

Wikifying the CBC: Reimagining the remit of public service media

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Abstract

This paper describes the research and development of an online collaborative environment for Canadian music fans. The project to set up a music wiki at CBC Radio 3 balances the need to provide an open and creative space with the desire of a public broadcaster to publish high quality user-generated content that showcases Canadian music. It is an example of the adoption of a collaborative knowledge system within the context of public service broadcasting in the 21st century, exploring the application of social media technologies within established media organizations, and specifically within the role and remit of Canada's public service broadcaster. A music wiki provides a particularly relevant topic given the digital evolution of the music industry and the increasing role of the fan in a participatory culture, which scholars argue is transforming the relationship between producer and consumer. Our findings indicate that user-generated digital technologies represent one way of reimagining radio for the web. We suggest that an innovative initiative such as a wiki can be undertaken within low-risk areas of a public broadcaster, particularly when they are in line with the strategic mandate of the organization. The funding model further minimizes the financial risk to the broadcaster, suggesting there is potential for publicly funded university partnerships to stimulate new media research and development at incumbent journalism organizations.

Keywords: Canada, CBC, journalism, innovation, public service broadcasting, wiki

Introduction

Challenges to the 20th century institution of public service broadcasting (PSB) in a 21st century world are considerable. In the digital age, the universality of broadcasting is under pressure as a result of digitalisation, fragmentation and personalisation, undermining the role of PSB to provide important informational, educational and cultural content to citizens (Born, 2003; Hoynes, 2003; Picard, 2005; Steemers, 1999).

In the Canadian context, public broadcasting is closely associated with national identity and cultural sovereignty. The CBC is a government-owned broadcaster that fills a national purpose role in Canada (Hoskins et al.). Legislation specifies that Canadian broadcasting should provide “a wide range of programming that reflects Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity” and be “displaying Canadian talent in entertainment programming” and “offering information and analysis concerning Canada and other countries from a Canadian point of view” (CRTC, n.d.).

The question remains as to the contribution of PSB in an online media space that Silverstone (2007) has labeled as contested and cacophonous. Silverstone describes this as “barely a space at all. It is dominated by a few multinational companies who have managed to extend control based on their existing dominance within broadcast media into the otherwise open territories of the Internet” (2007: 12). Public broadcasters, such as the BBC in the UK, NPR in the USA and CBC in Canada, have sought to ensure relevance in a new media environment by expanding into digital platforms, with an investment into content and services beyond the traditional modes of public service television and radio (O’Neil, 2006).

This is particularly relevant in Canada, given the country’s image as a technologically highly advanced nation. As of 2007, approximately 78 per cent of the country was connected, spending an average of 17 hours per week online (Zamaria and Fletcher, 2008). In addition, 40 per cent of Canadians have used a community or social networking site and almost a quarter do so weekly (Zamaria and Fletcher, 2008). In light of the digitalization of the media, some scholars have argued that CBC should continue to be a vital portal for Canadian content, this time on the Internet, by rethinking “the role of public broadcasting in the so-called knowledge economy” (Murray, 2001: 34). Murray calls for a “shift away from traditional, physical, or manufactured assets to search for the source of non-traditional, intangible, or intellectual assets” (2001: 34).

The creation of a collaborative space for Canadians to contribute and collaborate on the creation of content on Canadian music can be considered as one way of reimagining the remit of a public service broadcaster such as the CBC. This paper describes the research and development of a user-generated, participatory online resource focused exclusively on Canadian music and Canadian musicians, using collaborative wiki software. This paper covers the first phase of the project, which is a collaboration between the University of British Columbia and CBC Radio 3, a digital music station devoted to the promotion of Canadian arts and music via the Internet and satellite radio. The paper examines the processes involved in adopting emerging technologies by established media organizations, discusses the value of user-generated content in general and analyses how public media can be reimagined in the digital age.

The CBC and new media

The transition of a public service broadcaster into a digital environment involves more than simply the simple digitalization of terrestrial broadcast networks. Historically the PSB was justified on technical grounds – the scarcity of spectrum – and on the basis of an underlying philosophy grounded on normative values associated with Western-style democracy - diversity, pluralism, universal service, and the maintenance of cultural identity (Steemers, 2001). Those who see the Internet as an open, democratic space label PSB a relic of a paternalistic past (Moe, 2008). Murdock (2005) argues that marketization, fragmentation and exclusion online require a rethink of the core functions of information, knowledge, representation and participation associated with public service broadcasters.

