

# Exclusion and Inclusion in Personal Media Networks

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## Abstract

Personal media bypass mass media hierarchies, generating a sense of community and proximity. Print 'zines' and online 'blogs' also serve to culturally and socially distinguish those who produce and consume them. Digital network technology has transformed personal media. For example, blogs enable viewers to add comments, extending the parameters of inclusion. At the same time, instances of exclusion seem to proliferate in the 'blogosphere'. The simplification of complex tools makes it ever-more easy to create personal media: hence the multiplication of internal exclusion procedures which serve to differentiate agents equalised by undifferentiated inclusion in dominant networks.

## Introduction

In contemporary societies, the production of personal media is generally understood as affording isolated individuals the opportunity to generate a sense of community and proximity. At the same time, according to Pierre Bourdieu (1979), individuals seek to distinguish their cultural practices from that which they perceive to be common, through the often hidden procedures of exclusion of outsiders and inclusion of insiders. How is this contradictory process affected by the advent of the network society? It appears that information and communication technology (ICT) has profoundly affected the nature of personal media. For example, the participatory nature of some Internet-based personal media, which allows casual onlookers to freely post comments, radically alters the processes of inclusion and exclusion: in theory, there can be no 'other' to discriminate against. Could it then be argued that, perhaps, the inclusion of personal media in digital networks is an inherently democratic endeavour, which expands the scope of communication?

This paper proposes to explore the impact of digital networks on the cultural field of personal media by comparing the distinctive procedures at work in two types of personal media: 'zines' (idiosyncratic amateur print publications) and 'web-logs' or 'blogs' (chronologically updated personal websites). Though zines are by no means extinct, the growing popularity of the Internet has significantly reduced their number. For this reason, I will sometimes refer to the zine market in the past tense, as it is no longer as vibrant as it was during its heyday, which stretched from 1980 to 1995, and was known in the United States as the 'zine explosion'. This paper is informed by two online surveys dealing with the social background, personal media production and distribution activities, and cultural preferences of personal media producers. In December 1996-January 1997, I collected 115 responses from North American zine editors, and in August-September 2004 I collected thirty responses from North American and Australian bloggers.

## Personal media: the self, the media field, quality control

Personal media may be described in terms of self-expression, discourses on reclaiming the media, and insecurity about the quality of what is being produced. The fundamental axis of personal media, which all agents involved agree about, is its origin: the self. What is valued by producers and consumers of personal media is, above all, a sense of first-person immediacy. Zines may serve to express an individual's obsessions and interests (such as pills or pinball), the point of view of the member of a minority (in the case of 'queerzines', for example), or simply narrate the life of the author (in the case of 'personal zines'). Similarly, John Coates (2003) writes that the move from the homepage to the blog can be characterised as a move "from a place to a person." In other words, personal media are an avatar of what Theodore Roszak (1978) identified as the culture of the person, when he wrote that, on a historically unprecedented scale, we are becoming interesting to ourselves and to one another as "beings who carry unexpected destinies into the world" (p. 4). One consequence is the increasing importance of catalogues, the structure which can best corral the variety of human experiences now being expressed. The 1970s had resource guides such as the *Whole Earth Catalogue*, the 1980s saw the rise of the *Factsheet 5* 'review zine' which eventually listed a thousand zines in each issue. Today many blogs features a sidebar of links which enables online personal media producers to proclaim which tribe they belong to. Indeed, personal media also reflect a sense of belonging, of associating to what is close to one's concerns.

Michel Maffesoli (1996) asserts that this proxemic quality proceeds if not by exclusion, then at least by exclusiveness. The characteristic of a tribal grouping is that by highlighting what is close (persons and places), it has a tendency to be "closed in on itself" (p. 141). Both zines and blogs feature uncontextualised references to friends and acquaintances, as if they were personally known to the reader, thereby conflating the private and public spheres. Moreover, the introduction of network technology may reinforce the feeling of belonging. Audience feedback can now take the form of e-mails and comments as well as the traditional 'LOCs' (letters of comment) of the original science-fiction fanzines. The popular LiveJournal blogging software favours the development of a strong sense of community: practitioners can enter a full user profile and search for other users with similar interests, link to friends' blogs, and exchange text messages with other LiveJournalers. They can also specify who is allowed to access their entire blog, or even individual posts.

