

Southern New Hampshire University

Sports Blogging: Bridging the Gap
Between Journalism and Academics

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial
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By

Robert D'Angelo

Riverview, Florida

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Student: Robert D'Angelo

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Southern New Hampshire University
College of Online and Continuing Education

Date

Abstract

ROBERT D'ANGELO
Department of History, April 2018
Southern New Hampshire University

Blogging has been an online activity for more than two decades, and its impact has been felt in the journalism and academic communities. In its infancy, the sports blog consisted of an author posting links to other sources. Since then, sports blogs have been used as a journalistic tool by industry professionals and amateurs to break news, provide analysis and context to issues of the day. Likewise, scholars have begun to realize the potential for blogs to reach out to a larger and more diverse audience, using its sense of immediacy to keep up with changing trends in academic sports history. This thesis will show that a bridge has been formed that connects sports journalism with scholarly research. Bridging the gap between sports journalism and digital history has the potential of opening new areas of legitimacy while bringing more credibility to online work. Twenty years after its inception, blogging about sports has positioned itself to connect the immediacy of sports journalism and the long-lasting effects of scholarly journals.

Dedication

To my wife Sandra, whose love, encouragement and support sustained and inspired me as I worked toward a master's degree in history at Southern New Hampshire University. It's one thing to dream about achievement; it's much more meaningful when it is accomplished. Getting there has been a challenging journey that could not have been done without my partner and best friend encouraging me to take my studies to the next level.

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List of Abbreviations

A.D.: Anno Domini, a Latin phrase for “in the year of our Lord.” It signifies the number of years since the birth of Jesus Christ.

HTML: Hyper Text Markup Language, which is the standard markup language used for creating web pages and web applications, such as bold and italic type, paragraph indents, paragraph centering and other functions.

MD: Doctor of Medicine.

NFL: National Football League.

NPR: National Public Radio.

RSS: Known as a Rich Site Summary and sometimes referred to as Really Simple Syndication. This is a web feed that allows users to access updates to online content by using a standardized, computer-readable format.

SEO: Search engine optimization. This is the process of attracting traffic from free, organic, editorial or natural results on search engines.

URL: Uniform Resource Locator, also known as a web address. It references a web resource that allows the user to retrieve a web page.

Introduction: Welcome to the Toy Department

Through the years, sports journalism has been labeled condescendingly as “the toy department” or “the sandbox” of the news media. In 2007, Australian professor David Rowe conceded that while there was “an element of cultural snobbery” behind those labels, sports journalism should not be exempt from the professional standards of news gathering, research and reporting.¹ In a parallel sense, that scrutiny dovetails nicely with authors of scholarly articles about sports journalism and sports history. A newer method for addressing sports history is the blog, which had its infancy in the final decade of the twentieth century and has since assumed a more forceful and relevant role on the internet. Like newspaper reporting, traditional journals have been one-sided in scope — Mark Deuze neatly categorized it as the “we write, you read” concept — but the internet has altered the playing field as readers “push back” at sportswriters and bloggers by commenting on their work in real time.²

That has allowed scholarly blogs to assume more relevance, with audience interaction a bonus. “The ability to translate scholarly work to a mainstream platform is something that can be beneficial to the audience,” said University of Florida journalism professor Ted Spiker, “as well as the knowledge, to help people understand it better.”³ Bloggers can view their posts as part of a useful forum of scholarly action and reaction. Alex Sayf Cummings and Jonathan Jarrett compare the role of professional scholars to fishermen, and it is a fitting analogy for bloggers.⁴ In

¹ David Rowe, “Sports Journalism: Still the ‘Toy Department’ of the News Media?” *Journalism*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (August 1, 2007), 285.

² Mark Deuze, “The Web and its Journalisms: Considering the Consequences of Different Types of News Media Online,” *New Media & Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2003), 220.

³ Ted Spiker, email to author, December 16, 2017.

⁴ Alex Sayf Cummings and Jonathan Jarrett, “Only Typing? Informal Writing, Blogging, and the Academy,” *Writing History in the Digital Age*, Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, eds. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2013), 252.

their posts, bloggers throw out ideas like commercial fisherman casting nets, and then pull those nets back to safety to harvest the compliments and criticisms. Like a net, the internet can be a catch-all tool, but bloggers can toss back irrelevant responses at their own discretion.

That leads into this paper's thesis: Blogs are becoming the bridge that connects sports journalism and scholarly research. The time is ripe, Stephen Robertson argued in 2015, "to bridge the gap" between digital history and other fields, such as sports journalism.⁵ Blogging is positioned to become that bridge between the immediacy of sports journalism and the long-lasting effects of scholarly journals.

Through the years, the platforms of passing along news and information have changed. Even before the ancient Greeks, people communicated both orally and by writing letters. Eventually, three dominant platforms would emerge, with one supplanting the other: printing, broadcasting and digital.⁶ Blogs are the natural descendants of newspapers, radio and television. Rebecca MacKinnon, a research fellow at the Harvard Law School, asserted in 2008 that because of blogs, "professionals have lost their monopoly over information."⁷ Not only in the reporting of information, she argued, but also in how that information is framed in letting the public know what is important. "Journalists have been slow to understand why they owe a debt to bloggers," she wrote. "If we look at tapping distributed knowledge around the web, the people who know how to do that are bloggers."⁸

⁵ Stephen Robertson, "Foreword," *Sport History in the Digital Age*, Gary Osmond and Murray G. Phillips, eds. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press), ix.

⁶ Elliott King, *Free For All: The Internet's Transformation of Journalism* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 5.

⁷ Rebecca MacKinnon, "Blogging Significantly Influences Mainstream Journalism," *Blogs*, Sylvia Engdahl, ed. (Farmington, Michigan, 2008), 120.

⁸ MacKinnon, 124.

So, what are blogs? In the simplest, descriptive form, they are web pages where its newest content appears at the top of the page. One does not need technical savvy or extensive knowledge of Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) code to create a blog; there are websites that provide templates for beginners, and more complicated coding tools for advanced users.⁹ Blogs, S. Shyam Sundar wrote in 2006, can be “deeply personal” because they can serve as a diary or a journal and can cater to a limited group of people. Sometimes those people are friends or interested colleagues; other times, they are lurkers or “trolls,” who stir up trouble or controversy. Blogs are mostly shared “without access restrictions,” which make them an example of mass communication on the web.¹⁰ Many bloggers point their readers to other sources that buttress their arguments through the use of links, which gives readers instant perspective from another source; one click of a mouse takes readers from the main article to one that gives vital background information.

Wendy Parker, a longtime journalist and publisher of *Sports Biblio*, a weekly blog about sports books, notes the changes in sports media in the past decade “have been astonishing.” “A whole new generation of sportswriters has grown up with writing online, and many former print veterans are taking their work there as well,” she said. “This is the place to be, and it’s going to continue to evolve in dramatic ways.”¹¹ With the decline of newspapers over the past decade, more writers began gravitating toward online writing. At first there was hesitation, because the

⁹ Dunja Antunovic and Marie Hardin, “Women Bloggers: Identity and the Conceptualization of Sports,” *New Media & Society*, Vol. 15, No. 6 (December 2013), 1375.

¹⁰ S. Shyam Sundar, “Self as Source: Agency and Customization in Interactive Media,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Dresden International Congress Centre, Dresden Germany, June 19, 2006, 3, accessed February 28, 2018, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/9/2/5/3/pages92534/p92534-1.php

¹¹ Wendy Parker, email to author, December 16, 2017.

traditional mind-set of guarding information until the newspaper was printed remained a real obstacle for sports journalists. However, once sports journalists saw the value of breaking news online, the internet became an ally, rather than an adversary. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram give reporters a connection to their audience as they deliver information in real time, but for more depth and analysis, reporting online and blogging are becoming useful tools.

Bloggers have the luxury of space and time. There is no limitation to how much a blogger can write on a topic at one sitting. There is no cost for printing ink and newsprint, and there are no space constraints that a writer might find at a newspaper, magazine or journal. Unlike a broadcaster, who must edit their piece to fit within a time frame that can be as little as two minutes, bloggers can be expansive and fully explain their arguments. Bloggers can write as much as they want, but they also are cognizant of the attention span of their audiences. A long, rambling post can be dismissed by a reader with the simple click of a mouse. Keeping the audience engaged is a priority for online writers. Dan Shanoff, who made the transition from writing a column on ESPN's website to creating his own blog, pointed to the *D.C. Sports Blog* by Dan Steinberg of *The Washington Post* as the template for how mainstream media should approach blogs: "Original reporting, distinct (and likeable) voice," and "a fundamental understanding of the sports blog universe."¹²

The luxury of time means that bloggers are not confined to a specific deadline; they can react to a new piece of information and update their posts in real time. That gives a blogger the advantage of fresher material, and while scholars may approach their writing more earnestly and delay before publishing, a timely update can lend more credibility to his or her topic. Not having

¹² "Blogger Interviews: Dan Shanoff," *The Big Picture*, February 15, 2007, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://zachls.blogspot.com/2007/02/blogger-interviews-dan-shanoff.html>

to worry about the time factor and deadline pressure gives a blogger an advantage over a broadcast journalist, who must tell a story and include compelling visual footage — all within a framework that could be as little as two minutes of airtime. Airtime is precious, and television journalists fight to get that exposure; space on the blogosphere is unlimited, and there is room for anyone who wants to write a public thought or opinion.

Clearly, bloggers serve as gatekeepers. Sundar argues that there is “something seductive” about being a source of information, just as it is alluring to see one’s byline on a story or an academic journal article.¹³ Bloggers are becoming “more and more” of a primary source for news and rumors, Shanoff asserts.¹⁴ Being “out there” in public feeds the ego, and when writers demonstrate consistent knowledge and analysis, they become a trusted source for others. According to Statista, a website that gathers and analyzes statistics, 28.3 million internet users in the United States updated a blog at least once a month in 2015. The site projects that by 2020, that number is expected to rise to 31.7 million.¹⁵ That is a very large number of egos out there, dying to be stroked.

Blogs have become the bridge between sports journalism and scholarly writing about sports. Introductions have already been made to the media’s “toy department.” The following chapters will explore whether blogs and scholarship are compatible, and whether blogs can be accepted as scholarship. And if so, under what guidelines and circumstances? Can the informality of the blog still convey a sense of scholarship, or must there be a strict structure in place? Peer review has always been a cornerstone of scholarly research; citations can be used in

¹³ Sundar, 12.

¹⁴ “Blogger Interviews: Dan Shanoff,” *The Big Picture*.

¹⁵ “Number of Bloggers in the United States from 2014 to 2020,” Statista.com, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/187267/number-of-bloggers-in-usa/>

blogs, but is that enough to qualify them as legitimate forms of study? These are interesting questions.

Traditional scholarly writing is targeted to a specific readership, but blogging can reach a wider audience because of the internet. Being able to connect in real time with readers, and the ability to correct mistakes or update information, is a decided advantage. Adding explanations, context and amplification also create credibility. Critics point to bloggers' traditional tendency to "jump" into a conversation without thought and research to back up claims. Bill Press, a talk show host based in Washington, D.C., said blogs were like "ejaculations." "That would explain," authors Howard Rosenberg and Charles S. Feldman noted wryly, "why so many are premature."¹⁶ While the dysfunction between bloggers and academics may not be physical, it certainly has been a subject of scorn by its critics.

In 2004, Barbie Zelizer fretted that scholarship in journalism had evolved "into a terrain with many noncommunicative neighborhoods."¹⁷ She noted that the term "journalist" originally referred to someone who wrote in a journal or diary. That definition, originally assigned by the French *Journal des Savants* during the seventeenth century, was broadened in its usage, encompassing "reporting, criticism, editorializing, and the conferral on the shape of things."¹⁸

Blogging also can be used as a forum for floating new ideas and concepts. Blogs provide more two-way communication than the traditional author-to-reader path, and that helps engage the audience more. If mistakes are made, then the blogger can correct it, quickly and seamlessly.

¹⁶ Howard Rosenberg and Charles S. Feldman, *No Time to Think: The Menace of Media Speed and the 24-Hour News Cycle* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 67.

¹⁷ Barbie Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously: News and the Academy* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2004), 9.

¹⁸ G. Stuart Adam, *Notes Towards a Definition of Journalism: Understanding and Old Craft as an Art Form* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Poynter Institute, 1993), 12.

Unlike newspapers, there won't be a permanent, easily accessible record of the mistake: "Dewey Defeats Truman," the *Chicago Tribune's* erroneous headline after Election Day in 1948, is a classic example. For blogs, once typed over, the mistake is theoretically gone, and updates are made. Deep-diving computer technicians can probably find the original posting before it was corrected, but the public is less likely to bother.

Journalism, John Herbert wrote in 2000, is all about news and information. Journalists learn facts and report them, assembling them in a cohesive manner and deciding what facts to keep in a story and what to omit. Other qualities Herbert sees in good journalists are a natural curiosity, good interviewing skills, clear thinking and the ability to simplify difficult concepts. Those concepts are just as relevant in sports journalism. Herbert concludes that journalists who succeed possess practical skills and "a wide intellectual foundation," and that brings credibility to the reporting that is done.¹⁹

Bloggers have a rich pedigree, and the third chapter will provide their genealogy. That will include the emergence, dominance and — in some cases — decline of newspapers, magazines, radio, television and cable television. What were the defining moments in sports journalism, particularly during the twentieth century when technology began to change at an alarmingly rapid rate? Newspapers were dominated by big-name sports columnists, particularly in New York, the nation's most competitive market. Sports radio meant play-by-play announcers, with baseball broadcasters like Red Barber, Mel Allen, Harry Caray, Ernie Harwell, Jack Buck and Vin Scully paving the way for broadcasters who learned to adapt to a 24-hour news cycle. Television also focused on play-by-play announcers until Howard Cosell brought a

¹⁹ John Herbert, *Journalism in the Digital Age: Theory and Practice for Broadcast, Print and On-Line Media* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Focal Press, 2000), ix.

sharp mind and abrasive personality to the table. Cosell “not only created” sports broadcast journalism, Dave Kindred wrote in 2006, but also “showed how it best could be done.” That was by doing the reporting and thinking necessary to form and express a strong opinion.²⁰

Those are the qualities that good bloggers — and good journalists, for that matter — need to excel in the business. They cannot fall into the trap, as the late *Miami Herald* sports editor Edwin Pope once wrote, of “Gullible’s Travels.”²¹

It is interesting, when referring to the definition of journalist, that some writers believe that looking back in history “is not something that comes naturally” to journalists.²² That is what the fourth chapter will examine, noting the past through a literature review that will include newspaper and television reporting, following by the emergence of blogs during the late 1990s and early twenty-first century. A lack of comprehensive primary sources, particularly with documents, makes the comparison between blogs, journalism and academics difficult, but not impossible. Secondary sources will prove to be more useful, as essays about blogging began to emerge a decade ago.

The ethics of blogging, while ideally should follow the guidelines set out by journalists and academics, remain a murky area. Accountability issues from posting on the internet have not reached the United States’ highest courts, but as Ball State University telecommunications professor Dom Caristi notes, laws “that exist in the physical world also exist online.”²³

²⁰ Dave Kindred, *Sound and Fury: Two Powerful Lives, One Fateful Friendship* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 324.

²¹ Edwin Pope, *The Edwin Pope Collection* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1988), xviii.

²² Nancy J. Woodhull and Robert W. Snyder, eds., *Defining Moments in Journalism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1998), xiii.

²³ Dom Caristi, email to author, November 3, 2017.

The decline of print journalism has forced readers to migrate online for their sources of information. Blogs that focus on sports history, trends, richly detailed features and personality sketches, analysis and “think pieces” create readership interest. Hard copy, such as newspapers, books and magazines, are rapidly becoming extinct. The internet provides the permanence and adaptability that newspapers and sports scholars have sought but could never achieve. Access is easier and unlimited on the internet, and that enables the flow of information to reach more people. Those could be the factors that could remove the perception that sports bloggers — and sports journalists — are still part of media’s toy department. Or, as David Rowe relates, an occupation that is “conceived out of wedlock.”²⁴

²⁴ David Rowe, “Modes of Sports Writing,” in *Journalism and Popular Culture*, edited by Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 98.

Chapter 1: Blogging and Scholarship: Are They Compatible?

At its best, sports journalism and scholarship blend two diverse elements into a creative, peaceful coexistence. It can be a happy marriage. At its worst, there lies a testy relationship marked by distrust and sidelong glances. Journalism is an active, aggressive medium, always changing, vibrant and boisterous like a garrulous father. Scholarship is more sedate and measured, with the calm, steady hand of a protective mother. Enter the sports blog, which draws traits from both: the immediacy of information in real time, call-and-respond opinions from the public, and the potential for in-depth, scholarly analysis.