In Canada, “the crisis of public broadcasting has been felt most acutely in the angst surrounding the financial and existential crisis of the CBC, as it careens like a corporate Titanic on the verge of capsizing,” (Raboy, 1996; 106). Indeed, Hoskins et al. (2001) indicate that programming at the CBC, with a long-standing experience of commercial competition, has become less distinctive over the years. They conclude that the only way to prevent its demise is to refocus the CBC. Murray suggests that the CBC should “shift away from traditional, physical, or manufactured assets to search for the source of non-traditional, intangible, or intellectual assets” (Murray, 2001; 34). Murray argues that “the CBC must be aggressive as a portal for Canadian information on the Internet, building its already superior comparative advantage there” (2001; 37).

The notion of the CBC as the primary source for Canadian content online is central to its digital strategy. O’Neill (2006) described the development of CBC’s new media strategy, from experimental sites in 1993 to the launch of online news, services for children and dedicated sites for television and radio channels, as the ‘Canadianizing’ of the web. CBC’s objective to be “the most important and popular source of Canadian news, information, and entertainment content on digital networks” (Galipeau quoted in O’Neill, 2006: 184) can be seen as an attempt by the PSB to ensure its survival in a new media environment.

The CBC’s new media strategy derives from a 1998 speech by the then president, Perrin Beatty. He emphasized the online role of the national broadcaster, stating that it should aim “to create a critical mass of content and services to ensure that Canadians can never be relegated to a back corner of the web”. The “New Media, New CBC” speech committed the PSB to serving audiences wherever they were and on whatever technology they were using, with a mission to promote Canadian content and to continually innovate in order to remain relevant.

O’Neill suggests that “CBC’s commitment to new media publishing and diversifying its operations across a variety of digital networks may in the long term be seen as a far-sighted strategic decision that provided the appropriate response for a public service broadcaster under pressure in a declining market,” (2006: 194). Yet he acknowledges that CBC’s position remains precarious due to its reliance on the availability of resources and the level of public support for its new media activities.

The challenge facing PSBs such as the CBC is how to continue to fulfill a public service remit across in a highly competitive, unregulated and fragmented new media environment. This paper suggests that the development of a collaborative space for Canadians to contribute and collaborate on the creation of content on Canadian music can be considered as one way of reimagining the remit of a public service broadcaster such as the CBC.

A music wiki provides a particularly relevant strong case study given the digital evolution of the music industry and the increasing role of the fan in a “participatory culture, which is transforming value systems, undermining notions of authority, and creating rhizomatic pathways for autonomous innovation” (Draper, 2008:137). Given that participatory culture extends to journalism, this study examines whether collaborative social software could be of value to other areas of the public broadcaster.

Wiki technology in the media

The wiki format is a relatively new addition to the media. Experiments with the technology have suggested its potential “both to reach out to a readership – and to fall flat on its face - while also demonstrating the difficulty of exploiting the potential of wiki technology within existing news production processes” (Bradshaw, 2007: 1). Wikis allow users to immediately edit and directly change any page, with the ability to track the status of articles, review individual changes and revert a page back to an earlier version. Blogs and file-sharing systems pool information. In contrast, Cress and Kimmerle say that wikis have the ability to pool and build upon and revise such information (2008).

Wikis are mainly text-based, and feature the ability to revise, create hyperlinks, add content, delete content, or elaborate on content. Large groups of people are able to use their individual knowledge to work collaboratively on a certain topic. The technology allows for an online environment that enables many-to-many collaborative knowledge creation. Wikis are designed to harness the creative energies of contributors, promoting human engagement and investment in the community (Lih, 2009).

The best-known example is the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, described as “an impressive example of a global collective intelligence at work” (Wilkinson and Huberman, 2007). According to Denning et al., “Wikipedia provides a fast and flexible way for anyone to create and edit encyclopedia articles without the delay and intervention of a formal editor or review process” (2005: 152). There are numerous examples of online collaborations based on wiki technology like popular, niche topics on the Harry Potter Wiki (Harry Potter Wiki) and the Lostpedia for fans of the Lost television series (Lostpedia).

The most prominent example of wiki journalism is Wikinews, which has been identified as being becoming particularly important during crises such as Hurricane Katrina (Thelwall and Stuart, 2007). In the established media, the most high-profile use of wiki software is, arguable, the short-lived wiktorial experiment by the Los Angeles Times

in June 2005 (Glaister, 2005). So far, only the CBC Radio One show Spark has adopted wiki software.