A second characteristic of personal media is its positioning in relation to the dominant, 'mainstream' media. Against what Castells (1997) describes as the one-way communication, the "extension of mass production, of industrial logic into the world of signs" (p. 370) which characterises the mass media, zines and blogs offer the promise of a participatory culture. Personal media producers such as Rebecca Blood (2002) stereotypically assert that not only are they reclaiming the means of communication from corporations, but that "each kind of weblog empowers individuals on many levels." The transformation of the consumer of media into a creator of media carries the promise of rejecting alienation. According to Bourdieu's analysis (1984), this corresponds to the strategy of a new entrant in a chosen cultural field, whose heretical subversion attempts to partially revolutionise the field by claiming to be returning to the origins, the essence, the truth of the game, against the trivialisation and degradation into which it has since drifted. In the United States, for example, political bloggers contest the authority of the dominant players in the media field in the name of its original values, taking as their model the shamelessly opinionated Partisan Press of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Partisan Press editors were clearly identified as either 'Republican' or 'Federalist', and did not hesitate to viciously slander their adversaries; moreover, it was customary for newspapers to intersperse news and opinions, often within the same article.

Zinesters and bloggers employ a variety of means in order to communicate an alternative discourse. Specialised or idiosyncratic language, for example, is both inclusive and exclusive: it serves to authenticate the emotions expressed, to establish a direct connection between the author and the reader, to signify distance from the mainstream, and to restrict the readership of those who are prepared to accept such messages. An example of the use of verbal violence in punkzines can be found in *Wordburger*, where a zinester known only as Igor (1991) declares:

Burn Maximumrocknroll to the fucking ground!!! They are fascist dictators! They rule this sickeningly factionalised scene with an iron fist! (p. 12)

As a rule, zines rejected the bland ‘objectivity’ and ‘neutrality’ of mainstream media, and favoured an enthusiastic tone, the use of slang or, in the case of queerzines, of camp. A study by Nilsson (2003) investigates the juxtaposition, in blogs, of written language and more informal forms - contractions, slang (‘whachamacallit’), and abbreviations such as ‘LOL’, which stands for “laughing out loud” (p. 34). Freedom of speech also takes the form of alternative political opinions and practices. Many zine editors were virulently opposed to the 1991 Gulf War. The various phases of the ‘War on Terror’ have given blogs opportunities to formulate many different perspectives: instead of expressing a consensus opinion, in the mainstream media tradition, weblogs showed the dissent among individuals (Mortensen and Walker, 2002). In practical terms, some zines attempted to promote and embody an anti-capitalist ‘gift economy’. Conversely, many bloggers claim to be influenced by libertarianism, a political doctrine which holds that individual liberty is the supreme value and hence argues for the radical curtailment (or even abolition) of state power. They thus wish to redress what they perceive to be the supposedly ‘left-leaning’ or ‘liberal’ bias of the mainstream media establishment, and focus their criticism on daily newspapers such as the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, or television networks such as CBS. Sullivan (2002) also claims that blogs have invented ‘peer-to-peer journalism’, marshalling the resources of many to verify sources and stories.

