Introduction to Citizen Journalism and Social Media Archiving Minitrack

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HICSS-48 marks the inaugural year for the Citizen Journalism and Social Media Archiving minitrack, and it comes at an opportune time, because the adoption of social media content as a journalistic source alongside the practice of citizen journalism, aided by the immediacy of social media as a publishing tool and the ubiquity of mobile communication devices, are reaching significant proportions. The Irish Social Journalism Survey (2014), for example, reveals that 99% of professional journalists in Ireland use social media in conducting their work, and comparable surveys from other countries reveal similarly high adoption rates.

The exponential growth of social media as a central communication practice, and its agility in announcing breaking news events more rapidly than traditional media, has changed the journalistic landscape: social media has been adopted as a significant source by professional journalists, and conversely, citizens are able to use social media as a form of direct reportage. Social media content now forms a significant part of the digital content generated every day, and provides a platform for voices that would not reach the broader public through traditional journalistic media alone. In this emerging environment, citizen microblogs and other user-generated content constitute an important part of history and popular memory, in particular when attempting to capture significant events and the varied perspectives that accompany these events.

Traditional journalism has well-developed archival practices, enabling the news production lifecycle to reuse and rediscover content. In contrast, the flow of citizen generated reporting through social media is ephemeral and disordered; it quickly becomes inaccessible if not captured and stored in some way. This new landscape calls for new technologies and methodologies to 1) rapidly and efficiently capture, filter and verify content in a way that generates immediate value for journalistic purposes; and 2) properly annotate and archive this information for longer-term preservation, access and reuse in the news life-cycle (e.g. for contextualisation, investigative reporting or comprehensive storytelling).

A host of research questions arise around the role of social media in the news production lifecycle, and this minitrack is initiated to start the conversation at HICSS-48. Citizen Journalism and Social Media Archiving minitrack focuses on the areas of citizen/social journalism and social media archiving, which pose distinct, yet complementary, research challenges. By pairing these topics in one multidisciplinary minitrack we hope to stimulate an exchange of ideas between multiple domains of research and industry, including news media, digital archiving and preservation, social network analysis, semantic web and linked data, communication studies and cultural studies. This first year, we present three papers as follows:

“Tracing Emergent Structure in Self-organized Citizen Journalism” by Daniel Nylen, draws on complexity theory to trace how participants in an online discussion board practice collective citizen journalism to establish facts about a local crime.

“Trustworthy Citizen-generated Images and Video on Social Media Platforms” by Jessica Bushey takes an interdisciplinary approach to challenges associated with digital images, including trustworthiness, the importance of metadata, and procedures for proper archiving and preservation.

“What just happened? A Framework for Social Event Detection and Contextualisation”, by Prashant Khare, Pablo Torres and Bahareh Heravi presents an event detection and contextualisation framework for social media content, specifically to assist journalists and news editors for breaking news detection and reporting.

We would like to extend our appreciation to the authors who submitted to this minitrack, as well as the reviewers who dedicate their time to furthering the research of our contributors. We are looking forward to the continued growth and evolution of this emerging interdisciplinary and exciting field of research.