TEXT MESSAGING AS A BREAKING NEWS INFORMATION SOURCE
AND UNIVERSITY JOURNAL ACCENT SECTION PORTFOLIO

A Project
presented to
the Faculty of the Communication Department
at Southern Utah University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts in Professional Communication

by
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May 2009
TEXT MESSAGING AS A BREAKING NEWS INFORMATION SOURCE
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ABSTRACT

With the advent of new technologies every day, the information-gathering habits of those seeking breaking news stories evolves at an equally break-neck pace. For this project, I studied those habits within the context of text messaging on mobile phones regarding average daily usage and at the times of the high-profile deaths of actor Heath Ledger and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints President Gordon B. Hinckley. Results were consistent with similar research study findings, such as younger age groups texting more frequently than older age groups, and results also indicate that the use of text messaging as a breaking news information source is on the rise.

In addition to this research, I have included a portfolio of my work as the Accent Editor at the University Journal. This comprehensive and in-depth portfolio includes full-page layouts, articles and blogs created during Spring 2008.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Kevin Stein, who talked me into staying.

Thank you to Jon Smith, who stepped up when others stepped down.

Thank you to Captain, who taught me Patience and saved the frakking day.

So say we all.
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Text Messaging as a Breaking News Information Source

Although still a relatively new form of communication—originating in Europe in the early 1990s—Americans are snapping up text messaging technologies at exponential rates (Ling & Baron, 2007; Trappey III & Woodside, 2005). Only four years ago, 192 million mobile phones connected people, and 90% of the phones had text messaging, or Short Message Service (SMS), screens as a standard feature (Maney, 2005). As of February 2008, Communications News reports that U.S. citizens send approximately 30 billion text messages every month, up from roughly 2.8 billion per month in 2004 and 6.3 billion per month in 2006 (Communications News, 2008; Maney, 2005; Betancourt, 2007). And texting, often used in lieu of spoken conversation, is also being used for increasingly diverse purposes.

In the world of entertainment, country music celebrity Carrie Underwood revealed at a Los Angeles charity event that she ended her romantic relationship with Chace Crawford via text message: “We broke up over text, so … it’s like ‘peace out’” (as cited in Giantis, 2008, para. 3). Viewers of the television programs Videos Por Favor and Videos a la Cart on the bilingual network LATV can submit a text message that is displayed as a graphic overlay on the screen to give a “shout out” to friends or other audience members who are watching (Dickson, 2007, p. 43). American Idol watchers sent in approximately 64.5 million votes during one season—solely through Cingular wireless carriers—for their favorite singing contestants on the popular reality TV show (Becker, 2006). At U2 concerts, attendees were able to text their names to appear on a screen behind the band and to register as a member of the ONE Campaign, a charity project founded by lead singer Bono, that fights poverty; at the Live 8 rock concert, 26 million text messages worldwide were received to help poverty relief efforts in Africa (Maney, 2005).
In the world of sports, teams such as the Chicago White Sox use texting as a means of bonding with their fans, and at sporting events patrons can send text messages to appear on scoreboards between innings (Maney, 2005). For a nominal monthly fee each month, Major League Baseball’s Web site MLB.com offers text messaging packages to fans that include final scores, trivia questions and player injury updates to subscribers (Maney, 2005).

And in the world of love, www.sms.ac provides men with new “pickup” lines daily, and txt2flrt.com allows users to find dates through its matchmaking service (Maney, 2005). Couples on dates in noisy or large locations, such as dance clubs, use texting to maintain contact with each other, or conversely, to send a “help me” message to a companion in order to escape from unsavory patrons who outstay their welcome (Betancourt, 2007). In the near future, mobile phone providers may also offer, as they already do in Asia, a physical location “finder” for members of one’s social network (Betancourt, 2007; Maney, 2005).

Beyond casual personal use, though, text message transcripts are also being used in the legal world. In April last year, four Wisconsin high school students, if convicted, faced serving 90 days in jail and a maximum of $1,000 in fines for an exchange of text messages about potentially conducting a shooting on their school grounds (Braley, 2008). The teens texted each other with messages such as “we should get guns and get everybody at school” and “Dude, I got some guns and bombs in my locker … let’s kill everybody,” and though they claim the threats were simply jokes, they were enough to result in the students’ arrests (Braley, 2008, p. 1).

