type of case study they are working on, with how many collaborators,
etc. But in general, there is no fixed limit to the time they want to spend on a news-reporting assignment – except the one deadline I will give for me to receive their reports and draw my conclusions for the Code of Ethics and my thesis. But this means that as they work on OP in their class setting, they can spend time thinking about journalism ethics. This is something they won’t be able to do once they are working journalists. Deadlines are not a good time to engage in such reflections on ethics and to make complicated corrections in their reporting and writing. Once they are under fire - that will be the perfect time to apply the skills and critical thinking they will have learned while working on the OP case studies. They will be able to ask the right questions and make ethical decisions on the spot, at the moment they are needed.

This is why concerns that classroom ethics case studies aren’t ‘real’ should be allayed. Students will be better prepared to handle the tough, real cases once they have gone through the ‘easy’ ones in the class setting.

These considerations can also be applied to the more concrete instance of covering the controversial issues faced by a group of professionals such as the exotic dancers of the main OP case study. Although certain concerns from conservative quarters might be understandable, such as exposing students to such a loosely regulated community, one must say that it is much better for them to do so with the safety net that a class assignment and an MIT project offer. One must not forget too that once they graduate, they will be faced with such community news-reporting tasks. Last but not least, such topics as taste, taboos, stereotypes and the law are standard material in basic journalism news-reporting and writing textbooks. OP offers the chance to actually put in practice this material.

Finally, these classroom exercises in applied ethics directly serve the original goal of the Open Park project, which is to formulate an improved and sustainable model for collaborative journalism supported by its own code of ethics, and to develop it into a toolbox for collaborative news-reporting to be used by communities of professional journalists, freelancers and engaged citizens. The purpose of this toolbox is not only to offer the new media tools and techniques best adapted to non-competitive group journalism, but also to train those citizen journalists and other non-skilled users in covering the news collaboratively and ethically. I am confident that these students’ work and answers to the ethical issues they will encounter while covering their case studies will inspire the formulation of the code, and even directly inform some entries.

6] Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to remember that codes of ethics don’t have all the answers. They have limitations – if only because there are a lot of disagreement and different opinions as to what makes a good code of ethics, and on how best to enforce them. This is a reality one should keep in mind as I set out to lay the first stone of this new code specifically designed for the new collaborative modes of news production. Ethics codes cannot possibly cover all the potential problems that may arise as a result of news-gathering. This is especially true in the still porous and fast-changing terrain of new media and their use as a journalistic tool, where practices and standards have not yet been established.
In view of this, I will seek through my formulation of a code of ethics for new collaborative media production to urge my journalism students and future users of Open Park to develop a personal ethical credo that will guide them in making decisions based on consistent justifications - a way of thinking based on ethics that would apply from case to case, from source to source, from ethical dilemma to ethical dilemma. It is clear that such a system of thought, based on a strong ethical foundation yet able to deal with new cases, requires more than a code. It needs debate. Open debate. Not a list of dos and don’ts.

As Bruce W. Sanford, counsel to the Society of Professional Journalists, wrote “History teaches that the most effective way to promote ethical behavior is through discussion and information, not enforcement.”

And in an 1987 article in the Associated Press Managing Editors publication, Ethics Codes: Sunrise or Sunset?, Sanford quotes Geoffrey Hazard as saying, “Ethical principles can be established only as a result of deliberation and argumentation. These principles are not the kind of thing that can be settled by fiat, agreement or by authority. To assume that they can is to confuse ethics with lawmaking, rule-making, policy-making and other kinds of decision-making.”

It is such a deliberative process that Open Park seeks to apply to both collaborative news-reporting and the drafting of its code of ethics. My ultimate goal for the OP code is that it will guide users in making ethical journalistic decisions, not force them upon these users, which is why the entire OP project is based on collaboration, on democratic participation and deliberation. To achieve this, it needs to be open. The Open Park code of ethics will be on the OP website, in a special section open to all users to consult, comment on and contribute to. As of June 1, the section has been created: http://openpark.media.mit.edu/node/21

Perhaps this paper, which lays down the groundwork of the elaboration of this code, could be its first item?...

7] Table of Content

Chapter 1: Introduction - Why New Journalism Needs a New Code
. Defining collaborative journalism and online news production, and the ‘non-competitive’ model
. Defining the professional journalism practice and media ethics
. Defining codes of ethics and codes for the news media
. Open Park: an introduction - The professional practice, the technology, the business plan
. Open Park: Guiding values and principles
. The Open Park code of ethics for collaborative journalism: A solution?

Chapter 2: Needs & Goals - My Core Argument
. Defining the area of focus: bias, taste, taboos and stereotypes, and the law
. Goal: How to provide fair, multi-perspectival news coverage of voiceless communities?
. Sub-goals: - Redefining the journalistic code of ethics as a living document
. Introducing a new approach: Hyper-local news-reporting on a national, global level
Chapter 3: Issues & Research Questions

1. Ethical dilemmas: Defining issues in media ethics and ethics codes
   1] Ethics, the law and journalism
   2] Early codes
   3] Modern codes
   4] The process of generating codes: from concept to draft, and from institutionalization to enforcement

2. Research questions: Defining the type of dilemmas
   1] Basic reporting principles
   2] Types of beats
   3] The law and codes of ethics on bias, taste, taboos and stereotypes
   4] Ethical dilemmas for online collaborating media professionals

Chapter 4: Seeking Solutions Through Selected Methodologies

a. Current Codes of Ethics: What can we learn and take from them?
   1] Ethics, the law and journalism: Various views on codes’ design and enforcement
   2] Early, existing and future codes: Strengths and weaknesses, what features to keep or introduce

b. Theoretical Methodologies: The classical roots of journalism ethics
   1] Political science: Ethics and state institutions
   2] Philosophy: Ethics and the search for truth and morality
   3] Economics: Ethics and the marketplace
   4] Study of the legal basis for the OP code: Defending free speech and other rights on the Net
   5] Study of the technologists and participatory new media theorists:
      . Computer supported cooperative work (CSCW) and collaborative learning-work: How ethically-minded are they?
      . Online social networks and participatory new media services: To regulate or not to regulate through a code of ethics?

c. Applied Ethics – the Open Park Case Studies

Descriptions:

1. The Russian Diaspora & US-Russia July Summit
   - Who?
   - Where?
   - What? [Issue]
   - Ethical dilemma:
   - Solutions:

2. The US Exotic Dance Industry & Media Ethics
   - Who?
   - Where?
   - What? [Issue]
   - Ethical dilemma:
- Solutions:

. Latin/Spanish-Speaking Chefs & Cooks in US Upscale Restaurants
- Who?
- Where?
- What? [Issue]
- Ethical dilemma:
- Solutions:

. Russia’s African Communities
- Who?
- Where?
- What? [Issue]
- Ethical dilemma:
- Solutions:

Tasks:

. Discussion: Defining the rights questions to ask
. Assignments: Distributing the tasks and sharing skills and resources
. Implementation: Hyper-local/national news-gathering and -reporting
. Results: Observations and conclusions for drafting the OP code

Chapter 5: The Open Park Code of Ethics for Collaborative Journalism - a Proposed Draft

. Introduction: Statement of purpose for a new code
. Special note on area of focus: bias, taste, taboos and stereotypes, and the law
I. Responsibility
II. Freedom of the Press - Offline and Online
III. Ethics in the Digital Age
IV. Accuracy and Objectivity
V. Fair Play
V. Pledge
Note: This proposed code is temporarily based on the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists and will be changed according to the OP principles following observations of the OP case studies.

Chapter 6: Conclusion – Why New Journalism Needs the Open Park Code of Ethics

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