Along with self-expression and positioning in relation to mainstream media, personal media is defined by a reflective uncertainty about its own value. Criticism - from both mainstream and personal media sources - is rife, and it is often asserted that far more is written than needs to be said (Packer, 2004). The question of whether personal media constitutes an explosion of creativity or the debasement of quality leads to the creation of such neologisms as the ‘blogorrhea’, produced by the unimaginative blogger (Mead, 2000, p. 80). The fact is that blogs do not require an audience, and the advent of technology means that little effort is required to fill up page after page. A zine editor and blogger named Carvan (2004), writing about the process of evolution between the two forms, asserted that “what has been lost, I think, is the energy - the effort is so much less.” However, identical condemnations of zines, asserting that 99% were worthless, were frequently made. The following quote by Jim Goad (1994), which is directed to the entire zine field, is an admittedly extreme example of this common strand:

Nothing in your zine shatters the senses. Nothing in your zines makes me cry or laugh... If you held a burning match under it, your zine still wouldn’t catch fire. Your zine is the reason the world will end soon, because your zine is a staggering example of straight-arrow mediocrity. (p. 101)

In this instance an archetypical zine form - the rant - is used to condemn the very field which it exemplifies. This constitutes an illustration of what Bourdieu (1979) sees as the defining characteristic of cultural fields: struggles for the definition of classification systems. I now turn to the exclusion and distinction processes manifest in the fields of blogs and zines.

## **Attributing value in the zine field: the review economy**

The primary struggle concerns the definition of the stakes, that is to say, of the products of the field: what constitutes a zine? The answer to this question depends on the proximity of agents to the traditional DIY-punk ethic, which holds that a zine is anti-corporate and should be rough-looking; other agents believe that a zine expresses an idiosyncratic and obsessional individuality; others still consider that a zine expresses the language and values of a specific group, such as fractions of the gay community. The currency of the zine market, underground distinction ('coolness') resulted from the possession of specialised knowledge, dealing with marginal topics, groups and practices. In other words, distinction was attributed as a function of the distance between specific zines and the mainstream. The practice of thrift store shopping, for example, allowed zine editors to exhibit in equal measure the political activist's rejection of the mall's hyper-new commodities, and the distinction of the aesthete who can single out the retro treasures of the past amongst the flotsam of the junkyard.

Coolness was determined by a system of mutual zine reviews.<sup>1</sup> Though most zines comprised a section reviewing other zines, the zine network was dominated by a limited number of dominant hubs. Zines obtained radically different ratings according to where they were reviewed. In the pages of the main conveyor of punk rock orthodoxy, *MaximumRocknRoll*, which valued rough authenticity, Gardner Fusuhara (1995) writes:

Not too interesting, on tour with Impetus Inter, stuff about downtown St Paul, coffee, celibacy. Manages to say almost nothing. (p.88)

Whilst in the leading review zine, *Factsheet 5*, which prized quirkiness and originality, the same publication was described by Chris Becker (1995) in the following terms:

Very literate punk / political / riot girrrl with a strong attitude and a wide sense of what's really going on. Lots jammed into this issue... For everyone who doesn't know the difference between 'it's' and 'its' or thinks that all punks can't put a sentence together, Amanda will straighten you out once and for all. I hope. (p. 103)

These contradictory reviews reveal conflicts over cultural and social legitimacy. Bourdieu (1984) defines a legitimate language as a language whose phonological and syntactic forms are legitimate; a language which is grammatically correct, and which "constantly says - on top of what it says - that it is saying it well" (p. 104). This dominant form of language is, as a result, given the appearance of being incontrovertibly true. Some zine editors who wished to express a dissenting, anti-mainstream point of view employed a range of strategies to obscure their social and cultural legitimacy: using an old typewriter, writing by hand, leaving mistakes partially uncorrected. These practices also protected marginal rarity by making these publications unreadable by the uninitiated.