Before there were blogs and online columns, newspaper reporters would have been the voices of record after a big event. Chris Ballard uses the example of Kobe Bryant scoring 81 points for the Los Angeles Lakers against the Toronto Raptors on January 22, 2006, as an example. It took a full news cycle for many print outlets to report the news, but internet columnists and bloggers had beaten the print writers to the punch, posting opinions and analysis within minutes of the final buzzer. In this digital age, Ballard writes, “we all can be real-time observers,” and opinion “often trumps fact,” rendering the print media almost an afterthought.²⁵ Dana Hull echoed those concerns, noting that while blogs are supposed to be “fun and free-wheeling,” there is a clash of values between newspapers, which has a journalistic reputation and brand name to worry about, and blogs, which grew because “it flouted many of journalism’s traditional rules.”²⁶

²⁵ Chris Ballard, “Writing Up a Storm,” *Sports Illustrated*, March 27, 2006, accessed January 4, 2018, <https://www.si.com/vault/2006/03/27/8373295/writing-up-a-storm>

²⁶ Dana Hull, “Blogging Between the Lines,” *American Journalism Review*, December 2006/January 2007, accessed January 4, 2018, <http://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?id=4230>

Hull sounded the alarm a decade ago. In the ensuing years, the relationship of blogs to sports journalism and sports academic history has raised several key questions. Can blogging be scholarship? Is the informal culture of blogging a help or hindrance in achieving scholarship? Does scholarly blogging reach a wider audience because of its immediacy? And can blogging be a stalking horse for new ideas in sports scholarship?

Attempting to answer the question of blogging as scholarship attracts diverse opinions — and in some cases, some very passionate ones. Benjamin Alpers, associate professor of American Intellectual and Cultural History at the University of Oklahoma, noted in 2014 that his initial answer of whether blogging was scholarship was “of course ... sometimes.” He writes that what makes blogging scholarship is the same thing that gives an essay, a conference paper or a book legitimacy: “accuracy, significance, and some combination of original research and original thought.”²⁷ Purdue University’s Andrew McGregor has acknowledged that some bloggers, like Ann Little of *Historiann*, argue that a “lack of formal peer review” prevented blogging from being considered scholarly.²⁸ David Parry scoffs at this notion, asking why academics argue for “small-panel, anonymous peer review.”²⁹ Parry asserts that diversity of views and perspective can only enrich scholarly writing and advocates a more wide-open style of vetting. He argues that by using the blogging model, the traditional filter-and-publish route of peer review is rapidly being reversed to a publish first, filter later mindset. Rebecca Blood, author of *The Weblog*

²⁷ Benjamin Alpers, “Is Blogging Scholarship?” Society for U.S. Intellectual History, April 14, 2014, accessed November 27, 2017, <https://s-usih.org/2014/04/is-blogging-scholarship>

²⁸ Andrew McGregor, “The Power of Blogging: Rethinking Scholarship and Reshaping Boundaries at *Sport in American History*,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol 44, No. 2 (Summer 2017), 241.

²⁹ David Parry, “Burn the Boats/Books,” *Hacking the Academy: New Approaches to Scholarship and Teaching from Digital Humanities*, eds. Daniel J. Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2013), accessed January 21, 2018, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/dh/12172434.0001.001/1:2/--hacking-the-academy-new-approaches-to-scholarship?g=dculture;rgn=div1;view=toc;xc=1>

Handbook and a blogger since 1999, asserts that blogs have the power to transform writers and readers from “audience to public,” and from “consumer to creator.”³⁰ Interaction between author and audience is also a key element in powering the effectiveness of blogs.

Some critics of blogging as scholarship were more strident. Andrew Keen, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur and a vocal critic of blogs, warned in 2007 that “we are blogging with monkeylike shamelessness about our private lives, our sex lives, our dream lives, our lack of lives. ... In the time it took you to read this paragraph, ten new blogs have been launched.”³¹ Owning a computer and having an idea, Keen wrote, “doesn’t transform one into a serious journalist any more than having access to a kitchen makes one into a serious cook.”³² Keen raised the question of legitimacy, because critics of blogs cite lack of research and haphazard fact-checking as their biggest concerns about accepting bloggers as potential journalists or scholars. Just because a statement appears on the internet, that does not make it a fact. Proper vetting before publishing is crucial to ensure credibility, and Keen remains skeptical that bloggers have the time, talent or inclination to do so.

Dan Cohen, a professor of history at Northeastern University who also blogs, anticipated Keen’s argument in 2006, writing that “no rule book mandates” that bloggers should adopt the writing style of a “hormone-crazed” college student.³³ Twelve years later, Cohen still believes

³⁰ Rebecca Blood, “Weblogs: A History and Perspective,” *Rebecca’s Pocket*, September 7, 2000, accessed January 25, 2018, http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html

³¹ Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today’s Internet is Killing Our Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 3.

³² Keen, 47.

³³ Dan Cohen, “Professors, Start Your Blogs,” August 21, 2006, accessed December 20, 2017, <http://www.dancohen.org/2006/08/21/professors-start-your-blogs>

that blogs can be scholarly “if you choose to approach them in the right way.” That would be with “citations, thoughtfulness and a certain length.”³⁴

Geert Lovink, the founder of the Institute of Network Culture and an associate professor at the University of Amsterdam, quotes a poster from a 2005 blog called “The Personal Memoirs of Randi Mooney.” The poster notes that “Blogging is a form of vanity publishing.” “The truth is that blogs consist of senseless teenage waffle,” Lovink wrote in 2008. “Adopting the blogger lifestyle is the literary equivalent of attaching tinselly sprinkles to the handlebars of your bicycle.”³⁵ “Blogs are the proxy of our time,” Lovink writes.³⁶

In their 2007 study, Brad Schultz and Mary Lou Sheffer asked professional journalists how involved they were in blogging and what value they saw in online discussions. One veteran journalist represented the old guard when he responded that blogging “blurs the lines between journalism and pajama-wearing nitwits sitting in their mothers’ basements, firing off bile-filled opinions.”³⁷ John Thorn, the official historian for Major League Baseball who also writes a blog about the game, its historical events and personalities, responded with equal pessimism, albeit with less bile. Thorn said that “with a handful of exceptions,” sports blogging should not be considered scholarship. “Blogging came into being to enable immediacy for those without institutional publishing platforms,” he said.³⁸ Thorn readily concedes that his background in newspapers is one reason for his skepticism about scholarly sports blogs. While it is true that many bloggers lack an established platform to launch their posts, the decline of newspapers and

³⁴ Dan Cohen, email to author, January 11, 2018.

³⁵ Geert Lovink, *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2008), ix.

³⁶ Lovink, xxiii.

³⁷ Brad Schultz and Mary Lou Sheffer, “Sports Journalists Who Blog Cling to Traditional Values,” *Newspaper Research Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Fall 2007), 71

³⁸ John Thorn, email to author, December 9, 2017.

the migration to the internet has allowed blogging to elbow its way into the flow of news as a relevant source of information. There is no need for an institutional publishing platform because the internet readily supplies one.

By nature, blogging is viewed as informal writing. In addressing the question of whether the relaxed culture of blogging is a hindrance to scholarship, longtime journalist Wendy Parker notes that a blog can be as formal or informal as the writer wants it to be. For writers coming from more traditional backgrounds, a blog “can help amplify, explain and provide context” for a writer’s work. The ability to connect with readers in “a deeper way” is the greatest advantage for bloggers, Parker said, “even (for) those doing serious journalism and scholarship.” Besides, she notes, “readers let me know” when she has a typographical error or a factual mistake in her weekly blog.³⁹

Schultz and Sheffer determined that journalists who blogged remained true to the traditional principles of news gathering and source citation when they published blogs online. Blogging requires “a personal, subjective voice,” and journalists have been taught to write impartially. And while some bloggers do not necessarily conduct interviews or document sources, their work can provide traditional reporters with news tips and background information.⁴⁰ Whether they want to admit it or not, journalists have been forced to consider some bloggers as legitimate sources of news.

Audiences that read blogs want to be informed and entertained. That rule also applies to scholarly blogs. The payoff can be fruitful. Writing a blog, Cohen asserts, allows a writer to reach out “to an enormous audience beyond academia.” “Some professors may not want that

³⁹ Wendy Parker, email to author, December 16, 2017.

⁴⁰ Schultz and Sheffer, 63.

audience, but I believe it's part of our duty as teachers, experts and public servants," he wrote.⁴¹

In a January 2018 email, Cohen said that a sports blog that has "some levity and plainspokenness to it" can find a big audience.⁴²

The difference between blogs and traditional print journalism can be seen in their audiences. Journalists, whether covering news or sporting events, are providing a public service to their readers. However, as Simon McEnnis argues, public service no longer carries "a hierarchical, top-down meaning." Instead, that meaning is now "bottom-up," a conversation that society is having with itself.⁴³ Readers and viewers are no longer limited to making telephone calls or writing letters to the editor, neither of which might be acknowledged. With the emergence of blogs, people now have a new channel to lavish praise or heap scorn upon a writer. To a lesser, and more civil extent, audiences of scholarly blogs can analyze what was written and offer criticisms or suggestions to improve or correct the author's work. Dissecting what is written in a blog is easy and can be adapted in real time as corrections are made.

That sentiment was shared in 2012 by Jim Bankoff, the chairman and chief executive of SB Nation, an online sports network that includes a battery of bloggers. People once equated a blog with a personal diary, he said. "Those days are kind of gone," Bankoff said. "Now, there's a professional class of blogging" that includes online storytelling and online community building.⁴⁴ What Schultz and Sheffer found interesting, however, was that while news organizations encouraged blogging, they did little to promote them. "It's a new field and a new

⁴¹ Cohen, "Professors, Start Your Blogs."

⁴² Cohen, email to author, January 11, 2018.

⁴³ Simon McEnnis, "Following the Action: How Live Bloggers are Reimagining the Professional Ideology of Sports Journalism," *Journalism Practice*, Vol. 10, No. 8 (2016), 969.

⁴⁴ Simon Houpt, "For Raucous Sports Fans, Blogging Industry Grows Up," *Globe & Mail*, Toronto, Canada, October 5, 2012, B6.

learning curve,” one journalist responded in a survey provided by Schultz and Sheffer.

Management, he said, did not market blogs very effectively. “Why bother doing it if they won’t let people know it’s happening?” he added.⁴⁵

In dealing with the fourth question, blogging has been used to float new ideas. Clemson professor Gregory Ramshaw sees blogging as a “public venue” for his research notebook. “Some of my blog posts have ‘grown up’ to be journal articles or chapters,” he writes, while adding he has incorporated some of his ideas into other topics.⁴⁶ Purdue history professor Andrew McGregor calls blogging “a platform for testing ideas and building communities.”⁴⁷ Both subscribed to the idea that if something written is challenged successfully, that piece of work can be seamlessly altered to reflect corrected or even additional information. Hugh McGuire was even more emphatic, writing in *The Huffington Post* that “the sooner you get called out on bad ideas, the better.”⁴⁸ McGuire, echoing Parker’s opinion about accountability in the blogosphere, argues that a scholar’s peers will react quickly to point out a mistake or a gap in scholarship. They also will comment about an excellent idea or a new concept. Because a blog can be a fluid medium, a correction can be made seamlessly.

Research and Evidence

The sports blog presents an interesting challenge for researchers since it is relatively new and so little has been written about it. While the internet is the easiest place to find information, libraries continue to maintain a firm grip on traditional researchers. Wayne Wilson asserts that

⁴⁵ Schultz and Sheffer, 71.

⁴⁶ Gregory Ramshaw, email to author, December 16, 2017.

⁴⁷ McGregor, 239-240.

⁴⁸ Hugh McGuire, “Why Academics Should Blog,” *The Huffington Post*, November 28, 2008, accessed January 24, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/hugh-mcguire/why-academics-should-blog_b_138549.html

even though the internet “disrupts and even threatens” libraries in their present form, it creates a “symbiotic relationship to sport.”⁴⁹ Because sport is visual and aural by nature, it blends well with the digital world, where websites can include video and audio links to enhance research. Seeing a play in action is sometimes better than reading a description.

Evidence can still be found in traditional outlets like books, articles, magazines and newspapers, but increasingly, online sources are becoming more prevalent. Researchers trying to learn about a sports team can go to its official website, while organizations can pull the information from the entire league and place it neatly onto a website with convenient links to players and teams. Sites like baseball-reference.com come to mind. The United States Golf Museum has led the way in digitizing its old books and magazines.⁵⁰ The baseball site retrosheet.org has researchers working to put the play-by-play of every major-league baseball game into a convenient, clickable format. That site already has digitized nearly a century of information and provides updates during the current baseball season.

In examining blogs, the criteria set by Douglas Booth in his 2006 essay, “Sport Historians: What Do We Do? How Do We Do It?” will be used. Sport historians structure their arguments, he asserts, through seven distinct explanatory paradigms: traditional narrative, advocacy, contextual, comparative, casual, social change and linguistic.⁵¹ These seven categories can help determine whether a blog qualifies as a scholarly work with evidence, proper citation

⁴⁹ Wayne Wilson, “The Library’s Role in Developing Web-Based Sport History Resources,” *Sport History in the Digital Age*, Gary Osmond and Murray G Phillips, eds. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 40.

⁵⁰ Wilson, 45.

⁵¹ Douglas Booth, “Sport Historians: What Do We Do? How Do We Do It?” *Deconstructing Sport History: A Postmodern Analysis*, ed. Murray G. Phillips (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 35.

and analysis; or whether the posts are merely opinionated pieces with emotion, rather than facts, supporting the blogger's arguments.⁵²

Traditional narrative: This is the simplest of all the criteria. There must be, Booth writes, “some sense of story,” and it must be the dominant force in representing history.⁵³ It must have a logical beginning, a flowing middle and a conclusion that ties the entire story together. Does the blogger tell a coherent story, or is the post a jumble of random thoughts? In this scenario, the blogger makes a statement and then backs it up with facts and evidence. The story is told in traditional third person, rather than with personal pronouns like “I” and “we.”

Advocacy: Booth has a simple explanation for advocacy — “historians argue.” They work hard to make their arguments “watertight with no loopholes,” knowing that a skeptic is waiting to try and puncture holes in their assertions.⁵⁴ Advocates can be bloggers attempting to puncture a myth, but for this study, advocacy will focus on the writer's perspective. Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. makes an interesting point about advocacy, claiming there is a difference between arguing “for a point of view” and arguing “from a point of view.”⁵⁵

Historians who follow a straight reconstructionist path — that is, they believe it is possible to discover the past as it actually happened — tend to criticize advocates. They believe advocacy undermines the objectivity of history and destroys a historian's credibility. In their view, historians should be a neutral judge — Booth uses the term disinterested, which is a fancy word for neutral — relying on balance and evenhandedness to report an event.⁵⁶

⁵² Booth, 37. Booth covers his seven explanatory paradigms in Table 1.3 of his book, including objectives and epistemology. For this capstone, objectives will be the determining factor in assessing blogs.

⁵³ Booth, 37.

⁵⁴ Douglas Booth, *The Field: Truth and Fiction in Sport History* (London: Routledge, 2005), 111.

⁵⁵ Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 165.

⁵⁶ Booth, “Sport Historians,” 38.

All writing, whether it is scholarly, journalistic or a free-flowing blog, has a viewpoint put forth by the writer. Some writers may strive for balance in their writing, but achieving detachment is difficult. Objectivity and fairness are probably more attainable goals: a writer can state the facts on both sides of an issue, weigh them carefully and then take a side. There must be a verdict; otherwise, the story, journal or blog piece would be neutral and dull. Advocates question in the simplest sense and interrogate at an advanced level.

Contextual: Putting a topic into its proper context is a key element in historical writing, journalism and even blogging. It is a necessary device that reveals the writer's desire to write with more depth and analysis. For example, the fact that Jackie Robinson broke the modern-day color barrier in major-league baseball in 1947 is important, but what it meant in the overall history of baseball is its context. Robinson blazed a trail for future African-Americans and Hispanics to play the game, and his impact had social and cultural implications in addition to the historical ones. Discovering and defining that context should be a historian's goal in sports and in other fields. Context is about interpreting the big picture

Comparative: Sport historians, Booth writes, are "forever making comparisons."⁵⁷ Does the author attempt to compare the main thrust of his argument with something similar? What do they have in common, or how are they different? Using Robinson again as an example, one could chart the reactions the Brooklyn Dodgers' player received in the National League during his rookie season to those encountered by Moses Fleetwood Walker, who originally broke the major leagues' color barrier in 1884 with the Toledo Blue Stockings of the American Association.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Booth, *The Field*, 127.