Bradshaw (2007) suggests wiki journalism presents significant benefits to media organizations, enabling broader coverage of issues and a means to identify the concerns of the community. Furthermore, he argues there are additional economic and competitive advantages, highlighting how user-generated content can increase user traffic, foster community and boost loyalty. At the same time, scholars recognize there is some disquiet about the implementation of an open publishing system within established media. Concerns about inaccuracies, vandalism, libel and copyright have been raised as potential obstacles to the adoption of wikis in mainstream media outlets (see Bradshaw, 2007, for a discussion of this). However, as Gordon highlights, "it's hard to find a news organization that's not trying to tap into what we once would have called 'online communities' and now more typically refer to as 'social media,'" (2009).

Participatory online media has allowed a new generation of Internet users to shift from being producers to being creators of content. The proliferation of blogs and wiki websites provides platforms for the audience to participate in the process of creating, sharing and disseminating content, contributing knowledge to the media ecology (Bowman and Willis, 2003; Gillmor, 2006). In the model of participatory media, production of knowledge is no longer confined to conventional production/consumption models dominated by major media outlets but opened up to the individuals.

According to Tapscott and Williams, the rise of citizen journalism and consumer-controlled media provide yet another example of how mass collaboration and co-creation are erasing the previous boundaries between companies and consumers" (2008: 143). Lih suggests that wikis fall within the category of participatory journalism, arguing that the format "uniquely addresses an historic 'knowledge gap' – the general lack of content sources for the period between when the news is published and the history books are written." (2004: 4).

Innovation through CBC Radio 3

As with other public broadcasters, CBC has a strategic objective to incorporate digital technologies within its established practices. Within the corporation, Radio 3 has a reputation as one of the most innovative areas of CBC, with a track record in developing new media projects. The service has been described as "among the country's best kept web-based secrets" (Belanger and Andreche, 2009: 133). It was established in 2000 and was originally designed to be a FM channel aimed at a youth audience but for funding reasons only ever developed as an online-based, independent music station (O'Neill, 2006).

CBC Radio 3 has a mandate to promote Canadian culture by using emerging technologies to reach Canadians, particularly younger audiences. The station operates at the edge of traditional radio practices, and as such, has some latitude for experimentation, and even failure, when it comes to the adoption of emerging digital technologies. Radio 3 has developed a reputation as one of the most innovative areas of CBC, with a track record

in developing new media projects that help people discover Canadian music. In the first three years of its operations, the station won more than 30 awards, and was described as the “virtual community centre for the nation’s independent culture” (Whyte, 2004)

The research and development of a user-generated collaborative wiki is consistent with CBC Radio 3’s approach to music programming. O’Neill suggests that “CBC Radio 3 epitomizes the more radical and innovative aspects of CBC’s new media publishing approach” (2006: 188). The station allows bands and listeners an exceptional degree of influence over the music that it features. It already offered a concert calendar, the New Music Canada database—a pre-existing database containing artist profiles, with all data and songs uploaded by artists themselves—and the photos contained within the CBC Radio 3 community Flickr account.

Furthermore, CBC Radio 3 exhibits a strong social and collaborative media presence on its website <http://radio3.cbc.ca>. The website, relaunched in 2009, features many interactive features: customizable user playlists, comments on blog posts, an integrated Twitter feed, voting capabilities and rating capabilities. According to CBC Radio 3 director Steve Pratt, “The biggest goal of the new site is to empower our community more effectively... we want to make it easier for all of you to become music tastemakers yourselves on the site and to be able to share your own musical tastes with the rest of the community and/or your social networks,” (2009b).

Emerging businesses, and smaller enterprises like CBC Radio 3 are considered to have an edge over leading organizations when it comes to implementing disruptive technologies. According to Christensen, disruptive technologies are innovations that “are first commercialized in emerging or insignificant markets” (2003: xx). They are typically lower-end products that underperform compared to established products, but offer features that a few fringe customers value. With time, “disruptive technologies, though they initially can only be used in small markets remote from the mainstream, are disruptive because they subsequently can become fully performance-competitive within the mainstream market against established products” (Christensen, 2003: xxvii).