Two Louisiana teachers were also recently arrested for sending inappropriate text messages (Temple, 2008). The first teacher said he questioned a female student via text about her “sexual feelings” toward him, and the second teacher was booked after she sent similar messages to an underage student at her school (Temple, 2008, para. 5).
Similarly, text messages were a component of grand jury hearings for deputies at a Santa Ana jail (Los Angeles Times, 2008). While on duty, guards watched an episode of the television show *Cops* and one exchanged 22 personal text messages over a 50-minute span, despite jail logs indicating the guards checked on activities in the cell block during that timeframe (Los Angeles Times, 2008, para. 4). In the meantime, a 41-year-old inmate was “stomped and beaten to death” near the glass-encased guard station (Los Angeles Times, 2008, para. 4).

Further, because the content of certain text messages could have potentially contradicted testimony in a rape case against NBA star Kobe Bryant, the presiding judge granted the attorneys access to various text conversation transcripts for review, including those of the woman accusing Bryant, which is already an accepted legal practice in criminal proceedings in Europe and Asia (Associated Press, 2004). In a comparable case last year, the records of almost 14,000 text messages exchanged between Kwame Kilpatrick, the mayor of Detroit, and his then-married chief of staff Christine Beatty, were used as proof that the two had lied under oath about not having a romantic relationship (Davey & Bunkley, 2008).

On yet another litigious front, lawsuits are being filed nationwide in regard to the legality of text message contests. Numerous television programs have instituted “text-in” contests, such as NBC’s *Deal or No Deal* Lucky Case Game wherein viewers send a text message selecting the number of the “winning case” to try to win cash prizes (Cuneo & Klaassen, 2007). As of June 2007, over 210 million viewers had paid the $0.99 entry fee—in addition to standard text messaging fees—to participate in the *Deal* contest, which, according to Davis & Gilbert attorney Joseph Lewczak, violates the Standard Lottery Rule; if a contest requires a “premium fee” and doesn’t provide a “bona fide product or service” in return, the contest may be considered gambling, which is illegal in most states (Cuneo & Klaassen, 2007, p. 16). If, however, contests
do provide something in return for the fee, such as a mobile phone ringtone, wallpaper or special “insider” information about the show, the game providers can circumvent lottery laws and relatively legalize gambling (Cuneo & Klaassen, 2007; Becker, 2006).

While texting is obviously widespread in various social and legal realms, exactly who is utilizing text messaging services with such frequency and for precisely what reasons, though slightly investigated by the media, is still largely undocumented in academia.

Literature Review

Young adults clearly comprise the bulk of text message users—nearly half of all Americans ages 18 to 24 state they use texting services “all or most of the time,” as opposed to the mere 19% of 25-to-34-year-olds who do so (Vorhaus, 2007, p. 29). Although Europeans exchange approximately four times as many texts daily than Americans, U.S. college students in 2006 still spent roughly 20 minutes each day solely on texting (Fernando, 2007; Harris Interactive, 2006).

College students, consumers and leaders are recognizing that text messaging can provide services for highly specialized uses. For example, text voting and petitioning has been advantageous in many areas worldwide. In October 2005, some residents in Switzerland were asked to vote on local speed limits, and in India an activist group recruited supporters who then sent text messages to their local government in an attempt to reopen a controversial murder case (Fernando, 2007). Also, in Germany, Power, Power and Rehling (2007) conducted a survey of deaf people and found that rather than using email, fax, or traditional telephone typewriter (TTY) services, 96% of their survey respondents used text messaging regularly in order “to be spontaneous and in control of their communication with both deaf and hearing friends, workmates, family, businesses, and services such as pizza delivery and taxis” (p. 294).
Texting is being increasingly used for advertising purposes, as well. In lieu of placing a listing in the classified section of one’s local newspaper, individual text message advertisements may cost up to only 10 cents each (Maney, 2005). To promote the television show *Smallville*, the WB network teamed with Verizon Wireless to include brief TV spots that encouraged viewers to opt-in to a text messaging campaign; subscribers were then offered “*Smallville* trivia, pictures, polls and updates,” as well as participation in a sweepstakes for a travel destination prize to the show’s Vancouver set and for Verizon products (Stanley, 2003, p. 4). Further, Trappey III and Woodside (2005) studied responses from 5,401 households in the United Kingdom regarding a direct marketing campaign conducted via text message. The researchers were attempting to increase awareness of certain television programs through text message advertisements, and, thus, increase viewership of those programs; the campaign proved to be successful, particularly among younger age groups, and was, incidentally, very likely much less expensive to conduct than standard telemarketing or direct mail surveys (pp. 382-383).