⁵⁸ The American Association was considered a "major league" during its existence from 1882 to 1891. In 1892, it was absorbed into the National League.

Both met with resistance, but while Walker and other blacks were drummed out of major-league baseball by the late 1880s, Robinson opened a door for other minorities to follow.

Causal: Does the author identify a cause behind an event he is writing about? Cause and effect also comes into play. A recent example could be the allegations of sexual abuse against former Michigan State team doctor Larry Nassar. The allegations of misconduct by more than one hundred gymnasts caused anger in the media, among women's group and by the public. The effect from Nassar's conviction and sentencing for between forty and one hundred seventy-five years in prison led to the resignation of Michigan State President Lou Anna Simon and the forced resignation of the entire board of directors of USA Gymnastics in January 2018.

Social Change: Explaining change is something that both journalists and scholars do. What were the ramifications of a certain event, or the crusade led by a certain person? Or, what if change *didn't* happen? An author can examine change and theorize how it might have an effect. If Robinson's breaking of the modern-day color line in major-league baseball caused social change, what was it? Were blacks allowed to stay at the same hotels as their white teammates? Were they held to a higher standard? Or, in the case of baseball integration, did this social change evolve slowly and painfully? Those are pointed and excellent questions that journalists, scholars — and now, bloggers — have answered, and continue to revisit.

Linguistics: This is an area where the writer gives voice to the subject. From a journalistic standpoint, that means quoting a person. Live quotes from a source make a sports story come alive; similarly, scholars either use direct quotes from sources or lift partial quotes to support their subject matter. Quotes also can be used as part of an argument against a point of view. Bloggers can use both devices, quoting sources directly or lifting partial quotes. Booth notes that ultimately, historians are narrators who subordinate their subjects' viewpoints to their

own. That recalls advocacy, because in the same sense, a writer, scholar or blogger, no matter how neutral they set out to be, must adopt a certain viewpoint.

Chapter 2: Three Sports Blogs: An Analysis

Having established the guidelines for examining blogs, the next step is to choose different blogging sites to measure how scholarly they are. The evidence that will be used in this project will be drawn from several different types of blogs. The blogs selected are *Sport in American History*, by Andrew McGregor; *Sports Biblio*, a sports book review site by former print journalist and digital editor/writer Wendy Parker; and *The Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine Blog*, by James MacDonald. They were chosen because McGregor is a sports historian, Parker is a sports journalist, and MacDonald is in the field of medicine. This should provide three good samples of work that could be considered scholarly. McGregor employs a staff of regular and guest bloggers, so he has the luxury of a daily blog post. Parker writes once a week, publishing on Sundays and generally has a theme that she sticks with throughout that blog. Books about the Olympics, for example, might include new publications but also reference older key works. MacDonald also solicits guest writers, and his publishing schedule is much more infrequent than McGregor or Parker.

Other blogs worth considering are those that focus on gender and race; both subjects are well-represented in the blogosphere. For example, in their 2013 essay, Dunja Antonovic and Marie Hardin strongly suggest that women who blog about sports “challenge assumptions” about sports consumption and engagement in sports.¹ Jen McGovern, in her examination of blogs and

¹ Dunja Antonovic and Marie Hardin, “Women Bloggers: Identity and the Conceptualization of Sports,” *New Media & Society*, Vol. 15, No. 6 (December 2013), 1374.

race, followed seven different baseball blogs over the course of a year, focusing on six team sites and a general Major League Baseball blog.²

The blogs that have been selected feature excellent sources of evidence, written from the point of view of a scholar, a professional journalist and a sports medical professional. Each approach their blogs differently, but all would be considered scholarly in their own way. The sample is small to begin with, but that can be expanded to include other bloggers. The standards inherent in the work of these three bloggers will set the bar for other blogs that may be examined in the future.

The time sample that will be used in examining these blogs will be the final quarter of the 2017 calendar year, from October 1 through December 31, inclusive. These three blogs have different release dates; *Sports in American History*, for example, comes closest to a daily blog, partially because of its stable of contributors. *Sports Biblio* is posted on a weekly basis, while *The Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine Blog* had more gaps between blog posts but eventually averaged one per week. An effort will be made to see how these blogs fit into any — if not all — of these criteria. Their selection, which covers a broad spectrum of sports history and sports information, probably precludes an across-the-board sweep by one blog. Where one blog might be more narrative in nature, another might rely on more technical terms.

Sport in American History

Andrew McGregor launched *Sport in American History* in May 2014. McGregor, who works in the history department at Purdue University and received his doctorate in history from the Lafayette, Indiana, school in August 2017, believes that his blog is a form of “new

² Jen McGovern, “Does Race Belong on Sports Blogs? Solidarity and Racial Discourse in Online Baseball Fan Forums,” *Communications & Sport*, Vol. 4, No 3 (2015), 334.

scholarship” that helps to rethink and reconsider traditional ways to publish and communicate with an audience.³ As of April 13, 2018, there were 2,090 subscribers that received posts through email delivery.

McGregor describes *Sport in American History* as a group blog, with an eclectic group of contributors that include professors, graduate students and journalists. McGregor’s editorial staff also represents diverse fields. Cat Ariail, for example, is a third-year doctoral candidate in the Department of History at the University of Miami. Josh Howard, the site’s social media director, owns Passel, a historical consulting company. He earned his doctorate in public history at Middle Tennessee State University. Andrew D. Linden is the site’s communications coordinator and is an assistant manager of sport management at Adrian College in Michigan. Lindsay Parks Pieper is an assistant professor of sport management at Lynchburg College in Virginia.

**Sport in American History
October-December 2017**

Posts reviewed	Number of authors	Links used/Avg.	Book reviews	Interviews/Q&A
24	21	113/4.7	12	1

Table 1.1

Pieper and Ariail handle the bulk of the book reviews for the site, which has working agreements with ten different companies that have reputations for publishing scholarly sports history books. However, during the final three months of 2017, only Ariail reviewed a book. Pieper was busy coordinating a three-part series about historically significant women athletics.

³ Andrew McGregor, “The Power of Blogging: Rethinking Scholarship and Reshaping Boundaries at *Sport in American History*,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol 44, No. 2 (Summer 2017), 239.

Ten other writers picked up the book review slack, critiquing eleven books. Of the twenty-four blog posts between October 1 and December 31, 2017, twelve were book reviews. Twenty-one different writers posted blogs during that final quarter. That number does not include the contributors for Pieper's three-part series. There were sixteen contributors each in the series, including Pieper, who wrote the introductions for each piece. This series ran on consecutive Thursdays beginning on November 2, 2017; writers were assigned an athlete to write about, so most of these posts were a paragraph or two.

In general, the book reviews appear every Saturday on the site. There are thirteen regular contributors to the blog, with fifteen recurring contributors. Guest contributors also are encouraged to post, and during the final three months of 2017, thirty-one different authors that either posted solo articles or had a contributing role. The essays showcase an interesting cross-section of academia: one Ph.D., four doctoral candidates, three associate professors, two master's graduates, one historian, one public historian, an assistant professor and one undergraduate student. The site offers a generous amount of links on the right-hand panel, with archives hot-linked along with authors, subject matter and other useful tags. The site also has a search function, and visitors to the blog can jump to the site's social media presence on websites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Traditional narrative: Most of the writers stay true to the traditional narrative of telling a story, although several of them approached their essays with more of a casual writing style. Of the three blogs reviewed, this one is the most collegial and scholarly. Still, a scholarly journal would not begin with "It takes me about an hour to suck the air out of a room," as Andrew R.M.

Smith does in his review of *Making March Madness*.⁴ Nor would it begin with Josh Howard's sweeping generalization in "Baseball as Political Theater in the Virginias," when he opens with the thought, "As everyone reading this assuredly knows. . . ."⁵ Howard does redeem himself with more cerebral review of culture and ethnicity of nineteenth-century baseball, but the casual writing is not necessarily a hindrance. It's a device used to connect to the reader in a more relaxed, informal way — and it works.

Book reviews follow a curious pattern. Some of the authors write an opening observation and then summarize every chapter in chronological order, while others are more nuanced and analytical. Russ Crawford's post on October 15, 2017, provides an example of the former in his review of *The War on Football*. He follows the same formula in his November 11, 2017, review of *Play Big*. Patrick Salkeld writes in the same vein in his December 23, 2017 review of *Beyond Soccer: International Relations and Politics as Seen through the Beautiful Game*. Salkeld writes one long paragraph that summarizes every chapter. The approach is earnest and scholarly, and certainly not incorrect, but not one that might keep the interest of a casual visitor to *Sport in American History*.

Other authors use a more nuanced, analytical approach. Smith, recovering nicely after sucking the air out of the room with his opening line of his review of *Making March Madness*, delves into the characters of the book and describes in depth the detail that author Chad Carlson employs to tell his narrative. The value of the book, Smith notes, is in its "honest and detached

⁴ Andrew R.M. Smith, "Review of Making March Madness," *Sport in American History*, October 8, 2017, accessed March 12, 2018, <https://ussporthistory.com/2017/10/08/review-of-making-march-madness/>

⁵ Josh Howard, "Baseball as Political Theater in the Virginias," *Sport in American History*, October 12, 2017, accessed March 12, 2018, <https://ussporthistory.com/2017/10/12/baseball-as-political-theater-in-the-virginias/>

surveying of many fault lines” that lurked underneath the surface of college basketball history.⁶ Smith’s critical thinking and sound criticism gives his post a more scholarly feel while not resorting to a book report format.

Zachary Bigalke finds a middle ground between the two extremes in his December 10, 2017, review of *Appalachian State Silences the Big House*. Bigalke addresses scholarly work and structural analysis, straddling both areas with keen observations and examples to back them up. He writes that the book is “well-crafted for a diverse range of audiences,” and then explains why.⁷ He also uses a chronological approach but has a smoother narrative. Bigalke notes that the authors lead off the book with chapters detailing the build-up and preparations leading to the 2007 game between the University of Michigan and Appalachian State University football teams. He details the primary sources, which included thirty-seven interviews, twenty-eight newspaper articles, court documents, ten Appalachian State press releases and video of the game.⁸ What emerges is a more detailed, scholarly look at a sporting event that was significant in college football history.

Comparative: Pieper’s three-part series on historically significant women athletes offer a definite comparison for lovers of sports history. It is the age-old bar room question: Who was better? Pieper drew nominees from scholars, casual readers and a sport history classroom. There were seventy athletes and three teams profiled, and the first part of the series highlighted fifty of

⁶ Andrew R.M. Smith, “Review of Making March Madness,” *Sport in American History*, October 8, 2017, accessed March 23, 2018, <https://ussporthistory.com/2017/10/08/review-of-making-march-madness/>

⁷ Zachary R. Bigalke, “Review of Appalachian State Silences the Big House,” *Sport in American History*, December 10, 2018, accessed March 23, 2018, <https://ussporthistory.com/2017/12/10/review-of-appalachian-state-silences-the-big-house/>

⁸ Bigalke, “Review of Appalachian State Silences the Big House.”

them. The second segment focused on thirteen candidates, while the final installment counted down the top ten. And as Pieper conceded, the survey raised more questions than answers.

Linguistics: Because many of these posts were either book reviews or end-of-the-year wrap-ups, giving voice to the athletes themselves was a rarity. Perhaps the sample could be expanded to include other times of the year.

Internet savvy: The hyperlink, which is the lifeblood of internet-generated material, is present in most of the *Sport in American History* posts. Of the twenty-four posts reviewed, only two did not contain at least one link. Six had only one link. There were one hundred thirteen links used during the final three months of 2017, which made for an average of 4.7 posts per blog post. That number is skewed by the final three posts of the year, however, and that is because they are end-of-the-year wrap-up pieces. Colleen English used fourteen links in her December 28 post, “Looking Back on Women’s Soccer in 2017”; on December 29, Roberto Jose Andrade Franco used sixteen links in “Looking Back on Boxing in 2017”; and Russ Crawford ended the year with the most links, generating twenty-two in his December 30 post, “2017: An Outstanding Year for Women’s Football, but Few Noticed.”

Subtracting those three posts, the typical blog post in *Sport in American History* had slightly less than three hyperlinks (2.9) per post. Some of the links were cross-posts, meaning that the hyperlink took the reader to a story that had already appeared on the *Sport in American History* site. The cross-post is a useful tool to give readers the proper background in a story, and when used in *Sport in American History*, it is an effective device. The ancestor of the hyperlink, the footnote or citation, appears in several posts, along with links. Of the twenty-four blog posts surveyed, four contain footnotes. There are twenty footnotes in total, with Andrew Pettit using

seven (but no hyperlinks) in his December 27, 2017, post, “From the Punch-Up in Piastany to Boxing Day on the Couch: The Invention of a Canadian Junior Hockey Tradition.”

Another way to increase traffic to a website is through tags, which are the most common words or phrases used to categorize a story. *Sport in American History* uses tags liberally, identifying topics by sport (soccer, boxing), or by type of story (book review, year in review).

Conclusion: The lineup of scholars is impressive. While some of the authors try their hand at casual writing with mixed reviews, others write with purpose. The light-editing that McGregor employs appears to keep the site error-free. The subject matter is interesting, and the book reviews contain genuine feedback and criticism. That gives these reviews and essays a large amount of credibility, and the variety and diversity of the many authors prevent the site from becoming stale.

Sports Biblio

Wendy Parker debuted *Sports Biblio* on October 5, 2015, after retiring *Extracurriculars*, a blog that ran from 2010 through 2014. The focus for *Sports Biblio* is books and book reviews, journalism, literature, history and culture as they relate to sports. Parker touts the site as a “departure from the 24/7 media stream of clickbait, ginned-up controversy and easy outrage,” offering instead “a more measured look” at why sports has such a grip on its fans. She stresses the human side of sports, introducing a philosophy that echoes the credo of ABC’s *Wide World of Sports*: “the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat”: sports’ “endearing ability to draw us irrevocably to its delights and heartbreaks.”⁹

⁹ Wendy Parker, “Introducing: Sports Biblio,” *Sports Biblio*, October 5, 2015, accessed March 7, 2018, <http://www.sportsbiblio.com/introducing-sports-biblio/>

Parker has worked as a journalist on print and digital platforms. She was employed at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* from 1990 to 2008 as a sportswriter and covered college football, college basketball and soccer. She also reported on local politics and government for the *Journal-Constitution's* suburban sections. Parker moved to the newspaper's digital platform and became a web editor, producer and project manager for the *Journal-Constitution's* website, *ajc.com*. After leaving the *Journal-Constitution*, Parker became a local editor for East Cobb Patch, an AOL news site in suburban Atlanta. Most recently she began freelancing and doing contract web editing for WABE.org, a site for an Atlanta-area NPR station.

Parker stresses that she does not do scholarly writing in her blogs, emphasizing that her perspective “is as a daily journalist,” and she adheres to the process and principles of “reporting and verifying” that she has learned through the years.¹⁰

Blog posts are published every Sunday. Subscribers receive a copy of the latest post via email. The site is adorned by a banner photograph of books, and the right-hand side of the web page is an informational bonanza for the reader. There is a drop-down menu that directs the reader to posts from a specific month, and recent blog posts are listed on the right side of the page with hyperlinks. There is also a search box: type in the word “baseball,” for example, and all references to the game pop up on the computer user's screen. Links to *Sports Biblio*-related tweets on Twitter are also included. There are buttons available on the site that link the viewer to Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Google+.

Traditional narrative: Parker writes her own material and does not have guest writers. She still has plenty to say. Each week's post follows a distinct format: a main subject, plus

¹⁰ Wendy Parker, email to author, December 16, 2017.

several features that run every week. It is very much the vision of a magazine — *Sports Illustrated* is a good example — that has a main article, then small nuggets of trivia, information, comings and goings, and deaths and retirements. Every issue of *Sports Biblio* has a section titled “A Few Good Reads.” These are snappy, one paragraph (and at times, just one sentence) summaries of new books, covering all areas of sports. Some weeks there is “A Few Good Listens,” which highlights books that contain CDs, plus interviews and podcasts of note.

**Sports Biblio
October-December 2017**

Posts reviewed	Number of authors	Links used/Avg.	Book reviews	Interviews/Q&A
11	1	460/41.8	11	0

Table 1.2

Parker also offers podcasts and has been broadcasting on the second and fourth Friday of every month since January 29, 2016. She devotes the fourth Friday of the month to a “classic” sports book, with titles like Lawrence Ritter’s baseball gem, *The Glory of Their Times*, being a prominent example.