## **Attributing value in the blog field: the link economy**

Unlike zines, which come in many different shapes and sizes, most blogs have a similar appearance: a central main part, where the chronologically updated entries appear, and one or two sidebars, usually featuring links. Despite this relatively uniform look, the quest for differentiation is no less intense in the blog field than in the zine field. The struggles around the definition of the field's subject (what is a blog?) are mainly organised around a central distinction between two

main types of sites: those which link or filter, mining the web for interesting content, and those which present a description of their authors' lives. At the same time, struggles over definitions reflect a hierarchy, from the most basic to the more complex blogging software. Rebecca Blood (2002) writes that the introduction of Blogger made it 'too easy' to blog, thereby giving no incentive to seek links. This exclusionary discourse is particularly virulent when discussion turns to LiveJournal. LiveJournal users often do not include links and rely instead on a series of ready-made fields which indicate, either via emoticons or a limited set of choices, the current mood of the blogger, the music they are listening to, and so forth. This extreme use of pre-set templates arouses great contempt among some filter-bloggers.

Another differentiating nexus of the blog field is the so-called 'A-List'. This number one cluster in the field comprises early practitioners, software producers, and bloggers who show persistence. Members of the 'A-List', like other celebrities, may be the subjects of adulation. A blogger known as ninety-four (2004) qualifies a link to another blog thus: "caterina.net - she knows powacek! i'm so jealous."<sup>2</sup> Several respondents were highly critical of 'A-Listers', seeing them as interchangeable and generic (and therefore able to attract a larger audience), or as similar to career sales-people out to exploit any commercial opportunities which might come their way. Some respondents had never even heard of the 'A-List', a fact which relativises its importance - though online 'how-to' columnists such as Pollard (2003), when offering advice on setting up a blog, sometimes assert that the best way to generate traffic is to be noticed by and linked to an 'A-Lister'. Similarly Rebecca Mead (2000), author of a ground-breaking *New Yorker* article, entitled "You've Got Blog," wrote that being linked to original A-Listers Jason Kottke or Megnut<sup>3</sup> was "like having a book on Oprah" (p. 82). Survey respondent Jessica Donohoe (2004) amplified this point:

The belief in an A-List totally influences blogging practices. Webloggers link to other weblogs in hopes that the target site will see them in their referrer logs and come visit them, and link back to them, and that tends to be successful. Both groups of people (the collective term is 'linkwhores') look at their logs so frickin' often that it's the first thing they talk about socially.

The principal measure of value on the blog field resides in being linked to, and linking to, other sites. The practice of seeking to be linked to, 'linkslutting', though often viewed negatively, has also been defined by Walker (2002) as a logical practice, a "consensual exchange of favours" (p. 79). The central importance of links to the blogosphere has been reinforced by recent technological tools such as 'trackback' (which records web addresses of sites that have linked to a blog) and RSS (Really Simple Syndication), which provides users with automatic updates of new entries on selected web sources. Refusing to link to someone - breaking what Salam Pax (2003), the 'Bagdhad Blogger', refers to as the chain of 'lynkylove' - is therefore the most negative blogging action, as stated by Cohen (2004):

I took a pass on Michelle Malkin when her book first came out because I honestly didn't want to contaminate this site with anything as vile and hateful. Her book (which I will neither name or link to) suggests that interning the Japanese during WWII was a good idea and should be applied to Arabs and other 'darkies' now... \*\*\*ANOTHER UPDATE: I hate myself for linking this, but [Malkin blogs about her appearance](#).