However, established businesses do not usually react to disruptive innovations until it is too late because their “most profitable customers generally don’t want, and indeed initially can’t use, products based on disruptive technologies” (Christensen, 2003: xx). New media technologies such as wikis are disruptive technologies because they value a decentralized approach that is alien to the traditional top-down paternalistic structure of public service broadcasters.

CBC Radio 3 can be considered as an organization on the edges of the corporation that has the room to experiment with disruptive technologies. Being an online-based, independent music station, it already largely falls outside traditional radio practices. It operates as a company within a company, with its base in Vancouver, rather than at CBC headquarters in Toronto. As such, Radio 3 can be considered a venue for risk and innovation.

The challenge for CBC Radio 3 is researching and developing new digital cultural content products at a time when it is facing financial limitations. In March 2009, director Steve Pratt warned that “like the rest of the company, we are undertaking a significant cut to our budget next year,” (Pratt, 2009a). As a public service broadcaster, CBC, as a whole, has a role to contribute to the cultural life of the country, providing services whose value is defined by the contribution to the public good, rather than based on a monetary return.

The development of the wiki

This paper covers the first stage of the Canadian Music Wiki project, which ran from September 2009 to December 2009. This phase covers the research into wiki software and best practices. At the time of writing, the second phase to finalize, launch and market the wiki was under way. Both four-month phases were funded through the MITACS Accelerate program. MITACS Accelerate is a national internship program that connects companies with university graduate students under the guidance of a professor. The intern, in this case Amanda Ash, is required to spend approximately half of their time on site with the partner organization, with the balance of the time at the university, working with a professor on further researching the project. For each phase, company funds are matched by MITACS through the support of federal and provincial funding partners.

Wiki choice

Software sources for the Canadian Music Wiki were extrapolated from the research outlined earlier in this paper. The choice of the wiki software was based on issues of flexibility, interactivity and customizability. The site www.wikimatrix.org was used as a source for detailed information on the attributes of wiki software, resulting in the shortlisting of two contenders: MediaWiki, which is used by Wikipedia and TikiWiki, which is used by The Globe and Mail newspaper.

MediaWiki offered a number of attractive features, among them its resemblance to Wikipedia, which would create a sense of familiarity around the wiki. However, this familiarity could also make it harder to define the Canadian Music Wiki as a separate entity from Wikipedia itself. Moreover, Radio 3 is known for its originality in programming, content and design; therefore, it was important for the wiki look and feel to reflect these ideals. TikiWiki could be customized according to Radio 3’s personality, and it included a WYSIWYG editor. Usability was a priority; therefore, a WYSIWYG editor would provide easy and accessible editing first-time wiki users and the Radio 3 audience. TikiWiki was adopted for its collaborative features and its WYSIWYG feature, which allowed users unfamiliar with the wiki software to create, add or edit without previous knowledge of wiki style and formatting.

Wiki development

For the initial launch of the wiki, it was decided to limit the number of features available. These were the ability to create/edit pages, forums, photo galleries and FAQs. The aim was to implement additional features over time. The entire site would be searchable and viewable by a non-registered user. However, to edit or create a page within

the wiki, a user must sign up to both prevent anonymous edits and to create a community feel.

Permissions were set to restrict regular users from editing static pages; these pages, such as the Welcome and Getting Started pages, were designed to guide the first-time user around the wiki and describing the contribution process. The only static page editable by the base user is the blogroll page, where music bloggers across the country could post a link to their site. Other content included in the site was a front page of RSS feeds that tapped into Canadian music websites and their news feeds. A blog RSS feed page was also created, which included Canadian music blogs considered as professional and reputable by CBC Radio 3.

Wiki design

The wiki design was based on the five-column grid used for the CBC Radio 3 site. (see fig. 1) The Categories module, which organizes the wiki pages according to a general tag, i.e. artist, venue, album, etc. was the first module to appear in the left column, followed by an Edit/Create Page module. Following that came the Administration menu and then further social modules such as top pages, top users and recently edited pages. The login box and top-level navigation with search box are all or near the top of the page for easiest access, as is customary for most user-permissive sites.