Advocacy: Parker is not afraid to take a stand. For example, her blog post of November 26, 2017, that addresses the National Baseball Hall of Fame, is decisive as she chides the writers for waffling on their positions about players who may have taken performance-enhancing drugs and have been kept out of Cooperstown. It’s been too easy for the Hall of Fame, she writes, “to dump the messy quandary of what to do with PED users into the lap of writers who haven’t been

given clear guidance.”¹¹ Parker enjoys the argument but has a calm, reasoned tone when she discusses it, which is good because the issue has elicited emotions on both sides of the question.

Contextual: This is where Parker excels. She either picks a book or a subject and delves into it with depth, links and commentary. For example, her October 22, 2017, post titled “The Rebirth of the Los Angeles Dodgers” does not target a specific new book about the Dodgers, but plays off the fact that the team was appearing in the World Series for the first time since 1988. She then lists some of the more interesting books about the Dodgers over the past few years, including *The Best Team Money Can Buy* by Molly Knight, *Forever Blue* by Michael D’Antonio, *Miracle in Chavez Ravine* by William E. McNeil, and *The Dodgers: 60 Years in Los Angeles* by Michael Schiavone. Her commentary also notes that longtime Dodgers announcer Vin Scully would not be calling an “honorary game” at the 2017 World Series.

Social Change: Parker has written about the politics of women’s sports, and in her October 15, 2017, post she explains the impact that the defeat of the United States’ men’s soccer team in World Cup qualifying has on the overall game in America. She uses her experiences from covering the World Cup in 2002 and traces the rise and decline of soccer as a spectator sport in the United States. She writes about the cultural mindset that changed when the men’s team had success in the late 1990s, and how that crumbled with a stunning defeat in 2017.

Linguistics: Parker is a smooth writer who can easily switch between formal and casual writing styles. At times she injects her own personal experiences into her blog posts, but after more than a quarter century in the business, such insight can be illuminating.

¹¹ Wendy Parker, “Another Contentious Twist for the Baseball Hall of Fame,” *Sports Biblio*, November 26, 2017, accessed March 23, 2018, <http://www.sportsbiblio.com/another-contentious-twist-baseball-hall-fame-sports-biblio-digest-11-26-17/>

Internet savvy: Parker began her career in newspapers but was able to reinvent herself when the digital age arrived. If the transition was difficult, it is not apparent. Parker is a hyperlink fiend, using them to great advantage throughout her posts. Every book she mentions is linked either to the author's website or the publisher's. In addition to her reviews, she offers links to reviews written by media outlets. While eleven posts were considered for review during the final three months of 2017, Parker wrote a twelfth blog post on December 27. It was omitted because it was merely a list of her top one hundred books of 2017, which consisted of the title's name, a link to the book, and one line to identify it. Since this post had more than one hundred links, it would have skewed the research for the final quarter of 2017; therefore, it was omitted.

Parker averaged more than forty-one links per blog post, using them to link to books, publishers, news items, personalities and cross-posts to previous blog entries. Originally, she linked books to their Amazon page, but beginning in late October 2017, Parker began using IndieBound, which is run by the American Booksellers Association, as her primary linking source, along with publishers' websites. She explained that she had "felt the need to adopt the habit of going local," and wean herself from the habit of "going easy."¹²

Her links are not in the traditional light blue, but in a brown color, so the reader can easily read past them if desired. There is less of a chance to hover over a link, but the option is there. The decision to use an earth tone color also gives the page a pleasing look; with as many links as Parker uses, the traditional light blue hyperlink would be an enormous distraction. Parker's blogs can run up to ten pages, but there are plenty of photographs and subheads to break

¹² Wendy Parker, email to author, December 16, 2017.

up the type. It would be classified as what journalists might call “a fast read.” The posts are error-free, and any fact errors can be corrected in real time.

“I do miss the luxury of having copy editors and line editors giving my work a read, so it makes being careful more of an imperative,” Parker said in an email. “We have to create our own safety nets in ways we didn’t have to do before, and that is something of a concern.”¹³ Careful editing before posting may cost a few more minutes, but in the long run it creates a more credible source of information. Given her newspaper background, that is what Parker attempts to achieve every week with *Sports Biblio*.

Conclusion: Although Parker claims she is not a scholar, she exhibits the traits of one. She is thorough and works to break new ground with her posts. She makes effective use of hyperlinks to document her sources and does not leap into an issue with an opinion until she has thoroughly considered it from all angles. Her blog is a mixture of information, links to other sources, opinion and intelligent analysis.

The Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine Blog

According to James MacDonald, who is listed as the Emerging Media Editor for *The Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine Blog*, the site offers clinicians who are primarily interested in sports medicine and its practice to discuss current issues. The goal of the blog is to act as a community platform to discuss and debate current issues in sport and exercise medicine, and to promote and share the best clinical practices for patients. The blog debuted in June 21, 2011, with a discussion by Chris Hughes about learning and educating with anatomy apps.

¹³ Parker, email to author, December 16, 2017.

MacDonald is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatric and Family Medicine at The Ohio State University and is also a Pediatric Sports Medicine Specialist at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. He received his MD from Harvard Medical School after graduating cum laude from Harvard College.

Blog posts have been sporadic at *The Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine Blog*. The most posts during any month was nine, which happened in June 2013 and again five months later. In the final three months of 2017, there were ten blog posts. In addition to blogging, MacDonald has hosted twenty-three podcasts, beginning with a May 2013 discussion about concussions in soccer. The blog posts are accessible to the public, but people who subscribe have them automatically delivered via email. According to statistics on the website, there are two hundred eighty-eight subscribers as of April 13, 2018. The site is well-organized and has a drop-down menu on the right side of every blog post, so readers can quickly access articles published during a particular month. The website has experienced modest success; as of April 13, 2018, the site has been visited 223,812 times. There are all the whistles and bells one might expect from a savvy website, including tags for search engine optimization (SEO). There are also interactive buttons, so a reader can access *The Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine Blog's* Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Reddit pages, along with buttons that take the reader to Google posts that reference the blog. Buttons for sending entire articles by email to someone else and a button that initiates a user's computer to print articles are also handy devices.

**Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine Blog
October-December 2017**

Posts reviewed	Number of authors	Links used/Avg.	Book reviews	Interviews/Q&A
10	3	85/8.5	0	2

Table 1.3

A unique feature of the site is the ability to translate articles into several languages, including Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

Traditional narrative: All the blog posts were introduced by MacDonald, but he did not write all of them. For example, the October 15, 2017, post about sports medicine training in the United Kingdom was written by junior associate editor Dr. Dawn Thompson. Another junior associate editor, Dr. Jason Zaremski, penned the site's first online Journal Club Commentary piece on October 19, 2017. The narrative is not smooth, and in fact is rather choppy as far as style goes. However, there are plenty of links for readers to click, which give information about the subject matters or the doctors being interviewed.

Advocacy: A podcast on November 6, 2017, is an examination of sport-related concussions in ice hockey and makes a strong case for changes in critical evaluation. In his interview with Dr. Aynsley Smith of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, MacDonald probes whether there is a need for an objective diagnosis of sport-related concussion, and how medical officials can determine the severity of head injuries and then treat the patient accordingly.

Contextual: The thrust of most of these posts focuses on identifying a specific medical issue, determining what methods to use, and then analyzing the results. MacDonald focuses on one subject in each blog post and then builds around it. He uses experts in the field to address the issues and adds hyperlinks to direct the reader to further research possibilities.

Linguistics: Any voice that is given in this blog is clinical. At times it is informal, but most of the posts are written with the care one might expect from a medical professional. MacDonald provides a voice to the blog by conducting different types of interviews. One

particularly effective method is a recurring question-and-answer session — usually five questions — with a medical expert. For example, in an October 24, 2017, post, MacDonald interviews Dr. David Howell, who specializes in children's safety in his work as the lead researcher at Children's Hospital in Aurora, Colorado. On November 24, 2017, MacDonald interviews Dr. Brian Krabek, who wrote *The Long Distance Runner's Guide to Injury and Prevention*.

Internet savvy: MacDonald is liberal with hyperlinks, using them on an average of eight-and-a-half per post. Unlike Wendy Parker, MacDonald prefers to use the traditional light blue hypertext link. It is easy enough to navigate online, but readers who want to print a blog post find that the URL of the link is placed parenthetically next to the phrase or word being linked. It's a good service for the offline reader, but it does tend to interrupt the flow of reading away from the computer. Four of the nine blog posts contain traditional footnotes.

Conclusion: This is a scholarly blog that has a very narrow focus. Can it be exciting? Doctors, nurses, personal trainers and athletes concerned about overall health will benefit from the blog's scholarly tone and reams of good information. The casual reader may be put off by the clinical tone of the subject matter, and the overabundance of links can be a distraction; after all, one would want a reader to examine the entire article before clicking a link. There are eighty-five links in the ten blog posts, with a high of nineteen in the November 11, 2017, issue. The material is not sexy, but the site itself is attractive and orderly, lending it an authoritative air.

Chapter 3: A Blogger's Family Tree

As if from branches of a family tree, blogging is descended from several ancestors. Each played a major role in defining how people received the news of the day, and how they learned about scholarly topics. First, it is important to define what scholarship is. The American Historical Association drafted guidelines for evaluating digital scholarship in 2015 and defined it as “a documented and disciplined conversation about matters of enduring consequence.”¹ Blogging was in its infancy when Ernest L. Boyer wrote *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* in 1997, and he was targeting professors. However, to write a scholarly blog, an author must follow the same professional standards of careful research and diligence in selecting and interpreting sources. Boyer targeted four “separate, yet overlapping” functions of scholarship for professors: discovery, integration, application and teaching.² To Boyer, scholarship meant conducting original research, but he also argued that scholars must step back from their own investigations and look for connections. They must make those connections between theory and practice and then communicate their conclusions.³

Newspapers and magazines first published articles about blogging in 1999 and 2000, noting the genre's arrival with some approval or, at the very worst, amusement.⁴ With the decline of newspaper circulation in the first decade of the twenty-first century and with the credibility of some newspapers challenged because of the Jayson Blair plagiarism case in 2003, the attitude of

¹ Seth Dembo, “AHA Publishes Guidelines for Evaluation of Digital Scholarship by Historians,” *AHA Today*, September 2015, accessed December 21, 2017, <http://blog.historians.org/2015/09/aha-publishes-guidelines-evaluation-of-digital-scholarship>

² Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 16.

³ Boyer, 16.

⁴ Scott Rosenberg, *Say Everything: How Blogging Began, What It's Becoming, and Why It Matters* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009), 270.

reporters toward bloggers shifted from “detached interest” to a “more active belittlement.” It still did not seem wise to cross swords with the media, as critics dutifully — and at times, ruefully — parrot the old quote, “Never pick a fight with someone who buys ink by the barrel.”⁵ John Thorn, the official historian for Major League Baseball, has a more modern version, writing that blogging “requires neither paper nor ink, nor trucks for distribution,” adding that “pixels come without cost.”⁶ Scott Rosenberg gives that parallel an added historical context, noting that in the colonial United States, anyone with a printing press or employed by someone who owned one could call themselves a journalist.⁷

In the United States, newspapers were the original gatekeepers of recorded information, distributing information about politics, national news, gossip and society occurrences, and current trends. Eventually, sports would be welcomed into the fold as a viable piece of the newspaper’s journalism package. Sports fans began to buy publications to stay abreast with local, national and even international sporting events. The first publication dedicated to sports in the United States was published during the late 1820s, Seven magazines would be published through 1835, but only two would last more than three years.⁸ The *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* was published monthly from 1829 to 1844 and had an annual subscription rate of five dollars.⁹ *The Spirit of the Times*, published by William Trotter Porter, debuted in

⁵ Ralph Keyes, *The Quote Verifier: Who Said What, Where, and When* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 64. The quote’s origins are murky; some have attributed it to Mark Twain, while others said Indiana congressman Charles Bruce Brownson was the author. Still other sources have called the quote “Greener’s Law,” in honor of William Greener, a press aide to President Gerald Ford. Keyes, however, dates the quote to the nineteenth century, although he conceded he could not verify who originally said it.

⁶ John Thorn, email to author, December 9, 2017.

⁷ Rosenberg, 274.

⁸ Robert W. McChesney, “Media Made Sport: A History of Sports Coverage in the United States,” in *Media, Sports & Society*, edited by Lawrence A. Wenner (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1989), 50-51.

⁹ John Stuart Skinner, “American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine,” *American Farmer*, August 28, 1829, 190.

December 1831 and would eventually absorb the *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*. Both publications were devoted to horse racing since it resonated with most of the American reading public, who viewed sports as “vulgar and disreputable.”¹⁰

Porter decided to emphasize baseball during the 1850s to gain a wider readership. David Rapp, a former editor of the *Congressional Quarterly*, wrote in early 2018 that there had been a “core audience” for sports coverage since the *New York Clipper* debuted as a weekly entertainment sheet in 1853. The *Clipper*’s editors, recognizing the emerging popularity of baseball gave a platform to Henry Chadwick, who wrote about the game’s evolving rules.¹¹ Baseball was still in its infancy before the Civil War, so fans eagerly read Chadwick’s articles to debate and interpret rule changes. The *New York Herald* emerged as the leader among the “penny press” newspapers with its coverage of boxing, thoroughbred racing and trotting.¹²

The Sporting News, a weekly newspaper that began in 1886, would emphasize baseball for much of its publication life and was known as “The Bible of Baseball” during its heyday. Printing costs and a decline in circulation would force the paper into a biweekly printing schedule before it became an exclusive digital publication in 2013. But *The Sporting News*, along with the newspapers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, would work to capture the imagination of America’s sports readership. Print reporters were trained “to instill excitement in their readers through vivid language and stylistic devices.”¹³ Excitement sold newspapers, and

¹⁰ McChesney, 51.

¹¹ David Rapp, *Tinker to Evers To Chance: The Chicago Cubs and the Dawn of Modern America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 184.

¹² McChesney, 51.

¹³ Pamela C. Laucella, “Jesse Owens, a Black Pearl Amidst an Ocean of Fury,” *From Jack Johnson to LeBron James: Sports, Media, and the Color Line*, edited by Chris Lamb (Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 67.

the human interest and daily suspense of sports like baseball attracted readers like a magnet. Recognizing this, publishers and editors began allocating more space to sports coverage, particularly in baseball. The newspapers that emerged during the 1880s and 1890s, particularly from the highly competitive market in New York City, were characterized “by entertainment and information.”¹⁴ Will Irwin, writing for *Collier's* in 1911, observed that sportswriters of the early twentieth century attracted readership with a “flippant, humorous, slangy view of sport.”¹⁵

The 1920s were called the Golden Age of sports, as athletes like Babe Ruth, Red Grange, Bobby Jones, Jack Dempsey and Bill Tilden dominated the sports pages. That decade also saw a golden age of sports writing, with Grantland Rice, Walter “Red” Smith, Ring Lardner, Damon Runyon and Shirley Povich at the forefront of sports journalism. There were two kinds of sports journalism in the 1920s: the “gee whiz” tactic taken by Rice, which played up the heroism angle; while Lardner and Runyon belonged to the “aw nuts” school of thinking, in which athletes were treated “less as heroes than as deeply flawed human beings.”¹⁶ Rice’s style of poetic interludes and his lionization of athletes was derisively called a “Hero Sandwich” by *Esquire* writer Randall Poe.¹⁷

And yet in 1924, Rice writing for the *New York Herald Tribune*, typed what has been called the most memorable lead in sports writing history: “Outlined against a blue-gray October sky, the Four Horsemen rode again. In dramatic lore they are known as Famine, Pestilence,

¹⁴ Raymond Boyle, *Sports Journalism: Context and Issues* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 35.

¹⁵ Tracy Everbach, “Sports Journalism and the New American Character of Energy and Leisure,” in *Journalism 1908: Birth of a Profession*, edited by Betty Houchin Winfield (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 187

¹⁶ Lee Congdon, *Legendary Sports Writers of the Golden Age: Grantland Rice, Red Smith, Shirley Povich and W.C. Heinz* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 11.

¹⁷ William A. Harper, *How You Played the Game: The Life of Grantland Rice* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 523.

Destruction and Death. These are only aliases. Their real names are Stuhldreher, Miller, Crowley and Layden. They formed the crest of the South Bend cyclone before which another fighting Army team was swept over the precipice at the Polo Grounds yesterday afternoon as 55,000 spectators peered down on the bewildering panorama spread on the green plain below.”¹⁸ Rice’s prose had all the components of good sports journalism: the “who, what, when, where and how” elements. The lead became famous because Rice’s column was syndicated in more than one hundred newspapers nationwide; readers did not need to know the teams (Notre Dame vs. Army) or the score (Notre Dame won 13-7) to know what took place. Rice’s imagery painted the picture for his readers. By today’s standards, the Four Horseman analogy is an example of over-the-top, hyperbolic writing. But in 1924, it was what readers craved.