It is likely that consumers prefer to use text messaging for these and other practical reasons instead of more traditional methods of communication, such as landline telephones or e-mail, because of the portability of and perpetual access to mobile phones, and for texting’s immediacy (Harris Interactive, 2006; Maney, 2005; Fernando, 2007). Because text messaging services are always available, subscribers to various information providers can conveniently receive updates on breaking news, traffic delays and road closures, flight changes, bank account transactions, local events and entertainment, politics, appointments, sex offender alerts, retail bargains and the weather (Fernando, 2007; Shields, 2007; Betancourt, 2007; Maney, 2005; Frye, 2006). Weather information, second only to wireless e-mail, is the most frequently accessed by mobile phone, and text message alerts for weather and other general news and information tidbits
are already well-established in Europe (Rockwell, 2007; Van Camp, 2004). American companies AT&T Wireless and T-Mobile were some of the early providers for such services in the U.S. less than six years ago, and text message subscription practices like these continue to increase (Van Camp, 2004; Maney 2005). Breaking news updates received instantly via text message are of particular interest in this study.

Especially in emergency situations, breaking information updates are critical. Unfortunately, many U.S. government agencies that would regularly provide those updates are “hampered by emergency communications technology dating to the 1970s” (as cited in Communications News, 2008, p. 7). Those outdated technologies often rely on providing information using television and radio, but having electricity to run such units isn’t always possible in an emergency situation; more often is it the case that only a wireless text message “‘pushes’ information to citizens wherever they are” (Communications News, 2008, p. 7).

Additionally, during the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, countless Americans found themselves unable to contact loved ones when telephone voice lines were jammed by high volumes of calls, but because of smaller band-width requirements than voice-to-voice calls, text messages again allowed people to connect (Betancourt, 2007; Gordon, 2007). Text messages and multimedia messages (MMS) with photo or video evidence of events can also prove highly valuable in documenting emergency situations (Gordon, 2007).

Gordon (2007) conducted potentially endangering research on three high profile crisis events: the Chinese Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003, the south-east Asian tsunami in December 2004, and the London bombings in July 2005 (pp. 317, 308). During the SARS outbreak, it was found that even with actual footage and text messages from civilians, some of the information regarding outbreak locations and possible treatments for
SARS were subject to “gatekeeping” editorial processes and much of the information presented to the public was “deliberately inaccurate, misleading or had been removed,” that “the Chinese government was under-reporting SARS cases by about 90 percent” and that “there was some evidence that concealment was deliberate” (pp. 308-310).

In contrast, those involved with the Sumatra-Andaman tsunami fared much more positively with texting. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre (PTWC) sent a mass text message to members of the Tsunami Warning System, alerting surrounding areas of the underwater magnitude 9 earthquake that occurred near Indonesia, and in the aftermath of the tsunami, mobile phone technologies were used to document damage and to locate survivors (pp. 312-313).

Falling between these extremes were the London bombings. In the moments immediately following the terrorist bombings, witnesses were already providing accounts of the events through voice calls, text messages and multimedia messages, which were subsequently used in news broadcasts and would not otherwise have been available (p. 314). However, some of these accounts were considered “more distressful and disturbing than what the media wishes[d] to display,” and many were “subject to the editorial process” and not included in news coverage in the end (p. 314). But despite the government and media censorship shortcomings in these three cases, with eyewitness text and multimedia message evidence, these events were still more properly documented than they would have been solely through official news outlets (p. 307).

As is evidenced through these many varied purposes, text messaging is beginning to firmly root itself into the information-gathering habits of Americans. With this shift comes a need for adaptation on the part of the news providers, as Frye (2006) notes: “News organizations, to survive, must understand these behaviors and be willing to adapt and distribute information in a variety of formats” (p. 14). For example, Jason Bugg, an editor for the Pocono Record in
Stroudsburg, Pa., divulges his newspaper’s adaptation strategies: e-mail alerts, videos on the paper’s online homepage, a MySpace Web site profile page, an online blog, and, of course, a text messaging alert service (Bugg, 2006, p. 43). I have, therefore, developed two research questions regarding the subject for this study:

RQ1: How deeply rooted are text messaging habits in the context of gathering breaking news information?

RQ2: To what extent are text messages replacing the Internet as an instant news source?

Method

Based on this literature and personal observation, I conducted a small-scale pilot study to determine the validity of these research questions. The sample for this study was drawn from the student body of Southern Utah University (SUU), a rural but mid-size public university.