## Personal media and the space of flows

The inclusion of personal media on ICT networks has significantly changed their relationship to the mainstream media and the sphere of work, as well as the manner in which distinction is evaluated in these cultural fields. Zines ignored or rejected the mainstream, and Marr (1999) has documented how the mass media found zines to be an interestingly off-beat subject matter (p. 25). Originally, blogs were treated with amused condescension by the mainstream. The mass media coverage of bloggers reporting on the Democratic National Convention is a case in point (Faler, 2004; Johnson, 2004). Blogs themselves engage in a complex relationship with the mainstream. *San Jose Mercury News* technology reporter Dan Gillmor (interviewed by Jardin, 2004) asserts that “blogs have joined the journalism ecosystem. It’s more symbiosis than rivalry.” In the course of the ‘blogger wars’ in the United States, in which opposing bloggers supported Republican or Democratic presidential candidates, the greatest prize was seeing a story which had originated on a blog migrating to a mainstream news organisation. The so-called ‘Rathergate’ controversy began when the authenticity of documents critical of George W. Bush’s National Guard service was questioned by a conservative blogger named ‘Buckhead’ on the *Free Republic* site. This post was linked to by another blog, *Power Line*, which was itself picked up by Matt Drudge, and given an audience of millions on his *Drudge Report*. A day after they were broadcast on CBS, ABC disputed the credibility of the accusations. An unexpected result of the scandal was that (right-) ‘wingers’ or ‘freepers’ - terms used by Democrat-leaning bloggers to disparage *Free Republic*-type bloggers - proudly started calling themselves ‘pyjamahadeen’, after a CBS executive declared that bloggers work in their living-room wearing pyjamas (Devine, 2004). Bloggers’ use of the same platform as the mainstream is starting to make them appear as a threat. An alternative view, ventured by Coates (2003), holds that since many mainstream journalists spend time surfing on the Internet, or maintain their own blogs, the “mainstream has been infected by the amateur.”

Inclusion on the global network also entails a significant shift in how value is constituted and evaluated in personal media. Zines favoured subjective value systems. As previously mentioned, the main review zines, such as *Factsheet 5* or *Zine World*, based their taste logic on qualities such as quirkiness, unusualness and originality. The legitimacy and accuracy of these choices was reinforced when the excellence of a zine was recognised by the reviews of other zine editors. On the web, the seemingly infinite multiplication of voices makes it impossible for any one reader to have experienced all, or even most, of the blogs in existence, making quality an unsatisfactory or impractical measure. Mortensen and Walker (2002) contend that popularity, on the other hand, is easily quantifiable if it is interpreted as the number of other weblogs linking to a particular blog. Sites such as Blogdex and Technorati make success statistically measurable, by identifying the most popular blogs, that is, those that are most linked to. Moreover, ‘A-List’ blogs are distinguished because of their early presence in the field, not quality: as a result, the A-List is static and unchangeable. Blogs are constructed post by post, over a period of time, whereas most print magazines are released as one large block of data. New entrants on the zine field could win the highest honours - being included in *Factsheet 5*’s prestigious “Editors Choice” section for example - and instantly obtain cult status. The zine field was paradoxically more fluid than the blog field.

The integration of personal media into the space of flows leads to a shift in the relationship between personal media and the sphere of production. The most obvious example is that certain discourses tend to disappear. The blog equivalent to the ‘tales of toil’ found in zines such as *Processed World*, *Temp Slave* and *McJob*, where employees criticised their jobs, bosses and co-workers, or recounted various forms of sabotage, is extremely rare, and perhaps impossible. ‘A-Lister’ Dooce lost her job when she blogged about her workplace (Armstrong, 2004). Rachel Mosteller ridiculed, under the name of ‘Sarcastic Journalist’, work practices (such as awards for doing something ‘spectacular’) at her place of employment, the Durham (NC) *Herald-Sun*. She did not identify herself, her co-workers, bosses or company, but that did not

prevent her from being fired the day after that post (Joyce, 2005). This narrowing of the gap between home and work environments exemplifies Mario Tronti's (1973) vision of a 'social factory' where automated factories have been emptied of workers, and where every sector of society is geared towards production.

Technological spaces of personal expression such as weblogs exhibit a familiar tension between free play and the possible challenging of dominant orthodoxies, on the one hand, and integration into the rapid cycles of entertainment hardware consumption, on the other. Bloggers, like computer hackers, participate in the provision of 'free' content over the Internet, thus reinforcing the widespread notion that a cornucopia exists in the here and now (O'Neil, 2005). Both groups perform a great service to state and corporate promoters of the Internet society, as it is impossible to access 'free' content without purchasing the requisite hardware and network connection. The totalising nature of networked production also requires that workers must be available at all times. The number one rule of blogging, which holds that posting every day is the mark of the best blogs, is echoed by the anxiety commonly expressed by readers of blogs: they fear 'missing something important', when they go on vacation, for example. Writing and reading blogs seems to imply that it is necessary to be always on, always there. Bloggers are thus in agreement with what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron (1996) call the 'Californian ideology' - the counter-cultural obsession with personal liberation becoming entwined with technology and the free market. A new form of capitalism emerges, where 'creative' employees are encouraged to wear non-conformist clothes, to express their individuality... and are also expected to work through the weekend.