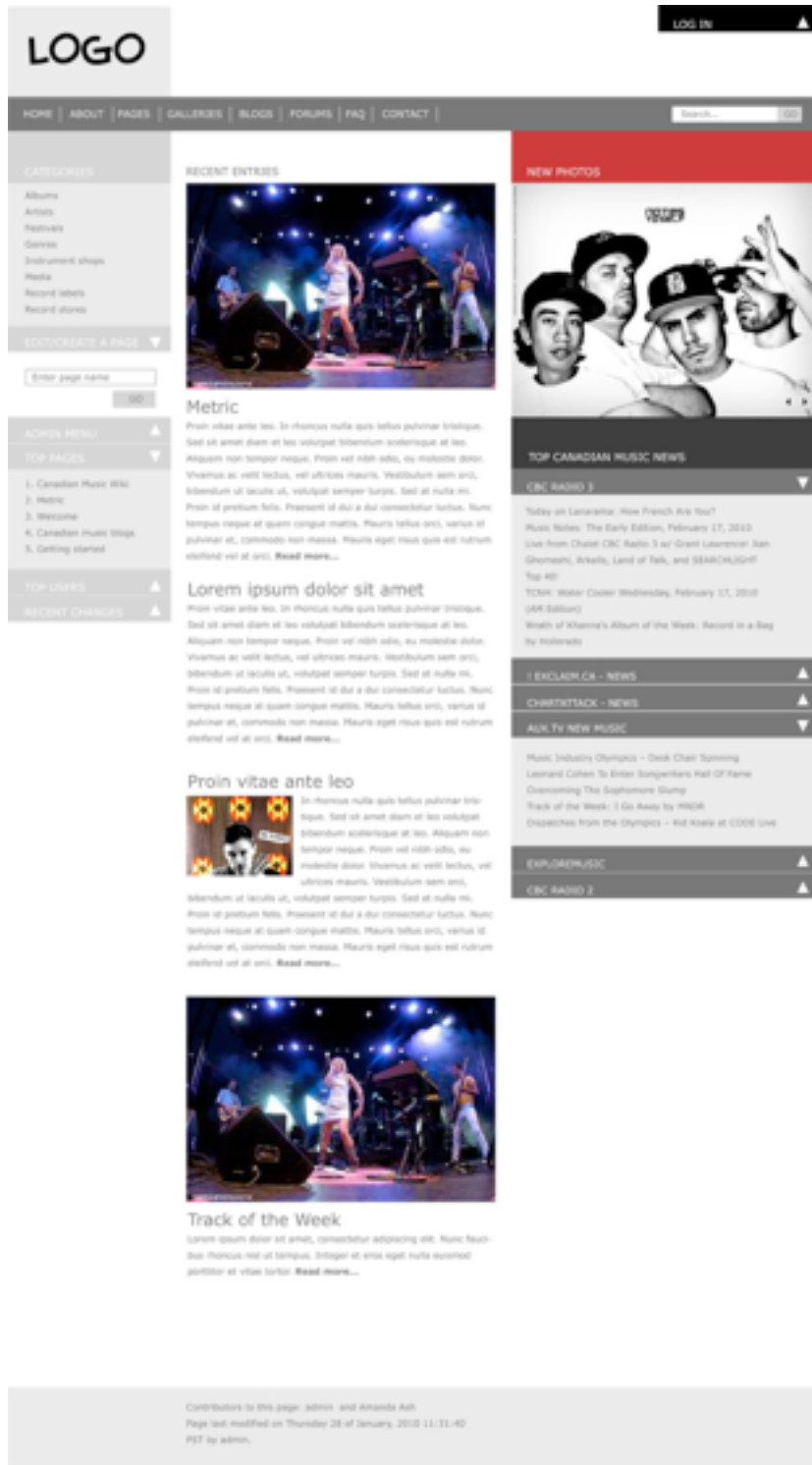


Figure 1: Prototype of the Canadian Music Wiki homepage

Wiki launch and marketing

At the time of writing, no date had been set for the launch of the wiki. Upon launch, CBC Radio 3 staff will be instructed in how to use the wiki. The staff would then promote the wiki through Radio 3 blog posts, on-air mentions, podcasts, satellite radio and flash promotions on the Radio 3 site. The plan is to engage with the Radio 3 audience and build a community of contributors who will maintain the site after its expected launch. The objective is to reach out to the existing “power user” base in the CBC Radio 3 community and the artist/music community to be early adopters and content generators, use their efforts and enthusiasm to grow the base, and spread to more and more users and contributors. The end goal is to have the community monitor, moderate, and self-correct editorial material on its own, with the ability to flag contentious content or inappropriate behavior to CBC.