Following the pilot study, a colleague and I distributed a revised version of the original survey (See Appendix A) to a convenience sample of 70 students enrolled in one of four SUU communication courses.

In the survey distributed to the sample participants, four questions refer to Oscar-nominated actor Heath Ledger and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Gordon B. Hinckley, both of whom were included because their deaths were high-profile news items within the previous three months.

The completed, anonymous surveys were then collected, analyzed and destroyed.

Results

After reviewing the submitted demographic information, of the 70 participants who completed the survey, 26 were male and 44 were female. 48 participants were ages 18-22 (14 of the males, 34 of the females), and 19 were over the age of 22 (9 of the males, 10 of the females).
Three male respondents did not declare their ages and were excluded from the age-specific tabulations only.

Females scored higher than males for the average number of text messages sent and received—an average of 73% of females sent and received more than 10 text messages per day, whereas approximately 49% of males sent and received more than 10 text messages per day. However, males outscored females with their exchange counts regarding the death of Ledger (24% of males compared to only 2% of females), but females scored higher overall with their text message exchange averages regarding the death of Hinckley with 33% of females exchanging texts as compared to 18% of males (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Number of sampled participants (out of 70) who sent and received text messages for each category for males and females.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Messages</th>
<th>Average Text Messages Sent</th>
<th>Average Text Messages Received</th>
<th>Heath Ledger Messages Sent</th>
<th>Heath Ledger Messages Received</th>
<th>Gordon B. Hinckley Messages Sent</th>
<th>Gordon B. Hinckley Messages Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11+ Messages</td>
<td>Male: 12 Female: 31</td>
<td>Male: 13 Female: 33</td>
<td>Male: 5 Female: 1</td>
<td>Male: 7 Female: 1</td>
<td>Male: 4 Female: 13</td>
<td>Male: 5 Female: 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for 11+ Messages</td>
<td>Male: 47% Female: 70%</td>
<td>Male: 51% Female: 75%</td>
<td>Male: 20% Female: 2%</td>
<td>Male: 27% Female: 2%</td>
<td>Male: 16% Female: 29%</td>
<td>Male: 19% Female: 37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the 18- to 22-years-old and the over 22-years-old age groups, the younger group exchanged approximately 65% more text messages than the older group in general. However, the exchange counts regarding the deaths of Ledger and Hinckley split the averages. The older group exchanged an average of 19% more text messages regarding the death of Ledger than the younger group, yet the 18-22-years-old group exchanged an average of 31% more text messages regarding the death of Hinckley. In summation, the younger group exchanged more texts overall, except in the context of Ledger’s death (See Table 2).
Table 2. Number of sampled participants (out of 67) who sent and received text messages for each category for all participants ages 18-22 and over 22.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Messages</th>
<th>Average Text Messages Sent</th>
<th>Average Text Messages Received</th>
<th>Heath Ledger Messages Sent</th>
<th>Heath Ledger Messages Received</th>
<th>Gordon B. Hinckley Messages Sent</th>
<th>Gordon B. Hinckley Messages Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sampled males ages 18- to 22-years-old exchanged substantially more text messages on average (79% sent and received more than 10 messages per day) than their over 22-years-old counterparts, 95% of whom sent and received approximately 0-10 messages per day. However, for text messages exchanged regarding the death of Heath Ledger, the older group outpaced the younger group at a rate of almost 5 to 1. For the death of Gordon B. Hinckley, though, a full quarter of the 18-22-year-olds exchanged text messages, whereas 0% of the over 22-years-old group did so (See Table 3).

Table 3. Number of sampled participants (out of 23) who sent and received text messages for each category by age for males only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Messages</th>
<th>Average Text Messages Sent</th>
<th>Average Text Messages Received</th>
<th>Heath Ledger Messages Sent</th>
<th>Heath Ledger Messages Received</th>
<th>Gordon B. Hinckley Messages Sent</th>
<th>Gordon B. Hinckley Messages Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Sampled females ages 18- to 22-years-old exchanged approximately twice as many text messages on average than females over 22-years-old. While both age groups exchanged very few text messages about the death of Ledger (18-22-year-olds at 3% and over-22-year-olds at 0%), the younger group did exchange more text messages on average regarding the death of Hinckley than did the older group—approximately 40% of the younger group compared to 10% of the older group (See Table 4).

