Citizen Journalism and Implications for Privacy

“As an activity, journalism belongs to the people themselves...” –Jay Rosen
What is Citizen Journalism?

- Individuals lacking professional journalistic training who utilize modern technology to create and interact with media in collaboration with others
  - The name is controversial, because it promotes misunderstandings about what citizen journalism is.
- Is often contrasted with traditional journalism
  - Journalism used to be a one-way street, where the public were passive receivers.
  - Modern technology allows for bidirectional participation in journalism.
- Can be understood as a change in our culture that processes are continuing to adapt to
  - Not tied to a particular method of dissemination
Note to MODS: Don't touch this thread. News and info is needed to keep people safe. Sit behind your computers with all the power you want... but I won't let people die because you are entitled.

New Note to MODS: I love you guys, keep doing what you are doing. I know stuff can get rough and you get a bad rap sometimes but you guys keep things a float. I'm sorry for my message above (which I will leave for legacy) but I hope you understand my temporary anger at the time. Real Talk: Keep up the great work!

From the live audio feed: MIT Officer shot and his firearm was stolen. [Small Edit] Officer is on his way to the hospital [Mass General]. No update on his condition. MIT is also updating their emergency site with news.

EDIT 11:26 EST: They have a photo of the alleged suspect.
EDIT 11:27 EST: Heard a Black Male in all black clothing.
EDIT 11:32 EST: NBC just reported the shots on TV. No new info there.
EDIT 11:33 EST: There was a robbery at a near by 7-11 (Dark Skin White Male 5'11' 200lbs, black top). Could be related?
EDIT 11:40 EST: Woman reported on the ground screaming/crying. Male that was with her just walked away. [Unrelated, thanks /u/dontgotmilk]
EDIT 11:42 EST: Image from the scene. Warning blood.
EDIT 11:44 EST: Possible witness.
EDIT 11:47 EST: /u/philsmith24457 points out they mentioned a mini excavator [Unrelated]
EDIT 11:59 EST: Reportedly a group of Black males. 1 in a gray hoodie, in his early 20's, heavy set. 2 in black hoodies. Firearms present. [Unrelated].
EDIT 12:04 EST: from /u/TheFightingFarsi : NBC Connecticut reporting MIT Officer has died. (grain of salt till for now)
EDIT 12:07 EST: MIT updated their emergency site with news. Police are searching the campus, stay indoors.
EDIT 12:12 EST: Removed links to emergency site to prevent Reddit DDoS. Thanks /u/Some-Internet-Guy
EDIT 12:13 EST: Boston Globe Editor confirms MIT officer death.
EDIT 12:16 EST: /u/TheFightingFarsi has more info on the MIT officer.
EDIT 12:17 EST: [Unrelated] Black male with grey hoodie put his firearm in the front pouch. Please stay inside tonight.
| EDIT 2:26 EST | Backdoor found opened. Police searching the area. Handgun mag found. |
| EDIT 2:27 EST | Reports of shots fired at Aberdeen & Mr. Auburn. |
| EDIT 2:29 EST | NBC is showing a cat screaming NO! while being put into a tub... |
| EDIT 2:30 EST | Boston Globe is confirming one of the Marathon bombers is in custody. |
| EDIT 2:31 EST | Gold Nissan Maxima being searched. |
| EDIT 2:35 EST | Different news places are reporting 1 suspect as dead, and another reporting that same suspect as in custody. Nothing known about his status atm. |
| EDIT 2:40 EST | Large area cleared by police (protected area location). |
| EDIT 2:41 EST | Boston Globe seems to be reporting everything...I'm not going to trust them for now on. Just FYI. |
| EDIT 2:43 EST | White male in gray hoodie considered armed and dangerous! |
| EDIT 2:44 EST | More update - White male, black hoodie, curly hair. |
| EDIT 2:46 EST | Mt. Auburn Hospital is being evacuated. - **FALSE, accepted in confusion** |
| EDIT 2:48 EST | Police confirm these are the Marathon Bombers |
Live tweeting from someone on scene. One picture of arrest being made
https://twitter.com/sethmnookin
Edit: Another great twitter with live updates and photos directly on scene
https://twitter.com/AKitz
Video of automatic weapon fire
Found from Ranger Up's FB page
/u/JobSeeker55 helped their neighbor upload a video from their cellphone of the shootout in Watertown
Direct YouTube Link
EDIT: http://livewire.wcvb.com/Event/117th_Running_of_Boston_Marathon has been the champs. Great coverage.
A subreddit called /r/FindBostonBombers was created for users to post theories about suspects.