Sports coverage has since evolved from storytelling and hero worship at the turn of the twentieth century and into the Golden Age of the 1920s to a more critical view of athletes in the twenty-first century. New technologies, athletes with diverse backgrounds, more aggressive reporting and the advent of social media have driven that change.

At its worst, newspaper writing from the 1920s through the 1960s reflected racial prejudices and stereotypes. White sportswriters did not write about racial issues, but as Chris Lamb observes, when they wrote about blacks they “relied on racial stereotypes and characterizations.” Influential columnist Westbrook Pegler, for example, referred to black sprinters as “African savages” and described heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis as “a cotton-field Negro.” Bill Corum of the *New York Journal American* noted that Louis was a “superbly built Negro youth” who ate fried chicken and never did “a lick of work he could

¹⁸ Harper, 360.

escape.”¹⁹ Interestingly, Pegler criticized baseball’s color line after New York Yankees outfielder Jake Powell made derogatory comments about blacks during a dugout interview in July 1938. Ripping into the unspoken “gentleman’s agreement” that baseball owners had with Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Pegler wrote that the game “has always treated the Negroes as Adolf Hitler treats the Jews.”²⁰ It was a rare, but enlightened look at racial issues from a newspaper columnist whose prose predated Jackie Robinson breaking baseball’s color line by a decade and provided a template for more socially aware sports writing of the 1960s. As a gatekeeper, Pegler exposed his audience to prejudices that were prevalent in sports.

Even white players were not immune from racism, particularly if they were the sons or daughters of immigrants. New York Yankees outfielder Joe DiMaggio graced the cover of *Life* magazine on May 1, 1939. In the main article, DiMaggio was described as “a tall, thin Italian youth equipped with slick black hair” and “squirrel teeth.” “Although he learned Italian first, Joe, now twenty-four, speaks English without an accent,” and kept his hair slick with water, “instead of olive oil or smelly bear grease.” Writer Noel F. Busch also noted that DiMaggio, “never reeks of garlic” and preferred chicken chow mein to spaghetti.²¹

Sports coverage before 1945 relied heavily on reporting by newspapers and magazines, which focused on “what happened.” In the post-World War II era, the emergence and maturity of electronic media such as radio, television and cable television has not only expanded the scope of sports coverage, but also forced newspapers to become more analytical. Competition — and the fear of being beat on a story — challenged journalists to go beyond what happened and ask *why*

¹⁹ Chris Lamb, *Conspiracy of Silence: Sportswriters and the Long Campaign to Desegregate Baseball* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 23.

²⁰ Lamb, 117.

²¹ Noel F. Busch, “Joe DiMaggio: Baseball’s Most Sensational Big-League Star Starts What Should Be His Best Year Yet,” *Life*, May 1, 1939, 69.

it happened. Roger Kahn illustrated the point in his book, *The Boys of Summer*. As a young sports reporter covering the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team, Kahn heeded the advice of veteran beat writer Dick Young of the *New York Daily News*. Young, who revolutionized sports writing when he visited locker rooms for postgame quotes in 1950, told Kahn that when writing about baseball games, “anytime, you hear me, *anytime* you get your story off the game, you got to do it. ... Your real fan knows the score already.”²² Kahn had to create different approaches to his reporting, particularly because in the 1950s, many newspapers (especially in the New York metropolitan area) had several editions of the newspaper that were printed during the day.

In a sense, writers like Young and Kahn were bloggers, changing their stories for each edition in what amounted to real time in the 1950s. The only difference was that they had to call their updated stories to the copy desk or send them to the office via Western Union. New editions of the newspaper would be available during the day — readers who saw the early story and wanted an update could buy the latest edition, and readers viewing the newspaper for the first time that day could do the same.

When Robinson broke major-league baseball’s color barrier in 1947, newspapers were still sports fans’ primary source of news, but sports writing in general was mostly deferential.²³ As a newer generation of sportswriters entered the field, deference was replaced by inquisitiveness. Sports reporters asked more probing questions and were not afraid to be critical. Naturally, that candor led to friction between journalists, sports owners and players. Boston Red Sox owner Tom Yawkey, incensed at press criticism leveled at manager Billy Jurgens in June

²² Roger Kahn, *The Boys of Summer* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 107-108.

²³ Howard Bryant, *Juicing the Game: Drugs, Power, and the Fight for the Soul of Major League Baseball* (New York: Viking, 2005), 320.

1960, did not mince words when interviewed by *The Sporting News*. “I can take any one of your stories and find thirty mistakes in them every day,” he said. “People who couldn’t run trolley cars are telling me how to run a six-million-dollar business.”²⁴

The 1960s saw the emergence of “chipmunk journalism,” a nickname derisively pinned on young, brash sportswriters by veteran New York columnist Jimmy Cannon. Irritated by a group of writers talking loudly in the press box, Cannon told them they were “chattering like a bunch of chipmunks.”²⁵ Larry Merchant of the *Philadelphia Daily News* and Stan Isaacs at *Long Island Newsday* were the leaders of the chipmunk pack, paying attention to detail and leaving “no stone unturned” in their writing, no matter how uncomfortable the question might be. The signature moment for the chipmunks came during the early 1960s when New York Yankees pitcher Ralph Terry excused himself from reporters to take a telephone call from his wife. When he returned to the locker room, Terry explained that his wife was feeding their infant son. “Breast or bottle?” Isaacs asked.²⁶

Asking the tough question, if not the personal one, has been perfected over the past fifty years, in part thanks to the chipmunks. One could root for the home team as a fan — as a “homer” — but not as a sports journalist. There was no cheering allowed in the press box. “Homers make me barf,” *St. Petersburg Times* columnist Hubert Mizell wrote in 1985. “We’re not supposed to be fans. ... We cannot be an extension of the team. Our charge is to describe the

²⁴ Bill Nowlin, *Tom Yawkey: Patriarch of the Boston Red Sox* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 219.

²⁵ Joe Enriquez, “Coverage of Sports,” in *American Journalism: History, Principles, Practices*, edited by W. David Sloan and Lisa Mullikin Parcell (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2002), 2003.

²⁶ Enriquez, 203.

scene,” while asking questions “no matter how acid.”²⁷ Those pointed questions are posed to find answers and provide information to the readership of the newspaper.

While newspapers flourished through the middle of the twentieth century, radio was beginning to make inroads, taking sports journalism from past-tense writing into real-time listening. The first baseball radio broadcast occurred on August 5, 1921, on Pittsburgh radio station KDKA, and “soon ferried a galloping world of big-league vibration.” Radio was different than print journalism. One did not have to be literate to listen to the radio; one had to know how to read to appreciate what was being written in newspapers and magazines. The only requirement for listening to radio was access to receivers. Plus, after the expense of buying a radio receiver, a listener did not have to pay for broadcasts; in the pre-internet age, newspaper readers had to buy the publication daily to get the latest sports information.²⁸

Radio announcers had to be inventive during the early days of broadcasting games, since many of them did not travel with the team when it went on the road. Instead, they would read dispatches of play-by-play that were sent via telegraph. So, if the Boston Red Sox traveled to Chicago, for example, the announcer might receive a telegraph notice that read “Cronin 6-3.” That would be shorthand for Red Sox batter Joe Cronin grounding to the shortstop, who threw him out at first base. The radio announcer, by turning up background noises and simulating the crack of the bat, could describe a few pitches before noting enthusiastically that “Joe Cronin slams a hard ground ball to (Luke) Appling’s left ... Luke grabs the handle and fires to first. ...” And so on, throughout the game. It took a storyteller’s mentality to keep the listener engaged.²⁹

²⁷ Hubert Mizell, “Fan and Writer Play Different Critical Roles, at Park or Pump,” *St. Petersburg Times* (St. Petersburg, Florida: October 20, 1985), 3C.

²⁸ King, 39.

²⁹ John Dinan, *Sports in the Pulp Magazines* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998), 39.

Television essayist Curt Smith characterized a baseball broadcaster as “a Rubik’s Cube of actor, writer, director, producer, cameraman, and salesman.”³⁰ Future president Ronald Reagan honed his future skills as “The Great Communicator” by doing play-by-play baseball broadcasts between 1932 and 1937 at WOC-AM in Davenport, Iowa; and WHO-AM in Des Moines, Iowa.³¹ Broadcasters were free to tell stories to supplement the action on the field. Plus, they could describe the weather and the emotions they heard from the stands, drawing the listener closer to the action. Curt Gowdy, who excelled in both radio and television broadcasting, said he preferred doing radio. “There’s more freedom,” Gowdy said. “If I wanted to talk about the sky or a fat lady in the stands, I could do it. On TV I was just part of a team and was limited by what was on the screen.”³²

Some baseball owners, however, were afraid that radio would give fans a reason to stay away from the ballpark and listen to the game from home. Newspaper publishers also fretted, believing that fans would no longer buy the paper to read game excerpts.³³ The owners need not have worried; radio stoked interest in going to the game, rather than staying away. Casual fans would venture to the ballparks, joining the diehard fans who attended more frequently. Radio introduced strong personalities as announcers, particularly in major-league baseball: Red Barber, colorful with homespun Southern sayings, yet always grammatically correct; Harry Caray, a loud, garrulous announcer whose blue-collar style resonated with fans; Dizzy Dean, a former star pitcher whose cornpone, syntax-challenged announcing infuriated a generation of English

³⁰ Curt Smith, *The Storytellers: From Mel Allen to Bob Costas: Sixty Years of Baseball Tales from the Broadcast Booth* (New York: Macmillan, 1995), ix.

³¹ ESPN, “Former President was Sports Announcer,” ESPN.com, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.espn.com/espn/news/story?id=1816460>

³² Ted Patterson, *The Golden Voices of Baseball* (Champaign, Illinois: Sports Publishing L.L.C., 2002), 147.

³³ Martin C. Babicz and Thomas W. Zeiler, *National Pastime: U.S. History Through Baseball* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 84-85.

teachers; Phil Rizzuto, a former shortstop with the New York Yankees whose excitable, city slicker persona was perfect for New York City; Jack Buck, quick-witted and glib, a perfect match for St. Louis and the midwestern affiliates that carried the Cardinals' games; and the smooth, poetic Vin Scully, whose understatement was ideal for Los Angeles and laid-back southern California.

Radio's influence was not limited to sports. Some politicians realized early that a medium that broadcast a person's voice live could be a valuable tool. "It seems to me," Franklin D. Roosevelt noted in 1929, when he was governor of New York, "that radio is gradually bringing to the ears of our people matters of interest concerning their country which they refused to consider in the daily press with their eyes."³⁴ Roosevelt's thirty-one "Fireside Chats" would become a staple of radio when he was president during the 1930s.

Sports journalism also could embrace political issues, at times nakedly so. At the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki, Finland, *New York Times* sports editor Arthur Daley wrote that "the communist propaganda machine must be silenced."³⁵ ABC sportscaster Al Michaels, whose "unrestrained and partisan" call at the end of the 1980 "Miracle On Ice" hockey game at the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York — "Do you believe in miracles? Yes!" — said the Americans' victory was a time when "you could be openly biased," since "99.9 percent of the audience is 100 percent with you." "I know there's supposed to be no cheering in the press box, but this was *the* exception," he said.³⁶ E.M. Swift of *Sports Illustrated* agreed, writing that "Here

³⁴ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life* (New York: Viking, 2017), 103.

³⁵ Kathryn Jay, *More Than Just a Game: Sports In American Life Since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 64

³⁶ Al Michaels, *You Can't Make This Up: Miracles, Memories and the Perfect Marriage of Sports and Television* (New York: William Morrow, 2014), 117.

is something that is bigger than any of you.”³⁷ For journalists taught to be impartial, these were notable departures from the norm.

Broadcast journalists like Howard Cosell, who believed that social issues could be reported on television through the prism of sports, used his platform to explore political issues even when they were unpopular.³⁸ Cosell was a rarity among broadcasters in the 1960s and 1970s — a journalist with a lawyer’s background who was not afraid to ask pointed questions and take sports figures to task when their answers appeared unsatisfactory. Author Mark Ribowsky wrote that Cosell’s voice “was clearly one of reason and enlightenment” during the combustible times of the late 1960s.³⁹ Today’s sportswriters tend to be more introspective, exploring, questioning, critiquing and analyzing the social, political, patriotic, legal and gender issues in sports. Digging into important issues and controversies remain the bread and butter of journalists. “As a sportswriter, you tend to root for turmoil,” Gene Wojciechowski wrote in 1990. “Let’s face it, melodrama provides better reading.”⁴⁰

That points back to Dick Young’s admonishment to write the most interesting angle, even if it had nothing to do with the score or even the game. The status of quarterback Tom Brady’s injury to his throwing hand was a major point of discussion in the week leading up to the New England Patriots’ AFC Championship Game against the Jacksonville Jaguars in January 2018, as sportswriters and bloggers weighed in on the subject. The drama that swirled around the injury nearly overshadowed the game, and when Brady led New England to a comeback victory to earn

³⁷ E.M. Swift, “The Golden Goal,” *Sports Illustrated*, March 3, 1980, 16.

³⁸ Kindred, 62.

³⁹ Mark Ribowsky, *Howard Cosell: The Man, the Myth, and the Transformation of American Sports* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012). 184-185

⁴⁰ Gene Wojciechowski, *Pond Scum and Vultures: America’s Sportswriters Talk About Their Glamorous Profession* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 81

a berth in Super Bowl LII, the hand injury remained a leading point of discussion. Only this time, the conversation centered around Brady overcoming his hand injury to lead New England to its eighth Super Bowl berth in seventeen seasons.

Inevitably, television would surpass radio as a sports fan's go-to media. Radio had been "an immovable object," selling more than one hundred sixty thousand sets a month at its peak. Slowly, however, television became "an irresistible force," selling seven million sets in 1950.⁴¹ Both radio and television were recognized as revenue streams for sports, particularly for baseball and boxing during the 1950s, and football beginning in the 1970s. In 1956, for example, radio and television sponsors paid a record \$26.2 million to broadcast baseball games. For the thirteen teams that had television agreements, this amounted to slightly more than ten percent of each team's income.⁴² In December 2017, Verizon agreed to a five-year, deal worth nearly two-and-a-half billion dollars with the National Football League for the right to stream live, in-market games on any of its websites. The deal went beyond television and the internet, allows fans to stream games on their telephones, and beginning in the 2018 season, on their tablets.⁴³ The NFL will renegotiate its television contract in 2021, and high numbers are expected.

Network sports television was the next logical step after radio, transforming sports "into spectacular entertainment" that was filled with emotion, drama and spontaneity.⁴⁴ Even though boxing manager Jack "Doc" Kearns warned that free television would affect attendance at events

⁴¹ Curt Smith, *The Voice: Mel Allen's Untold Story* (Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2007), 56.

⁴² Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith, *A Season in the Sun: The Rise of Mickey Mantle* (New York: Basic Books, 2018,) 68.

⁴³ Darren Rovell, "Verizon, NFL Agree to New 5-Year Deal Worth Nearly \$2.5 billion, ESPN.com, December 11, 2017, accessed March 22, 2018, http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/21737823/verizon-nfl-agree-new-5-year-deal-worth-nearly-25-billion.

⁴⁴ Jay, 16.

— “You can’t give it away and sell it at the same time” — the impact of television continued to grow.⁴⁵ Audiences increased and turnstiles at live events continued to click. Broadcasting in sports would follow the lead of news, evolving from a more dispassionate approach to major news stories that CBS News correspondent Dan Rather once compared to “the manner of an insurance adjuster” after a fire. “Winning, losing, tragedy, grief, courage” all become incidental to the job, “ashes to be sifted later,” Rather wrote in 1977.⁴⁶

That was never more evident than when the founding of ESPN in 1979 elevated sports coverage into a 24-hour cycle. ESPN, originally viewed as “a funky little seat-of-the-pants operation,” is now worth more than the National Football League, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League and Major League Baseball combined.⁴⁷ “If you love sports ... if you really love sports, you’ll think you’ve died and gone to sports heaven,” ESPN anchor Lee Leonard told viewers at 7 p.m. on September 7, 1979, as *SportsCenter* heralded the network’s debut.⁴⁸ Broadcasting on cable was a double-edged sword, particularly for broadcasters who had deep roots as print journalists. Just like in newspapers, radio and pre-cable television, advertising was the elephant in the room. Should a reporter cover a controversial subject, even if it made a key advertiser uncomfortable?