## **Conclusion: the proliferation of exclusion**

In the course of this paper, I have referred to analytical concepts such as cultural field, cultural distinction, and cultural and social legitimacy. These terms were first used by Pierre Bourdieu (1979) to posit a mechanical relationship between hierarchies of taste and oppositions between social fields (such as the dominant and dominated fields), or between the dominant and dominated fractions of the dominant field. Bourdieu asserted that these hierarchies reproduce social inequality between a cultured dominant class, a lower middle class with cultural aspirations, and a dominated class which is kept apart from high culture. Bourdieu's rigid segmentation of high and low (or legitimate and non-legitimate) culture has been criticised, notably in the work of sociologist Bernard Lahire (2004). Lahire shows that the distinctive practices of the great majority of individuals are dissonant, mixing highly legitimate and non-legitimate activities, rather than consonant, that is to say, constituted of homogenous cultural practices. According to Lahire, consonant practices are only found at the extremities of the social field, in the highest and lowest social groupings.

The majority of cases, that of agents whose relationship to cultural distinction is divided by inner struggles, are located in the middle echelons of society. These situations are exemplified by the creation of personal media, with its mix of the highly literate and the intensely quotidian. To be sure, since personal cultural practices vary according to interactions with other individuals, it is important to avoid group stereotypes. Nevertheless, the emphasis on producing texts, and the strong commonalities between zine and blog survey respondents in terms of education and employment,<sup>4</sup> could lead us to say, with Bourdieu (1979), that, through personal media, members of the dominated fraction of the dominant class (agents endowed with cultural rather than financial capital) are staking a claim for cultural superiority; more charitably, it could be suggested that they are attempting to achieve a degree of cultural autonomy when confronted with an overwhelmingly powerful industrial-media system.

Both zines and blogs purport to be democratic forms and, as such, accessible to all. In reality, access is limited to those who possess the requisite socio-cultural capital. This paradox affects both fields, yet zine and blog editors address it in a radically divergent manner. Zines aimed to be independent from the mainstream, by establishing an autonomous cultural market. Although they could be purchased in specialised record and book stores, many were reciprocally exchanged through the mail; moreover, marginal prestige represented an attempt to establish taste hierarchies based on non-mainstream criteria, such as quirkiness, authenticity and extremism. This attempt was undermined by the zine editors' discursive legitimacy, which indicated that they were part of the culturally and socially dominant group in society; in other words, of the economic mainstream. The main source of tension in zines stems from this unresolved contradiction between legitimacy and marginality.

Weblogs demonstrate no such tension as they are, of course, included on the global network. There can be no question of an opposition between 'mainstream' and 'marginal' blogs, as any kind of Internet content can be pulled into a blog - that is, linked to. What is striking, however, is the fact that internal exclusion processes, aside from the traditional struggles over definition, seem to have multiplied in the blogosphere. First, the possibility of posting comments to blogs is available to anyone. Comments can easily be spammed or abused, and therefore need to be constantly monitored. Secondly, comment abusers are known as 'trolls'. Just as on e-mail lists, online forums and so on, the term serves as a form of discipline. Being labelled as a troll generates a fear of contagion in others, and may result in automatic exclusion from further communication. Thirdly, there appears to be a gender divide between 'male-dominated' forms such as 'warblogs', which are based on counter-punching and 'fisking' (demolishing an opponent's points) and more inclusive, 'female-dominated' forms, such as LiveJournal, which are not dissimilar to online chat situations. Fourthly, the exact status of the dominant cluster known as the 'A-List' is unclear. Does it exist? How is membership determined? As we have seen, statistics are not the only measure. In fact, there is no clear consensus about inclusion and exclusion criteria. Fifthly, the openness of the network may induce a loss of safety, where members of minorities will be abused. A solution to this problem would be to restrict access by erecting digital barriers, resulting in closed networks where membership would be attained through invitation only.