As for a communications plan, there will be consideration of internal cross-promotion. This includes promoting through other CBC properties such as CBC Radio 1, Radio 2, The Hour and Q. Press releases detailing the project will also be sent out to local and national newspapers, magazines and websites. A social media strategy for the Canadian Music Wiki includes outreach via platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Artist outreach involves one-on-one meetings with music industry groups (labels, festivals, promoters, venues) as well as with artists themselves. Third party advertising is also a consideration.

Discussion

The Canadian Music Wiki project is an exercise in implementation of collaborative and social media technology within the overall framework of a public service broadcaster that is seeking to reinvent itself as a “content company” that is “the most important creator and distributor of Canadian content across all the major platforms of Canadians’ choice,” (CBC, n.d.). This section explores the implications of the adoption of a “disruptive technology” within the parameters of an established media organization.

Technology

Wiki software is a disruptive technology in the context of the media industry as content production is based around contributions from the public, rather than from trained professionals. The software provides a platform for a form of participatory journalism, facilitating the many-to-many communication between users, compared to the one-to-many communication model of traditional broadcasting. Furthermore, a user-generated, wiki model frees the site from the restraints of traditional music industry economics, where there is a clear delineation between producers and consumers, and a producer makes decisions based on monetary value of a product. In contrast, wikis are based on what Benkler (2002) calls a “commons-based peer production” which “depends on very large aggregation of individuals independently scouring their information environment in search of opportunities to be creative in small or large increments,” (Benkler, 2002: 5).

A wiki was adopted for this project due to its ability to act as an editable online hub for information built around content submitted by music fans, artists and industry professionals. Wiki software creates a complex system in which a number of diverse contributors collaborate in an unscheduled and asynchronous. Based on Bradshaw's taxonomy of wiki journalism (2007), the following key qualities were identified when examining the wiki in the context of CBC:

- The topic would not be a user-defined topic. It would be pre-established as a Canadian music wiki.
- The amount of content capable of being generated by the wiki would be impossible without the wiki.
- The timescale for the wiki is infinite (ongoing)

Based on these variations, the CBC wiki can be described as a crowdsourcing wiki, providing "a means of covering material which could not have been produced in-house (probably for logistical reasons), but which becomes possible through wiki technology," (Bradshaw, 2007: 8).

Arguably, CBC would not be able to create an online resource on Canadian music in-house without devoting significant funding and staffing. Flanagin et al. argue that the Internet allows for innovation on the scale of the individual user, with "the capacity for individuals to act or exert power" (2010: 185). The Internet is "a dynamic collaborative environment in which diverse opinions, experiences, and skills can be aggregated to provide substantial resources," where the "essential premise is that given efficient means of information sharing and participation, collective benefits will emerge from individual contributions" (Flanagin et al., 2010:186). By using wiki software, the role of the CBC shifts away from being a content creator and instead the public broadcaster becomes a facilitator. The wiki provides a structure for CBC audience to collaborate on the creation of content, rather than simply consume content.

Content and community

Wikis, by their very nature, are collaborative projects based on the willingness of unpaid professionals to contribute their time. For established media organizations, where production processes are based on a system of strict editorial checks and balances, the notion of allowing anyone to publish anything can be daunting. Leach points out that "digital media—and the emerging use of social media—are exponentially expanding the reach of journalism, and this presents us, its practitioners (and those whom we hope to reach) with opportunities and dilemmas," (2009: 42). For a national public broadcaster such as the CBC, a wiki presents its share of ethical concerns. In their discussion of Wikipedia, Denning et al. suggest that risks associated with accuracy, motivation of contributors and sourcing "can pollute enough information to undermine trust in the work as a whole," (2005: 152).

The quandary for CBC is that the success of the wiki will be largely dependent on the ability of users to contribute freely. Yet at the same time, the broadcaster will seek to

minimize defamation, copyright infringement and other legal issues. As is common for established media organizations, the CBC has guidelines on user input. Guidelines produced in 2007 acknowledge that handling large volumes of digital content submissions in a fast-paced environment such as the Internet can be challenging, but “the risks can be lowered through a combination of vetting, software filters, contributor registration and rapid response to audience complaints” (CBC 2007:2). As a public broadcaster, the corporation recognizes that online engagement can add “public value to overall content” and reflect “the CBC’s philosophy toward broadcasting” (CBC, 2007: 2).

As the time of writing, there were no specific guidelines for the wiki project. But they are likely to be broadly based on existing CBC practices. However there may be a degree of interpretation of the guidelines, given that the content is entirely based on user contributions. Social and collaborative media like the wiki are new existences. As a result, “it’s unlikely that agreement will be easy to find across the wide range of ethical issues, but unity ought to be expressed in ways that let digital consumers know we are thinking hard about these emerging ethical issues” (Leach, 2009: 42).