This was not a new issue in television. In 1959, an episode of the *Playhouse 90* series, “Judgment at Nuremberg,” was called “one of the most notoriously censored” television broadcasts of its era. One of the sponsors of the show was the American Gas Association, and

⁴⁵ Roberts and Smith, 67.

⁴⁶ Dan Rather and Mickey Herskowitz, *The Camera Never Blinks: Adventures of a TV Journalist* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1977), 117.

⁴⁷ James Andrew Miller and Tom Shales, *Those Guys Have All The Fun: Inside the World of ESPN* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011), xiii.

⁴⁸ Miller and Shales, 51.

either TV executives — or the sponsor itself — feared that references to gas chambers to exterminate concentration camp prisoners would create a negative impression about a sponsor that sold natural gas. All references are muted in the dialogue of the live telecast.⁴⁹

Stephen A. Smith was a beat writer and sports columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* before he joined ESPN as a commentator. Even though he is confident in his abilities and is not afraid to voice his opinion, Smith concedes that “fear has to drive you” in the broadcast business. Journalists at ESPN realize that the company has contracts and partnerships with the NFL and Major League Baseball. Smith was never asked to compromise his principles, but he conceded the specter of NFL commissioner Roger Goodell or baseball commissioner Bud Selig — representing two of ESPN’s major partners — was “hovering over me.”⁵⁰

Bill Simmons is another sports print journalist who ventured into cable television. He addressed the broadcasts of games, particularly those including more than one person in the booth, with a bluntness that is refreshing. “Announcing is like wrestling. If you’re not going to sell the other guy or guys in the ring, they are going to look like they suck,” Simmons wrote.⁵¹ Simmons concedes, however, that fans do not care who the broadcasters are, as long as they can explain the action on the field and offer some analysis. “Nobody on the planet watches a sports game for the (expletive) announcers,” Simmons said. “And that’s the thing we have never understood.” What became more clearly understood as the twenty-first century dawned was that the internet would become wedded to sports. Easy access to websites and blogs opened a new world for sports fans — and, albeit slowly, for scholars.

⁴⁹ “Playhouse 90 at 60: A Giant Step and a Last Gasp,” *UCLA Film & Television Archive*, September 14, 2016, accessed February 20, 2018, <https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/blogs/archive-blog/2016/09/14/playhouse-90-at-60-giant-step-and-last-gasp>.

⁵⁰ Miller and Shales, 670.

⁵¹ Miller and Shales, 679;

Blogs began to creep into the public consciousness in the 1990s. Dave Winer, a software developer who has dabbled in blogging and podcasts, credits Tim Berners-Lee with creating the first functional blog-oriented website in 1991.⁵² Others point to Winer as the father of the blog, with his “DaveNet” newsletter distributed by email to subscribers in November 1994. Winer followed that up with “Scripting News” beginning on April 1, 1997, a collection of musings he has called the longest-running web “log” currently on the internet.⁵³ The term “weblog” was coined in December 1997 by internet writer Jorn Barger for his RobotWisdom.com site and was shortened to “blog” in 1999 by Peter Merholz, who wrote on his website Peterme.com and first pronounce the term as “wee-blog” before shortening it.⁵⁴

Even now, there is no consensus over who really had the first blog. Barger insists the distinction belongs to him. “Since I made up the word, I assume I get to define it,” he wrote in an email to C-Net in 2007. “And by my strictest definition Winer wasn’t quite a blog — he mixed up the reverse-chronological ordering too much. So — unsurprisingly — the first 100 percent Weblog would be mine.”⁵⁵

That claim could be challenged by Justin Hall, a freelance writer who created “Justin’s Links” on January 23, 1994, when he was a student at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. “Howdy, this is twenty-first century computing (Is it worth our patience?),” Hall wrote in that initial post. “I’m publishing this, and I guess you’re readin’ this, in part to figure that out,

⁵² Edward M. Kian, Joe W. Burden Jr. and Stephanie D. Shaw, “Internet Sport Bloggers: Who Are These People and Where Do They Come From?” *Journal of Sport Administration & Supervision*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (September 2011), 31.

⁵³ Declan McCullagh and Anne Broache, “Blogs Turn 10 – Who’s the Father?” C-Net.com, March 20, 2007, accessed March 10, 2018, <https://www.cnet.com/news/blogs-turn-10-whos-the-father/>

⁵⁴ McCullagh and Broache.

⁵⁵ McCullagh and Broache.

huh?”⁵⁶ Called the “founding father of personal blogs” by *The New York Times Magazine* in 2004, Hall has more than 4,800 archived pages of subject matter, and his posts have been described as having “the immediacy of a gonzo documentary.”⁵⁷ Indeed, Hall attracted followers because of his penchant “for finding the juicier corners of an online world” that was still restricted to researchers and institutions. By January 1995, Hall peaked with 27,000 daily readers.⁵⁸ At the apex of his influence, Hall was “a human transmitter, beaming forth on all possible frequencies.”⁵⁹ Nearly twenty-three years later, married and with a family, Hall looked at what he helped create with some detachment. “I have mixed feelings about the whole thing,” he blogged in December 2017. “I have become more ambivalent about public sharing.” He notes that “at any moment” our society can marvel at what it has enabled. So, he wonders, “why should we be surprised that social media might actually be a manipulative scourge?”⁶⁰

It can be dangerous to generalize about social media, just as it was a mistake to make sweeping pronouncements about the print and broadcast media. It is easy to criticize the press, as Vice President Spiro Agnew did in the late 1960s, when he referred to journalists as “nattering nabobs of negativity.” The alliteration makes for compelling language, but as Tom Goldstein wrote in 1989, Agnew’s specific criticisms were “disingenuous, uninformed, and sometimes just plain inaccurate.”⁶¹ Agnew treated the media as a monolith, Goldstein argues, and by doing so

⁵⁶ Justin Hall, “Welcome to My First Attempt at Hypertext,” *Justin’s Home Page*, January 23, 1994, accessed March 10, 1994, <http://links.net/vita/web/start/original.html>

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Rosen, “Your Blog or Mine?” *The New York Times Magazine*, December 19, 2004, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/19/magazine/your-blog-or-mine.html>

⁵⁸ Lene Bech Sillesen, “Is This the Web’s First Blog?” *Columbia Journalism Review*, November 5, 2004, accessed March 10, 2018, http://archives.cjr.org/behind_the_news/justin_hall_blog_web.php

⁵⁹ Scott Rosenberg, *Say Everything: How Blogging Began, What It’s Becoming, and Why It Matters* (New York: Crown Publishers 2009), 32.

⁶⁰ Justin Hall, “Shoveling Up,” *Justin Hall’s Personal Site*, December 9, 2017, accessed January 4, 2018., <http://links.net/daze/17/12/08-shoveling-up.html>

⁶¹ Tom Goldstein, “Journalists and Their Biases — Conscious or Not?” in *Killing the Messenger: 100 Years of Media Criticism*, edited by Tom Goldstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 102.

overlooked one important point about the media: If there is one accurate generalization about the press, it's that "it is unsafe to generalize."⁶² In general, anyway,

⁶² Goldstein, 103.

Chapter 4: My Kingdom for a Source

Recent literature about sports blogs has mostly been found in journals and essays, rather than in books. For the past decade, books about blogging addressed “how-to” principles for beginners or explored ways to start a business. That is beginning to change. The literature can be divided into two camps: Writers who embrace blogs and their potential for connecting journalism and academics, and those who are dismissive of blogging and bloggers. Andrew McGregor is entrenched firmly in the first camp, and his 2017 essay, “The Power of Blogging: Rethinking Scholarship and Reshaping Boundaries at *Sport in American History*,” summarizes the debates surrounding the digital guidelines that were hammered together by the American Historical Association in 2015. The guidelines are a valuable primary source because the document articulates the standards for determining scholarly blogging.

McGregor outlines how *Sport in American History*, a group blog, has evolved. He writes that blogs are not alternatives to traditional journals, but complementary. Establishing book reviews within *Sport in American History* represents an “important affirmation and professional recognition” that the blog is “a venue of scholarly communications” in the field of sport history.¹ Like traditional publications, *Sport in American History* is edited, albeit lightly: posts by recurring and guest contributors are submitted three to five days before publication and vetted by at least one editor, McGregor writes. This policy “flirts with the concept” of an online journal and peer review.² McGregor also borrows from Ernest L. Boyer’s four types of scholarship to

¹ Andrew McGregor, “The Power of Blogging; Rethinking Scholarship and Reshaping Boundaries at *Sport in American History*,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 2017), 247.

² McGregor, 247.

demonstrate how *Sport in American History* represents a cross-section of academic departments, ranks and degrees.³ McGregor concludes emphatically that blogging is scholarship, “creating, connecting and maintaining” scholarly networks, fostering ideas and creating more opportunities for research.⁴ McGregor’s notes are extensive and cover an eclectic swath of sources, including books, journals, essays and even tweets on Twitter. McGregor’s writing is crisp, reasoned and organized. This essay is scholarly, and while it is also a public relations piece for *Sport in American History*, it does not fawn too much on its achievements.

Ernest L. Boyer’s work, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, was written in 1997, technically at the dawn of the blogging era. Boyer argues that teaching, service and the integration of knowledge across disciplines should be recognized as the equal of research. Boyer died in 2005 before blogs began to expand, but his theories can effectively be applied as easily to bloggers as they are to students and researchers. Boyer seems to hint at that concept when he asserts that the time has come to move beyond “the tired old ‘teaching versus research’ debate” and give scholarship a broader, “more capricious” meaning.⁵ Boyer is clearly speaking to academics who have adhered to a narrow definition of scholarship; he urges them to remain open-minded. Research is important, he argues, but so is the ability to rethink what scholarship is and what it means to be a scholar.

One of the fresher outlooks on digital history is 2015’s *Sport History in the Digital Era*, a collection of essays edited by Gary Osmond and Murray G. Phillips. The book’s ten chapters cover a wide range of issues about scholarship, including sports reporting and blogging. The authors observed that teaching, learning and research “are shaped in complex and interrelated

³ McGregor, 242.

⁴ McGregor, 254.

⁵ Boyer, 16.

ways” by newer online technologies.⁶ Scholars once wrote letters to each other, spoke on the telephone or compared notes at conferences. The digital era has changed that dynamic, as electronic correspondence such as email, message boards and chat rooms offer more up-to-the-minute interaction.

Sports historians used to physically comb through libraries and archives for information, painstakingly sifting through bound volumes of newspapers, microfilm and microfiche, and loosely collected papers. Now, they employ search engines to discover sources and can rely on online databases to track down relevant newspaper articles and journal articles. Type in a word or phrase at a site like Newspapers.com, and thousands of relevant articles appear. The scholar can then narrow his focus to a range of years or one specific year and zoom in on a location. Suddenly, thousands of vague possibilities are narrowed down to real, specific pieces of information. It is apparent that today’s sports historian has more tools to work with. Shawn Graham, Ian Milligan and Scott Weingart argue that historians who use digital sources are blessed with “an incredible array of archival material” that allows them to work faster and smarter without sacrificing accuracy and quality.⁷

Sport History in the Digital Era is divided into three distinct sections: “Digital History and the Archive,” “Digital History as Archive,” and “Digital History is History.” The first section, “Digital History and Archive,” is a blueprint that documents the changes that have occurred because of the digitization of historical materials. That includes access to manuscripts, photographs, cartoons, magazines, newspapers and maps. What the essayists in this section seek

⁶ Gary Osmond and Murray G. Phillips, *Sport History in the Digital Era* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press,) 259.

⁷ Jennifer J. Sterling, Murray G. Phillips and Mary G. MacDonald, “Doing Sport History in the Digital Present,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 2017), 137.

to answer are the possibilities presented to historians who now can access volumes of information without venturing away from their computers. Is working with “an infinite archive” advantageous and can it offer more than traditional historical practices.⁸

The second section, “Digital History as Archive,” demonstrates how online sites like blogs, fan sites and discussion boards have expanded the boundaries of research possibilities. Adding social media into the mix, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr and YouTube offer large amounts of data. The caveat is that this type of archive, conceived and grown exclusively in an online environment, creates “as many pitfalls as there are opportunities.”⁹ One could call this the “Wild West” of modern research, since the rules are fluid and are changing at a fast rate. There are no established, structured rules in place; Sterling, Phillips and MacDonald assert that digital archives are outside the control of one professional body, making them “amorphous, unregulated, and dynamic.”¹⁰

The third section, “Digital History is History,” Matthew Gold notes that a “fault line” has been created between those who use digital tools to enhance “traditional” scholarly projects and those historians who believe these tools are most useful as a “disruptive force” that can reshape ways that historians approach research. At its best, digital research can be a collaborative effort, created with community involvement from bloggers, citizen scholars, citizen journalists, librarians, public historians and even amateurs.¹¹

The essays in *Sport History in the Digital Era* are diverse and topical. Martin Johnes and Bob Nicholson probe the advances of sport history and digital archives, observing that it is

⁸ Sterling, Phillips and MacDonald, 137.

⁹ Sterling, Phillips and MacDonald, 137.

¹⁰ Sterling, Phillips and MacDonald, 137.

¹¹ Sterling, Phillips and MacDonald, 137-138.

becoming possible to conduct primary research “from the comfort of one’s own desk.”¹² Johnes and Nicholson approach digital scholarship from an angle of functionality, rather than practicality. They conclude, however, that if a digital archive is “designed and employed well,” it has the potential of transform the way scholars approach history.¹³ Fiona McLachlan and Douglas Booth note rather wryly that because historians want “stable, authentic, persistent and legible sources,” they view the internet skeptically, quoting computer scientist Jeff Rothenberg’s observation that “digital documents last forever — or five years, whatever comes first.”¹⁴

Aaron Barlow, a professor of English at the City University of New York, recognized the almost monolithic potential of blogs. “It is impossible to cover all of the blogosphere,” he wrote in 2008. “It is too big, too dynamic, and too responsive to change for anyone to say much about it beyond ‘this is what I found in this particular place at that particular time.’”¹⁵ Still, Barlow concedes that while personal blogs are “the most notorious aspect” of the blogosphere, they are changing our relationships with technology” by making them more personal and active.”¹⁶ This was a radical change from the one-way communication that newspapers, broadcasters and scholars had enjoyed with their readership. Because the audience can respond almost immediately to a blog post, it gives the author immediate feedback.

In the summer of 2017, Andrew D. Linden and Lindsay Parks Pieper combined to examine the advantages and disadvantages of blogging. Their essay, “Writing Sport Online: An

¹² Martin Johnes and Bob Nicholson, “Sport History and Digital Archives in Practice,” in *Sport History in the Digital Era*, edited by Gary Osmond and Murray G. Phillips, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015) 53.

¹³ Johnes and Nicholson, 54.

¹⁴ Fiona McLachlan and Douglas Booth, “Who’s Afraid of the Internet? Swimming in an Infinite Archive,” in *Sport History in the Digital Era*, edited by Gary Osmond and Murray G. Phillips, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015) 228.

¹⁵ Aaron Barlow, *Blogging America: The New Public Sphere* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger), ix.

¹⁶ Barlow, x.

Analysis of the Pitfalls and Potential of Academic Blogging,” subscribes to the theory advanced by Melissa Gregg that blogging “contributes to” and “mirrors” traditional scholarly norms, rather than threatening them.¹⁷ Linden and Pieper analyzed six different blogs, assigning categories and coding the results, and then presented their conclusions. The categories include academia, which discussed trends in academic life or its future; current events, which are descriptions of contemporary events, news or incidents in sport; information, which include promotional materials; links, which are posts that provide hyperlinks for further information; reflections, which cover a vast array of commentary, personal anecdotes, containing ideas with a critical edge that might not be grounded in research; research, which offer theoretical frameworks or critical analysis; the research process, which takes the reader through the steps used to conduct research; reviews, which provide commentary and criticism about books, articles, conferences, museums and films; and teaching, which cover methods in the classroom.¹⁸

Linden and Pieper conclude that while blogging is not new, it has increased. Still, the merits of blogging as scholarly work “remain in contention,” and with funding evaporating for sport history classes and Ph.D. students, they are cautious about “celebrating the virtues” of academic blogs.¹⁹ They assert that blogging has emerged as a medium that is full of opportunities and challenges for academics. They list four ways that blogging can contribute to the scholarly study of sport: accessibility, public engagement and response, flexibility and a place for multidisciplinary research.²⁰ They conclude that the merits of scholarly blogging remain in flux, noting that it has not remedied issues of academia — gender discrepancies are an example — but

¹⁷ Andrew D. Linden and Lindsay Parks Pieper, “Writing Sport Online: An Analysis of the Pitfalls and Potential of Academic Blogging,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 2017), 262.