- Sunil Tripathi, a student from Brown University who had been missing for a month was incorrectly identified as “White Hat”.
  - His grieving family was harassed by the internet community.
- Reddit apologized publicly for the embarrassing event, and this was widely seen as a failure of crowdsourced journalism.
How Does this Apply to Sensitive Information and Privacy?

- Traditional structures deal with loads of sensitive information
  - Journalists must protect sources, fact check information, and generally remain objective.
  - Law enforcement must keep sensitive information private to aid investigation.
- As these structures are now applied in a new context, what does this mean for our sensitive information and privacy?
What Counts as Citizen Journalism?

- Social Media Platforms
- Moderated Forums
- Traditional Media Utilizing Crowdsourcing
- Citizen Journalism Sites
  - Demotix
  - All Voices
- Data Havens
  - Networks that act as legal refuges for unregulated data
Advantages

- Prevents monopolies on information dissemination (democratization of information)
- Speed
  - MSNBC showing cat videos during a national crisis
- Access to massive resources at low cost
  - The Guardian was one of the first publications to publicly support citizen journalism by publishing a cross-section of their reporting on a blog that calls for public participation
    - Was able to explain the tax loophole that Tony Blair uses to keep his finances secret.
Disadvantages

- Lack of quality- little to no verification of accuracy or truth
- Subject to perhaps as much bias as a traditional source of information (democracy is not objective)
- Cannot fully replace traditional media, as journalistic training allows professionals to navigate complex societal norms and laws
How does this affect privacy?

- Citizen reporters
  - Tradeoff between anonymity and verifiability (identity issues)
    - Journalists use real names to add credibility to their stories.
    - Is an anonymous journalist possible?
  - Publishing of potentially defamatory information
  - Can unintentionally reveal data
    - EX: Pictures taken on iPhones have metadata such as time taken
  - Are vulnerable to those who disagree with their content
    - Repression of dissidence
  - Do not often have the same protection of the law as professional journalists

- Subject of the Media
  - Previously localized issues now become subjects of mass media
    - Steubenville, local political scandals, etc.
  - False Accusations and Mass Targeting
  - Nothing is Private in Public

- Journalists
  - Have to adapt to crowdsourcing by synthesizing and presenting material in an ethical and factual manner
    - I.e.- it is not good enough to cite YouTube as a source
Legal Privacy Issues

- Shield Laws grant journalists the right to protect their sources.
  - 37 states have shield laws to empower journalists to increase the flow of information and prevent chilling effects by regulation.
    - A bill calling for federal reform of shield laws has failed to pass through congress three times.
  - Does not currently extend to citizen journalists.
- Examples:
  - Elliott Madison- house was raided for breaking an anti-rioting law when he retweeted police movements so that protesters at a G20 summit could avoid being apprehended
  - Josh Wolf- was jailed for a month for refusing to hand over a subpoenaed video that would implicate protestors of damaging a police car during an anti-G8 summit
    - Courts ruled that he was not a journalist, and his “sources” were committing a public act.
Citizen Journalist websites that clearly state their function place full responsibility upon content providers.

Moderators of forums like Reddit are responsible for content provided by users (not in a legal sense- CDA 230, but a social one).

Traditional media’s usage of crowdsourced information must be held to strict protocol in order to assure quality and accuracy.

- NYCLU app to document stop and frisk experiences.
- The Guardian supplemented Tottenham riot coverage with survey results and verified anecdotal information.

Do Citizen Journalists have a responsibility to ethics?

- Do everyday citizens have the right to protect sources?
- Journalists often have to identify themselves in private, and some argue that they should do so in public as well.
  - What implications would this have in conjunction with the idea that anyone can be a citizen journalist?
Were any laws broken in the Sunil situation?
- No one was prosecuted, but most of the worst offenders were shunned by the online community.

Citizens who break laws in order to acquire information (even to report it) are still liable for that crime.
- EX: Anonymous, LulzSec, etc.

Interestingly, but perhaps intuitively, people care more about whether vigilante actions are in line with their beliefs than whether or not it breaks the law.
- Tim Libert analyzed the discourse surrounding illegal attacks conducted by LulzSec to determine that actions in line with public opinion were embraced positively.

How should society treat vigilantism?
- Deric Lostutter, if convicted for hacking a website to obtain evidence, may spend up to ten years in prison for bringing the national spotlight on the Steubenville Rape Case.
- Does a case-by-case basis work?
Questions

- Is there a responsibility upon society to become better readers and filter through information ourselves?
- Do citizen journalists deserve the same kind of protection as professional journalists?
- Does it matter that collecting sensitive information illegally is done for a good reason? Should it matter?
- How do you think that traditional media and crowdsourced journalism will continue to interact in the future? What is the best form that journalism currently takes?