Wikipedia is the most prominent example of a collaborative knowledge system, with studies suggesting that its strength lies in achieving a critical mass of contributors. In their study of Wikipedia, Wilkinson and Huberman found that “article quality continues to increase, on average, as the number of collaborators and the number of edits increases,” (2007:11). This suggests that an active and engaged community is a key factor in the success of a collaborative project such as the Canadian music wiki.

The decision to develop the wiki within the framework of CBC Radio 3 may be a key factor in its future evolution, as the station has established itself as the home of independent Canadian music, hosting more than 14,000 artists and 73,000 original songs (CBC Radio 3). According to O’Neill, “the publishing experiment, as well as garnering industry plaudits, has developed an established youth following in the coveted 18–34 demographic,” (2006: 187). As such, CBC Radio 3 is in a position to reach out to its existing power user base as early adopters and content generators. There are some indications of a positive reaction from the community of listeners to the wiki project (Ash, 2009; Beach, 2009). Tapping into a pre-existing and committed audience may help to alleviate concerns about quality of the wiki content, as Radio 3 listeners would have a vested interest in the success of the project.

Culture

The place of CBC Radio 3 within the cultural make-up of the Canadian music scene is a key factor in the development of the wiki project. Belanger and Andrecheck suggest that Radio 3 could “play an active role in the comprehension and definition of the types of rapport that youth establish with new technologies, as well as in the creation of expressive environments that they invoke” (2005: 131). The adoption of an open, collaborative technology fits within the approach of the station and the content is in line with its support of independent, grassroots Canadian artists who largely rely on self-promotion and word-of-mouth rather than on the major record labels. At the same time, the wiki is not designed as an exclusive space, but rather an open, creative space for fans of major label artists.

As a public broadcaster, the CBC is bound by a mandate of cultural requirements that are not necessary of private broadcasters, requiring it to broadcast at least 50% Canadian popular music each week (CRTC, n.d.). Being entirely based on Canadian content, the wiki far exceeds these requirements and creates a digital space that is strictly Canadian. As a project, it contributes to CBC's strategic aim to "become the most important creator and distributor of Canadian content across all the major platforms of Canadians' choice," (CBC, n.d.). According to O'Neill, "one of the main ways in which public broadcasting can ensure its continuing relevance and public support in the digital age is through a commitment to publishing across a variety of new media platforms and in particular maintaining a high profile presence on the internet" (2006: 182).

On a broader scale, the notion of a user-generated wiki based around music might be particularly suited to the participatory journalism on the Internet. Beers (2008) argues that "popular music plays a complex and central role in the connections necessary to the participatory functioning of Web 2.0." Since music has historically brought people together through shared tastes, the social networking attributes of Web 2.0 could act as an extension of the connections between music, space and place. Beers suggests that our sense of belonging based around our musical tastes is "altered as music cultures move out onto the web-top in the Web 2.0 context," (2008: 236).

Economics

The wiki project was funded through a collaboration between a public broadcaster, a public university and a government-run funding agency. The partnership was formed under the aegis of the MITACS Accelerate program, which aims to support research and development partnerships between companies and universities. This specific project highlights the role for journalism schools as a catalyst for innovation in the media. The wiki proposal and subsequent funding was channeled through the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of British Columbia, with a graduate student assigned to work on the project.

Schudson and Downie suggest that "journalism schools, thanks to the Internet, can help fill the gap" (2009, np) created by shrinking news budgets and newsrooms. The funding of the wiki can be considered as an example of how innovative media projects could be financed at a time of economic constraints at journalism organizations. The wiki project was launched in the same year that the CBC announced plans to cut up to 800 jobs in an effort to make up for a \$171 million budget shortfall in 2009-10 (CBC News, 2009). Even before this financial crisis, scholars were already pointing out that "CBC's new media activities need to be either self-financing or cross-subsidized from other activities and place a substantial burden on the organization" (O'Neill, 2006: 184). While this project received state funding, editorial independence was guaranteed as the money was channeled through the journalism school at the University of British Columbia.