¹⁸ Linden and Pieper, 259.

¹⁹ Linden and Pieper, 270.

²⁰ Linden and Pieper, 266.

have merely mirrored them. While they are cautious about celebrating the virtues of academic sports blogs, they are optimistic that they have a place in digital media.

Vibrant pieces of writing about blogs come from Dan Cohen, who is Vice Provost for Information Collaboration, Dean of the Libraries, and professor of history at Northeastern University in Boston. A blog post from 2006, “Professors, Start Your Blogs,” crackles with wit and insight. Blogs, Cohen argues, are just like any other forms of writing, meaning that while “there’s a whole lot of trash out there,” there also are some relevant and educational pieces worth reading.²¹ Cohen writes plainly but with humor, noting that he has carefully avoided the use of “extreme adjectives and hyperbole” that are common in the blogs that academics refer to scornfully. Cohen’s thesis is that a blog, when “shaped correctly,” can be a perfect place for scholarship. It gives a scholar a chance to reach out to a larger audience than a paper or journal could. Such attribution, responsibility and credit should allay the fears of academics and make them feel more comfortable about blogging, Cohen writes. He concedes that he is “preaching to the choir” because his audience is receptive to blogs, but Cohen clearly sees the value of the internet as a fresh, valuable device to create and add to online scholarship.

One of the more innovative approaches to digital scholarship was conceived by Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, who edited 2013’s *Writing History in the Digital Age*. They took what Robert T. Ingogilia, the former professor of history at Felician College in New Jersey, called a “publish, then filter” approach. Their book first appeared on a website, <http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu>, that invited anyone to read and comment on the text before it

²¹ Dan Cohen, “Professors, Start Your Blogs,” August 21, 2006, accessed December 20, 2017, <http://www.dancohen.org/2006/08/21/professors-start-your-blogs>

was published in book form.²² That gave the book transparency and encouraged interaction between the editors and the audience. Dougherty and Nawrotzki also hoped to produce more polished essays and scholarly essays, basically inviting electronic peer review.

The most relevant essay in the book concerning blogs was written by Alex Sayf Cummings and Jonathan Jarrett. In “Only Typing? Informal Writing, Blogging, and the Academy,” the authors note that “new technologies and new formats” have opened the media to voices that are more informal in nature — and perhaps not as polished — as work presented by scholars.²³ That does not mean that these new platforms are not useful, they argue. Conceding that scholars “have rarely been known to do things quickly,” they write that online writing has “whizzed by” many scholars, particularly historians.²⁴

Interestingly, Cummings and Jarrett have differing views about blogging and scholarship. Jarrett writes that blogging will only serve “as a means of *generating* scholarship when peer review ceases to *validate* scholarship.”²⁵ He believes that if academics follow their long-held beliefs, blogging will not be the place where scholarship is achieved. Cummings believes that blogging can complement, but not replace, mainstream scholarship. There is a place for scholarship in blogs, but not as a standalone source. Cummings touts a more expansive definition of scholarship that retains peer review but also welcomes other types of engagement.²⁶ In the final analysis, both writers concede that the main difference between blogs and edited works like *Writing History in the Digital Age* is one of editing and filtering and a perception of credibility

²² Robert T. Ingoglia, “Reviewed Work: Writing History in the Digital Age,” *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*, Vol. 51, No. 8 (April 2014), 1464.

²³ Cummings and Jarrett, 246.

²⁴ Cummings and Jarrett, 246;

²⁵ Cummings and Jarrett, 252.

²⁶ Cummings and Jarrett, 253.

and trustworthiness. Which platform, they wonder, carries more credibility? Currently, they agree that peer reviewed works are the gold standard but differ on whether it will remain solid or become fluid in the new era. “This guarantees that one of us will indeed look foolish in ten years for guessing wrong,” they wrote.²⁷

Another collection of essays was edited by Murray G. Phillips. In *Deconstructing Sport History: A Postmodern Analysis*, Phillips cites fellow historian Douglas Booth, a former Australian Rules Football player-turned-scholar who asserts that sports historians “structure their work to place sport within a broader social, economic or political context,” or simply explain an issue that caused social change.²⁸

This book is divided into three sections, addressing theory, practice and the future. In the first section, Douglas Booth articulated the criteria that was used to evaluate the scholarly levels of blogs that were examined in this paper. Michael Oriard, deriving his work from the “myth-and-symbol scholars,” delves into linguistics in his essay in his reconstruction of the culture of American football, noting that the boundary between social and cultural history “is particularly porous.”²⁹ Other essays in the book address race, sports historiography, gender, religion and even music. The book is well-edited, balanced and organized.

There are critics of blogs, who don’t believe they can ever be scholarship. Internet entrepreneur Andrew Keen has been the most vocal critic of blogs. He has been described as “a supreme cyber grump” and the “anti-Christ of Silicon Valley.”³⁰ In 2007, Keen criticized the

²⁷ Cummings and Jarrett, 253.

²⁸ Murray G. Phillips, “Sport History and Postmodernism,” *Deconstructing Sport History: A Postmodern Analysis*, ed. Murray G. Phillips (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 3.

²⁹ Michael Oriard, “A Linguistic Turn into Sport History,” in *Deconstructing Sport History: A Postmodern Analysis* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 75.

³⁰ Wendy J. Stewart, Media Review: Andrew Keen: What is Social Media Really Doing to Our Society?” *Media, Culture and Society*, November 12, 2013, accessed December 23, 2017,

anonymity and lack of trustworthiness across the internet. The cultural ramifications of the internet, Keen argued in 2015, are “chilling.” Instead of creating more democracy, the internet is “empowering the rule of the mob.” Instead of a renaissance, it has created “a selfie-centered culture of voyeurism and narcissism.” Instead of making people happy, it is “compounding our rage.”³¹ Keen argues that when the gatekeeper is removed, and anything can be published online, much of that content “will be either propaganda or plain lies.”³²

James E. Gall suggests that Keen is perceptive when he points out that “hard work, long hours and critical review” are the benchmarks of expertise in many fields.³³ Keen notes that the inspiration for his first book came from T.H. Huxley, a nineteenth-century biologist and author of the “infinite monkey theorem,” which claims that if you provide infinite monkeys with infinite typewriters, some monkey will eventually create a masterpiece. Blogs, Keen argues, have become “so dizzyingly infinite” that they have undermined what is real and what is simply illusion. launched.”³⁴

Keen leans on some “sensible experts and some indisputable data,” to advance his arguments, *Telegraph Online* noted in a 2015 review.³⁵ He also tells relevant stories. Keen discusses the rise and fall of Eastman Kodak, which controlled ninety percent of film sales and eighty-five percent of camera sales in the United States. In 2011, Americans took 350 billion

<https://mediaculturesociety.org/2013/11/12/media-review-andrew-keen-what-is-social-media-really-doing-to-our-society/>

³¹ Andrew Keen, *The Internet is Not the Answer* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2015), x.

³² Keen., 153.

³³ James E. Gall, “Reviewed Work, The Cult of the Amateur,” *Educational Technology Research and Development*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (2008), 363.

³⁴ Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today’s Internet is Killing Our Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 3.

³⁵ “Reviewed work: The Internet is Not the Answer; Indisputable Facts but Limited Ambition: The Internet Has Brought Huge Benefits for its Users, but We Should Remember the Losers, Too,” *Telegraph Online*, January 23, 2015, accessed December 23, 2015,

http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A398608913/STND?u=nhc_main&sid=STND&xid=dca2d6e1

photographs and 1.5 trillion in 2015 — but most of those were being taken by smart phones and published on websites, effectively sending Eastman Kodak into bankruptcy in September 2013. In terms of blogs, Keen remains dismissive, arguing that when “the gatekeeper is removed” and anyone can publish anything online, much of that content will be “either propaganda or plain lies.” This book is useful because it presents a powerful and controversial counterpoint to the advantages of the internet. Keen has dabbled in internet ventures but remains convinced that a brick-and-mortar business plan is much more effective. Ironically, Keen has written his own blog since 2011 and released his most recent work, *How to Fix the Future*, in February 2018.

In 2008 Geert Lovink wrote that blogs were causing the decay of traditional broadcast media. The first chapter of his book sets the tone: “Blogging, the Nihilistic Impulse.” Lovink argues that blogs are altering the way people attach meaning to their lives and are “decadent artifacts that remotely dismantle the might and seductive power of the broadcast media.”³⁶ Lovink also asserts that blogs are causing the decay of traditional broadcast media, calling them “the proxy of our time.” The weakness in Lovink’s analysis is that he tends to generalize. He claims that blogs are a form of regression, even though some might provoke discussion. Lovink brands them with a label of “sentimental nihilism,” claiming they only touch the surface and lack depth.

Like Andrew Keen, Lovink is a critic; unlike Keen, Lovink approaches his criticism more diplomatically. Those who blog would find Lovink’s criticisms easier to swallow than Keen’s, but both offer a flip side to the concept of sports blogging and scholarship.

³⁶ Lovink, 17.

Many bloggers, Sylvia Engdahl wrote in 2008, considered themselves amateur or “citizen” journalists, and blogs gave them a forum where their views could be heard by their peers — and additionally, their critics.³⁷ And yet, critics of blogs charge that these writers have neither the professional training nor the time to create work equal to that of professional journalists.³⁸ Engdahl edited twenty-three essays in her work, titled simply, *Blogs*, which was part of the Current Controversies Series. The essays examine the role of blogs in American politics and culture, what value they might have to the public, and legal issues they might raise.

There are only four chapters in *Blogs*, but they are broken down, debate-style, into pro-and-con essays. The most significant passages include Chapter 1, “Are Blogs of Value to the Public?” and Chapter 3, “How Are Blogs Affecting American Culture?” In the first chapter, jurist and economist Richard A. Posner argues that the blogosphere has more checks and balances than conventional media, but in a different way. The blogosphere, he asserts, is a collective enterprise: Instead of twelve million different voices, it is one enterprise with “twelve million reporters, feature writers and editorialists,” yet with little or no costs. Posner makes the analogy that the army of bloggers is like The Associated Press operating with reporters who are experts, “all working with no salary for free newspapers that carried no advertising.”

There are more secondary sources listed in the bibliography, and all complement and amplify the assertions of McGregor, Linden and Pieper, Osmond and Phillips, Keen and Lovink.

Primary Sources

Traditionally, primary source material would be documents in archives or transcripts of speeches. Times have changed, though, and the electronic age must be considered. A current

³⁷ Sylvia Engdahl, ed., *Blogs* (Farmington Hills, Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 18.

³⁸ Engdahl, 19.

form of primary source material that is being utilized is correspondence via email, with questions sent to several professors and veteran bloggers to gauge their opinions about journalism, scholarly work and the blogs that can connect them. Insightful opinions shaped by years of academic experience have been provided by Ted Spiker, Chair and professor of journalism at the University of Florida; Gregory Ramshaw, associate professor in the Department of Parks and Recreation at Clemson University; and Dan Cohen, the vice provost for information, dean of libraries and professor of history at Northeastern University. From a legal point of view — and just like journalism, there are legal ramifications involved with blogs — the views of Dom Caristi, a professor in the Department of Telecommunications at Ball State University, have proven to be instructive. The legal area of blogging with respect to digital writing is a gap that should be explored for future research.

Another primary source could be called a blueprint for digital writers of sports history, whether done by bloggers, scholars or journalists. “The Guidelines for the Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship” was created in 2015 by the American Historical Association. In this work, a committee of nine scholars worked to create “a broad working definition of digital history,” with the intent that future generations of scholars were going to need a clear understanding of the parameters that merit a work scholarly status.³⁹

Among the non-academics, primary sources include two veteran writers. John Thorn is the official historian for Major League Baseball and writes a blog about the names, places and events that have shaped baseball history. Every Sunday, Wendy Parker, a longtime journalist

³⁹ American Historical Association, “Guidelines for the Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship by Historians,” June 2015, accessed December 28, 2017, <http://historians.org/teaching-and-learning/digital-history-resources/evaluation-of-digital-scholarship-in-history/guidelines-for-the-evaluation-of-digital-scholarship-in-history>

with *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* who now freelances as a web editor for National Public Radio, publishes *Sports Biblio*, a blog about sports books. These bloggers are credible sources, with long trails of work behind them that attest to their expertise in their fields. Obtaining opinions from others is an ongoing objective. Information from the Pew Research Center, which has conducted surveys to determine how people access news and what platform is the most popular, also remains a credible primary source.

The compilation of primary sources is different than previous efforts because of the interaction through email interviews, and if needed, telephone chats. Previous researchers have quoted material from experts in the field, but some of those opinions are dated. The idea of emailing or interviewing by telephone affords the researcher the chance to gain some fresh insights, while the subject of the research can update or correct what was written previously. For example, Dan Cohen is quoted from his blog in 2006, and later corresponded by email when invited a dozen years later. His answers in 2018 seemed to match his thoughts from a dozen years ago, but he offered insights as he looked back. He notes, for example, that he was “all-in initially” with blogs, but his posts have “gotten a bit slower over time.” However, he notes that although his frequency has been diminished, the quality of his posts has improved. “They have all been longer and more thoughtful,” he writes.⁴⁰ Speaking to sources (or emailing them) and getting them to compare their current views with past perceptions is a valuable research tool. Sometimes, the source has changed his or her perspective, particularly if the original thought was made years ago. Other times, the email strengthens the position the source had already taken.

⁴⁰ Dan Cohen, email to author, January 11, 2018.

Regardless, updating sources with the most up-to-date information is important in a framework that includes blogging, since it remains such a fluid discipline.

Chapter 5: Ethics and the Elephant in the Room

The law is the tortoise to the hare that we call technology. While technological advances in receiving and distributing information become more sophisticated and continue at breakneck speed, the legal ramifications develop slowly. Are the safeguards that are applied to journalists likewise extended to bloggers? Is the peer review that is the foundation for academic journals likewise important for blogs? How much freedom of expression are bloggers allowed before the courts get involved? Those are good questions that continue to address a gray area in legal matters. Journalists are held to strict guidelines to prevent libel lawsuits. Their work is vetted and edited by copy editors and, when ticklish legal questions arise, that work is forwarded to legal counsel to ensure it is within the bounds of journalistic ethics. Litigation can be a big expense.

Similarly, scholars who work exclusively on the digital platform follow guidelines much like those adopted by the American Historical Association in June 2015. Some digital works are indistinguishable from printed material and are not held to any higher standards or are viewed in any lower light by their peers. Other works are radically different than the traditional printed material found in scholarly journals, using digital tools like hyperlinks, videos, recorded interviews, photographs and documents. Digital history, the American Historical Association wrote, represents “what history is, and can do” as a field, as well as to the audience it addresses. As scholars agree on the purpose of digital work, groundbreaking efforts can be seen “as strengths, rather than impediments.”¹

¹ American Historical Association, “Guidelines for the Professional Evaluation of Digital Scholarship by Historians,” June 2015, accessed December 28, 2017, <http://historians.org/teaching-and-learning/digital-history-resources/evaluation-of-digital-scholarship-in-history/guidelines-for-the-evaluation-of-digital-scholarship-in-history>

In a 2005 ruling, the Delaware Supreme Court acknowledged “the unique democratizing medium” of the internet, noting that it allowed anyone with a telephone line “to become a town crier with a voice that resonates farther than it could from any soapbox.”² While bloggers have a right to publish what they want online, courts have found that their comments are not protected from lawsuits. That holds true even if a blogger posts comments anonymously. Sandra Baron, executive director of the Media Law Resource Center in New York, observed in 2010 that “it was probably inevitable” that there was a steady growth in lawsuits over content on the internet.³ Three year earlier, the Citizen Media Law Project at Harvard University revealed that in 2003 there were only twelve civil lawsuits filed against bloggers and other social media users. By 2007, that number had risen to one hundred six.⁴

Since then there have been what could be called “blogging-based speech-tort” lawsuits.⁵ The most significant of those cases was *Snyder v. Phelps*, which was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in 2011. The family of Marine Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder sued members of the Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church, which picketed the soldier’s 2006 funeral in Westminster, Maryland, with an anti-homosexual demonstration. Snyder, who was not gay, was killed in Iraq. Snyder’s family, in its 2007 lawsuit, accused the church and its founders of defamation, the intentional infliction of emotional distress and invasion of privacy. In 2008 a jury awarded the family two million, nine hundred thousand dollars in compensatory damages, plus eight million dollars in punitive damages, which were later reduced to five million dollars.

² *John Doe I v. Cahill*, 884 A.2d 451 (Del. 2005).