How can we account for this increase in exclusion procedures? A possible explanation derives from the threshold for inclusion in the blog field, which has been lowered in comparison to that of the zine field: the radical simplification of complex tools makes it ever-more easy to create personal media. Hence the multiplication of internal exclusion which serves to differentiate agents equalised by undifferentiated inclusion in dominant technological networks. Manuel Castells (1997) reminds us that not only is access to computer-mediated communication socially restrictive, but that "presence or absence in networks and the dynamics of each network vis-à-vis others are critical sources of domination and change in our society" (p. 500). Zine editors' failure to achieve some measure of independence from the dominant system nonetheless induced a self-awareness about the means and ends of zine publishing. Blogs, on the other hand, demonstrate less reflexivity about their conditions of production and consumption, or about what role they may play in relation to the dominant system of production. The proliferation of online exclusion processes may thus be viewed as both mirroring, and also as serving to distract from, the sites of major social exclusion, the 'black holes' of contemporary society which exist outside the network.

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- <sup>1</sup> The previously quoted anti-zine 'rant' was the conclusion of an article exposing a hoax zine. Jim Goad, tired of the bad reviews garnered by his controversial, though well-written and well-researched, 'hatezine' *ANSWER Me!*, secretly published his version of a stereotypical zine, *Chocolate Impulse*. Deliberately poorly produced, full of fuzzy collages and spelling mistakes, it was supposedly the work of "two interracial Kentucky lesbians who were being victimized by rednecks." Mailed from Kentucky by an accomplice to his 'zine enemies' and to the principal review zines, *Chocolate Impulse* garnered rave reviews, exposing the uncritical nature of the zine market.
- <sup>2</sup> Derek Powazek has been working for the last ten years as a "web designer, print designer, writer about technology, writer of stories, photographer" (Powazek, 2004); since 1997, he has published several books and created the websites Fray, City Stories, SF Stories, DFC and Kvetch!
- <sup>3</sup> Meg Hourihan was a co-founder of Pyra, the company which created the Blogger software, and which was later bought by Google. She announced in September 2004 that she was embarking on a new career as a chef. What follows is another blogger's reaction to this news: "Meg Hourihan quits the geek life. Which removes competition from my plans to rule the geek world, so - y'know - I should be happy. But she will be very much missed. Good luck, lovely lady..." (Coates, 2004).

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<sup>4</sup> In terms of gender, 77% of zine editor respondents were male and 23% female, while 62% of blog respondents were male and 38% female. The national average for attending four years of college in the United States is 23% of the population (Department of Commerce, 1996). 64% of surveyed North American zine editors had attended a university and 18% were currently doing so. 81% of these respondents had obtained or were attempting to obtain an Arts or Humanities degree (the percentage of students enrolled in English in the US is 5%, and 11% in social science). 70% of surveyed North American and Australian bloggers had attended a university and 16% were currently doing so, making for an even higher total than zine editors. 60% of these respondents had obtained or were attempting to obtain an Arts degree, 17% had obtained or were attempting to obtain a technology-related degree, and 17% had obtained or were attempting to obtain a social studies degree. In terms of employment, 22% of surveyed zine editors worked as editors and writers, 19% as graphic artists, 17% were computer consultant, and 7% were employed as librarians and teachers. 22.5% of bloggers who responded to the survey were employed in the technology field, 22.5% were editors and writers, 22.5% were students, 10% worked in customer service, and the rest were evenly split (6.5% each) between artists, the financial sector and the unemployed.