The wiki project could be considered as an example of what Schudson and Downie (2009) describe as the "teaching hospital" model of professional education, with journalism students gaining practical experience while under the tutelage of journalism educator. The Canadian Music Wiki project highlights how university/media partnerships

can fulfill a public service remit, provide the employer with the skilled labor required for the project and contribute to the intellectual research of the university. The wiki and the resulting research can be seen as a step towards communicating, cross-fertilizing and assessing the outcome of a university/public media partnership. It suggests there are opportunities for growth in these symbiotic relationships.

Conclusion

This paper describes the research and development of a participatory online resource within an established media organization. It examines the contribution of social media technologies, specifically wiki software, to the remit of a public service broadcaster, in this case the CBC. The public service broadcaster has a particular role in the maintenance and development of national identity and cultural sovereignty through programming that is predominantly and distinctively Canadian. Through its online operations, the CBC has expanded its mission to establish a Canadian presence in an online environment largely dominated by United States-based interests. The wiki project is in line with CBC's mandate as it offers a distinctly Canadian online environment where music fans and professionals can collaborate, communicate and create a rich cultural hub of Canadian knowledge for Canadians.

Over the coming decade, the CBC is seeking to define itself as a "content company", rather than "simply be a traditional English and French language television and radio broadcaster with a presence on the Internet and other new platforms," (CBC, n.d.). CBC's strategy reflects the approach of public service broadcasters elsewhere seeking to redefine their purpose and remodel their operations for an Internet age. However, starting new ventures based on new technologies is a significant challenge for incumbent media organizations. CBC Radio 3, we suggest, is a natural home for a project such as the Canadian Music Wiki. The station has a track record in innovative digital initiatives, and, as primarily an online service based in Vancouver, is somewhat under the corporate radar.

As Christensen (2003) has argued, disruptive innovation tends to take place at the edge, often led by new entrants, rather than by incumbents. Radio 3's location on the periphery of CBC makes a project like the wiki possible because of its low-risk situation within the organization. However, because Radio 3 exists on the fringes of CBC, ensuring adequate technical resources for new projects can be problematic. The launch of the wiki, originally scheduled for January 2009, was partly delayed due to a lack of technical support. A project like the wiki is possible due to Radio 3's position within the corporation, but it is also vulnerable due to limited resources allotted to Radio 3.

The risk to the CBC as a whole was minimized due to the choice of topic for the wiki. In a transnational study of 24 newspaper websites, Hermida found that the collaborative ventures within mainstream media tend to take place in lifestyle areas, rather than what might be closer to hard news. "When newspapers enabled citizen participation in producing news content, this option was limited to lifestyle topics such as travel and culture" (Hermida, forthcoming: np). The choice of music as the focus for the wiki reflects this bias within mainstream media towards opening up to the public: the softer the area of journalism, the larger the role audiences are allowed to play.

The financial cost to the CBC was also minimized due to the funding model for the wiki. The ability to access funding from a government-run agency via the University of British Columbia reduced the amount CBC Radio 3 itself had to invest in the project. This funding model offers potential for media organizations to undertake innovative new media research and development projects that are effectively subsidized by the state. There are additional benefits for the university, as the funding provides for a practical, learning environment for a student and opportunities for research for faculty. In this particular case, the project highlights a role for journalism schools as venues for research and development into emerging forms of digital media.

The scope of this paper is limited as it only covers the first phase of the wiki project. At the time of writing, the wiki had not yet launched. We have been unable to evaluate the performance of the site in terms of visits, contribution and edits, registered users and the overall interaction on the site. User feedback could be collected once the wiki is launched to examine its usability and suggestions for further innovation. As such, our findings on whether this type of user-generated content is of value and relevance to Canadians, and whether it is a project appropriate for a public broadcaster, are limited.

Moreover, this project is limited to a Canadian broadcast setting, with the CBC as the main object of analysis. It is difficult to generalize conclusions from the results and aptly apply them to another public broadcast setting without discrepancy. Since one of the co-authors led the research and development of the wiki, this paper is limited by her subjectivity and may inherently possess personal bias.

However, a collaborative online site, we suggest, does offer one way of reimagining radio for the web. The wiki project can be seen as an extension of the CBC's mandate to push into the digital realm, illustrating its "commitment to new media publishing and diversifying its operations across a variety of digital networks" (O'Neill, 2006: 194). What is less clear is how far an initiative like this one can be replicated, not only in other parts of the CBC, but in other public service broadcasters. What is clear is that there is scope for experimentation with the constraints of incumbent media, which, we suggest, is something to be welcomed.

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