³ David G. Savage, “Blogger Beware: Postings Can Lead to Lawsuits,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 2010, accessed March 6, 2018, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/aug/23/nation/la-na-blogger-suits-20100823>

⁴ Hannah Rogers Metcalfe, “Libel in the Blogosphere and Social Media: Thoughts on Reaching Adolescence,” *Charleston Law Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 2011), 486.

⁵ Metcalfe, 486.

That decision was reversed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, which ruled that the original judgment violated the First Amendment's protections on religious expression. That appeal was upheld by the Supreme Court in an 8-1 decision.⁶

As Ball State University telecommunications professor Dom Caristi has noted, libel and privacy laws apply the same way online as they do in print or broadcast journalism. That buttresses the opinion of Jennifer L. Peterson, who wrote in 2006 that the standard for defamatory speech is the same whether the medium is paper or the internet. A statement is defamatory "if it tends to harm one's reputation so as to lower him or her in the estimation of the community."⁷ It is more difficult for a public figure to sue for defamation because as a plaintiff, he or she has to prove actual malice — that is, the author of the alleged defamatory statement knew it was false when it was published, or used reckless disregard as to the statement's truthfulness. Proof of actual malice is required because public figures have more chances to "effectively counter" false statements.⁸

Still, the possibility for legal action is real. Eric Goldman, who has taught internet law at Santa Clara University since 2006, told the *Los Angeles Times* that most people "have no idea" that they could be sued. "People are shocked to learn they can be sued for posting something that says, 'My dentist stinks,'" Goldman said.⁹ Using a derogatory name can be construed as an opinion: writing that a baseball team owner is "a clown," while most likely untrue, is still an

⁶ *Snyder v. Phelps*, Oyez, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2010/09-751>.

⁷ Jennifer L. Peterson, "The Shifting Legal Landscape of Blogging," *Wisconsin Lawyer*, Vol. 79, No. 3, accessed March 6, 2018, <https://www.wisbar.org/NewsPublications/WisconsinLawyer/Pages/Article.aspx?Volume=79&Issue=3&ArticleID=1186>

⁸ Peterson, "The Shifting Legal Landscape of Blogging."

⁹ Savage, *Los Angeles Times*

opinion. However, calling that owner an “embezzler” who misappropriates funds could lead to a defamation lawsuit because it asserts something as fact.

The most powerful legal tool at the disposal of the blogger is a piece of legislation that originally was drafted to restrict free speech on the internet. The Communications Decency Act of 1996 had many anti-free speech provisions struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but one provision that remains is Section 230 of Title 47 of the United States Code (47 USC § 230). On its website, the Electronic Frontier Foundation refers to Section 230 as “the most important law protecting internet speech.”¹⁰ Section 230 mandates that “no provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.”

Under this rule, bloggers are the provider when they create blogs and edit them through a service provider. They are also providers in the sense that some bloggers allow third-party comments. That means that the blogger could not be held liable for an incendiary comment by a reader, or the words of a guest blogger, tips sent by email or suggestions sent by an RSS (Rich Site Summary) feed. The legal protection is still valid even if a blogger is aware of objectionable content or makes editorial judgments.¹¹ “If a newspaper publishes a letter to the editor that is libelous,” Caristi writes, “the newspaper can be liable. But under § 230, a libelous commenter on the newspaper’s website would not result in liability for the paper.”¹²

Ultimately, the court ruled in *John Doe 1 v. Cahill* that “it is clear” that speech over the internet is entitled to protection under the First Amendment. That protection extended to

¹⁰ Electronic Frontier Foundation, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://www.eff.org/issues/cda230>

¹¹ Electronic Frontier Foundation.

¹² Dom Caristi, email to author, November 3, 2017.

anonymous posters in blogs and chat rooms; in effect, anonymous blogging “can become the equivalent of political pamphleteering.”¹³ Anonymous authorship or a pseudonym are not new concepts in American history. In the spring and summer of 1763, future president John Adams wrote seven essays that were published in Boston newspapers, ridiculing the warring political factions in the city. Using the name Humphrey Ploughjogger, Adams was an eighteenth-century blogger, purposely ignoring the rules of grammar and spelling to lampoon men who were ambitious and sought political power.¹⁴ Adams would employ other literary aliases through the years, writing as Misanthrop and Governor Winthrop in five essays that were published in the *Boston Gazette* early in 1767.¹⁵

During the ratification of the United States Constitution, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison wrote eighty-five essays between October 1787 through May 1788, a collection that has been known as *The Federalist* or the *Federalist Papers*. All of them were signed “Publius,” regardless of the author.¹⁶ The first essay appeared in the *New York Independent Journal* on October 27, 1787. They may not have been considered bloggers by twenty-first century standards, but it is apparent that some members of the Founding Fathers had a knack for getting their points across effectively to a large audience.

¹³ *John Doe I v. Cahill*.

¹⁴ John Ferling, *John Adams: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992), 36.

¹⁵ Ferling, 55.

¹⁶ Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 84.

Conclusion: Romantic Views and Harsh Realities

“The journalist writes down/The things he remembers

The things he forgets/Are the things that you feel.”

British songwriters Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook wrote those lyrics for a 1980 song, “Wrong Again (Let’s Face It),” which became a minor hit for the rock ‘n’ roll group Rockpile. The biting prose of the two singers, who fronted their own band, Squeeze, shows the wariness that the public and public figures have harbored — and still harbor — against the news media. Sportswriter Steve Rushin recalls a remark directed his way when he tried to interview a Pittsburgh Pirates player: “Working press? That’s sorta like jumbo shrimp,” the athlete sneered, chuckling at the oxymoron comparison.¹ Paul Gallico once wrote about a sportswriter who arrived late at a boxing match between two lightweights. After climbing over other writers to reach his seat, the writer stood up to his full height and counted the house, making sure the crowd knew he had arrived. The sportswriter’s pompous move was punctured when a fan yelled from the fourth row, “Sit down! You’re only a sportswriter.”²

Still, there are those who longed to be sports journalists, even people who dabbled in politics. Herbert Klein, the longtime press secretary for Richard Nixon before he became president, lamented near the end of his career that while he had been a newspaper correspondent, reporter, editor, television executive and press secretary, that “sometimes to my dismay” he had never been a sportswriter. Nixon’s vice president, Spiro Agnew, even mused that he had

¹ Steve Rushin, *Road Swing* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 1.

² William A. Harper, *How You Played the Game: The Life of Grantland Rice* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 472.

considered the idea of writing a column. “I’d be very interested in doing something in the electronic medium,” said Agnew, a vocal critic of the media.³

The adversarial relationship between the media and sports figures coincides with the cries of “fake news” that became prevalent during the 2016 presidential campaign in the United States. Donald Trump’s two-word putdown of the media is not a new phenomenon. University of Rhode Island professor Joanna M. Burkhardt writes that in the sixth century A.D., Procopius of Caesarea used fake news “to smear” the memory of the Emperor Justinian, who could not offer a rebuttal because he was dead.⁴ Jonathan Swift complained about fake news in a 1710 essay, and Edgar Allan Poe wrote a newspaper article in 1844 claiming that a balloonist had crossed the Atlantic Ocean in three days. It was a hoax. And most famously — or infamously — Orson Welles’ 1938 radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds*, an adaptation of H.G. Wells’ 1898 science fiction book, caused a panic in the United States when the public believed Martians were invading the Earth.⁵

The charge of fake news is as old as news itself and is used as a tool to undercut a writer’s credibility. Blogging’s strong suit is that making corrections in real time does not chip away at a writer’s credibility or integrity. Rather, this transparency enhances that credibility. That’s an important part of sports writing, whether it is being created by reporters, scholars or bloggers, because sports have always cultivated a loyal and rabid audience. In 1991, James H. Frey and D. Stanley Eitzen noted that “no other institution, except perhaps religion, commands

³ Jesse Berrett, *Pigskin Nation: How the NFL Remade American Politics* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 97.

⁴ Joanna M. Burkhardt, “Combating Fake News in the Digital Age,” *Library Technology Reports*, Vol. 53, No. 8 (November/December 2017), 5.

⁵ Burkhardt, 5.

the mystique, the nostalgia, the romantic ideational cultural fixation that sport does.”⁶ The decline of print journalism, including the nuts-and-bolts, day-to-day reporting along with more scholarly features and investigative reporting, has caused a notable shift toward online writing.

Media executives, after figuratively keeping their heads in the sand for nearly two decades, have finally grasped that readers are eager to interact — “clicks” and “page views” generate revenue, a fact that brings smiles to company heads and accountants who ravenously scan the bottom lines of ledger sheets; ironically, more than likely from their desktop or laptop computers. Dan Shanoff recognized the potential influence of blogging in 2007, noting that sports blogs “are absolutely eclipsing” traditional sports media. “Dominating. Eating their lunch. It’s laughable,” Shanoff said. “And if you discount the current state of blogs because the audience isn’t as big as a newspaper or the writing isn’t considered ‘professional,’ you’re not seeing the tectonic shifts right now — and the implications for the future.”⁷

While blogs can be short, punchy posts, stories about sports history, sports trends, richly detailed features and personality sketches, analysis and “think pieces” also create interest. Wendy Parker notes that “a good number” of the selections in the annual *Best American Sports Writing* books “are published in online publications.”⁸ The 2007 edition of the *Best American Sports Writing* included a blog post by Derek Zumsteg — “Bugs Bunny, Greatest Banned Player Ever” — which was “a deconstruction and analytical look” at “Baseball Bugs,” an animated cartoon produced by Warner Bros. in 1946. It was published on Zumsteg’s sports blog, making

⁶ James H. Frey and D. Stanley, “Sport and Society,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 17 (1991), 504.

⁷ “Blogger Interviews: Dan Shanoff,” *The Big Picture*, February 15, 2007, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://zachls.blogspot.com/2007/02/blogger-interviews-dan-shanoff.html>

⁸ Wendy Parker, email to author, December 16, 2017.

U.S.S. Mariner “the first blog and the first non-ESPN/Slate site to be so honored.”⁹ Zumsteg’s tongue-in-cheek, straitlaced analysis — complete with comparison charts and mathematical formulas — resulted in a hilarious blog, as he included tables comparing the heights and weights of the two teams playing, plus other trivial items (does each team smoke cigars, or slouch, or wear “illegally raggedy uniforms,” for example).¹⁰

That was a breakthrough, but there would be more to blogs than just humorous commentary. Jurist and economist Richard A. Posner asserts that the bloggers face more checks and balances than conventional media, but in a different way. The blogosphere, he argues, is a collective enterprise: Instead of twelve million different voices, it is one enterprise with “twelve million reporters, feature writers and editorialists,” yet with little or no costs. Posner makes the analogy that it is like The Associated Press operating with reporters who are experts, “all working with no salary for free newspapers that carried no advertising.”¹¹ “No blog exists alone. Each is part of a greater conversation,” Aaron Barlow wrote. “The blogger creates no discrete work but adds to the conversation already in progress.”¹²

There are different ways to view blogs. David Wallace, who served as mayor of Sugar Land, Texas, from 2002 to 2008, called bloggers citizens who were “engaging in the lost art” of public conversation.¹³ Since blogs have been introduced, there has been an undercurrent of resistance, initially by those who were suspicious of the internet — Andrew Keen is a good

⁹ “Top 10 Moments in Sports Blog History: Blog Post Among Best American Sports Writing,” *Real Clear Sports*, June 16, 2009, accessed March 20, 2018, http://dev.realclearsports.com/lists/moments_sports_blog_history/uss_mariner_best_american_sports_writing.html

¹⁰ Derek Zumsteg, “Bugs Bunny, Greatest Banned Player Ever,” *U.S.S. Mariner*, March 12, 2006, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.ussmariner.com/2006/03/12/bugs-bunny-greatest-banned-player-ever/>

¹¹ Richard A. Posner, “Blogs Give Citizens a Platform,” *Blogs*, Sylvia Engdahl, ed. (Farmington, Michigan: Greenhaven Press), 20-21.

¹² Aaron Barlow, xi.

¹³ David Wallace, *One Nation Under Blog: Forget the Facts ... Believe What I Say!* (Dallas: Brown Books, 2008), 169.

example — and then by professional journalists. The push-back by journalists was not a new phenomenon. In the September 1970 issue of *Harper's*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Halberstam wrote that when a reporter covers an institution he becomes protective of it and sees himself as “the arbiter of what is right to tell.” So, when someone “stakes out a new dimension of what is proper and significant ... they must (out) of necessity attack his intentions.”¹⁴ Nearly fifty years later, that sounds eerily like the arguments used by journalists and academics to dismiss blogs.

But as early as 2007, traditional print journalists could see that bloggers would be competition for newspapers. *New York Times* columnist William Safire noted that blogs would compete with op-ed columns for “views you can use.” He added that the best “will morph out of the pajamas game” to deliver serious analysis and new information and will emerge from “the mainstream to the mainstream” center of commentary and news coverage.¹⁵ Taking the pajama analogy further, *New York Press* writer Rush Smith believed bloggers had made mainstream journalists irrelevant. Those “‘citizen journalists,’ ‘pajama pundits,’ whatever you want to call them — are reaching millions of Americans,” and for traditional journalists, “it’s a kick in the pants” because their “precious words” do not matter as much.¹⁶

Returning to one of the blogosphere’s oldest ancestors, Justin Hall noted in 1995 that if everyone told their stories on the web, “we would have an endless human storybook.” Those perspectives would be different, depending on the storyteller. There would be content, but “on a

¹⁴ David Halberstam, “Baseball and the National Mythology,” *Everything They Had: Sports Writing from David Halberstam*, edited and with an introduction by Glenn Stout, (New York: Hyperion, 2008), 69.

¹⁵ Nicole A. Stafford, “Lose the Distinction: Internet Bloggers and First Amendment Protection of Libel Defendants — Citizen Journalism and the Supreme Court’s Murky Jurisprudence Blur the Line Between Media and Non-Media Speakers,” *University of Detroit Mercy Law Review*, Vol. 84 (2007), 599-600.

¹⁶ Stafford, 600.

personal level, a distinctly human scale.”¹⁷ Hall also believed that journalism was going to change. His vision of a twenty-first century journalist was elastic and supple: “Give someone a digital camera, a laptop and a cellular phone, and you’ve got a multimedia storyteller from anywhere in the world,” he said.¹⁸

An important idea that bloggers, journalists and scholars all embrace is credibility and recognition. Ultimately, writers crave recognition in a positive way. Blogs, they hope, will eventually get the same kind of peer review that scholars receive when they turn in an article for an academic journal. It is the same parallel that sports journalists experience when they turn in their work for copy editors to review. In both cases, the writer believes his material is pristine; it is up to the scholar conducting the peer review or the copy editor reading a sports story to show that improvement is needed. The sweetest phrase to a sports journalist’s ears is not “you have won an award;” rather, it is the three-word comment “no edits needed” that brings a smile to their face. The story passed muster and no words were changed. That brings a powerful sense of legitimacy to the writer, who already is sensitive to having even a comma shifted in his copy.

Scott Rosenberg puts the final touches to the concept of blogging. Now, Rosenberg notes, the internet, “having enabled each of us to assemble our Daily Me, is depriving us of any kind of ‘Daily We.’”¹⁹ Aaron Barlow wrote in 2008 that defining what blogs are will take time. “It will be decades before we have a clear view of what the blogs are, exactly,” Barlow wrote, “and how they have affected American — and world — society.”²⁰ Blogging has yet to replace traditional journalism, but it certainly has earned a place at the table of news gathering. Previous

¹⁷ Justin Hall, “Publishing Empowerment: Decentralizing Media for Human Potential,” *Justin Hall’s Personal Site*, June 13, 1995, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://links.net/share/speak/ndn/pubpower.html>

¹⁸ Rosenberg, 38.

¹⁹ Rosenberg, 298.

²⁰ Barlow, 159.

generations of Americans received their news by reading daily newspapers in the mornings and afternoons, and by watching the three television network news broadcasts in the evenings. The big media conglomerates chose and publicized the topic of the day. The internet has broadened the base for gathering information, and readers crave news and opinion, desire entertainment and want to be educated. There is more of a two-way flow of information and communication, and blogs are at the forefront of what originally was dubbed the information superhighway.

Rosenberg calls blogging the first form of social media to be adopted beyond the circle of technology lovers. It gave the public “a template for all the other forms that would follow.”²¹ Even though the blog is a digital beast, Rosenberg goes back to its roots, evoking a kind of pulp nonfiction. Blogs gave private people a public voice, he argues. “It handed them a blank page and said: Learn,” Rosenberg wrote. “Then take everything that you’ve learned and post it.”²²

Bloggers have been posting ever since.

²¹ Rosenberg, 13.

²² Rosenberg, 14.

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