Table 4. Number of sampled participants (out of 44) who sent and received text messages for each category by age for females only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Messages</th>
<th>Average Text Messages Sent</th>
<th>Average Text Messages Received</th>
<th>Heath Ledger Messages Sent</th>
<th>Heath Ledger Messages Received</th>
<th>Gordon B. Hinckley Messages Sent</th>
<th>Gordon B. Hinckley Messages Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;22: 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;22: 0</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;22: 12</td>
<td>&gt;22: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals for 11+ Messages</strong></td>
<td>18-22: 79%</td>
<td>&gt;22: 40%</td>
<td>18-22: 3%</td>
<td>&gt;22: 0%</td>
<td>18-22: 35%</td>
<td>&gt;22: 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;22: 40%</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;22: 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;22: 10%</td>
<td>&gt;22: 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other findings in this study relate to an ordered ranking question on the survey that asked participants to rank their sources of breaking news information, such as the deaths of prominent people like Ledger and Hinckley, on a scale of 1-5, 1 being the first information source they access and 5 being the last information source they access. The information sources to rank were television, print (newspapers, magazines), Internet, text messaging and radio.

Of the 70 responses to the survey, one was excluded from the ranking tabulations because it was incomplete. For participants overall, preferences for breaking news information sources were listed as: television (first source—30 votes), Internet (second source—26 votes), text
messaging (third source—7 votes), radio (fourth source—4 votes), and print (fifth source—2 votes), for a total of 69 voted rankings.

Discussion

Upon review, the demographics of the participants were fairly representative of the SUU student body with more females than males and more students ages 18-22 years old than students over 22 years old overall. The general findings of this study also support previous findings that younger age groups—and college students in particular—are regularly using text messaging as a means to communicate.

With the variety of results in this study, there are several areas that merit a closer look. For instance, females on average exchanged approximately 25% more text messages than males overall. While this could be an indication that females simply communicate more often and more regularly than males in general, it is also possible that females use text messaging as a springboard for dialogue. For example, such conversation-starters could be indicated by the higher percentage of sent texts than received texts regarding the deaths of Heath Ledger and Gordon B. Hinckley, and then these women may be continuing with deeper conversations through other more traditional means of communication instead, such as voice-to-voice phone calls or e-mail.

Females in particular, too, appear to find the death of Gordon B. Hinckley more newsworthy than that of Heath Ledger: Hinckley’s death generated approximately 32% more sent messages than Ledger’s. But perhaps this is less a commentary on the perceived value of the lives of these men and more an indication of these women’s deeply held personal beliefs—while Ledger was a high-profile actor and likable celebrity, Hinckley was a prominent religious
leader for many decades in the predominant religious culture in Utah. The significance of
religious priority over entertainment and pop culture may actually be what is indicated here.

Males, however, may be indicating just the opposite with their average number of
exchanges. While Ledger’s death merited approximately 30% of the males’ attentions,
Hinckley’s death scored less than 13%. While this could be an indication that males’ religious
beliefs are less deeply rooted than females’ beliefs, it could also be that the males are either more
entertainment-savvy than females, or that they don’t care to discuss the death of a religious
leader via text message, if at all.

Interestingly, though, the older males also exchanged text messages about the death of
Ledger at a frequency of roughly five to one compared to the rates of the younger group. This
may be an indication that males, again, are more entertainment-oriented than religion-oriented,
or this may simply be a demonstration of the older group’s willingness to pass along information
regarding a young celebrity’s death than that of an elderly religious figure, which behavior they
may perceive as more “politically correct.”

Similarly, the overall younger groups—male and female—exchanged text messages
about the death of Hinckley an average of 5% more frequently than that of Ledger. This could
be an extension of the notion that the younger groups are more comfortable talking about the
death of an aged person, it could be that the younger groups are more religion-oriented than their
older counterparts, or it could simply be a measurement of the numbers within the margin of
error and, thus, insignificant.

The younger age groups for males and females combined also text messaged more in
general on average than the older age groups: 81% of respondents in the younger group
exchanged more than 10 text messages on average per day, as opposed to 16% of respondents in
the older group. This may likely be because the younger group has more exposure to, and thus more familiarity with, the technologies of mobile phones and of texting itself than older age groups. This may also be a factor in why the younger participants exchanged more text messages about the deaths of Ledger and Hinckley (41% of the younger group exchanged more than 10 messages and 29% of the older group exchanged more than 10 messages); however, that may simply be a result of increased familiarity with Ledger and Hinckley themselves, or again, because of their personal priorities.

As for the rankings for primary news sources (television, followed by the Internet, text messages, radio and print, respectively), technological comfort and accessibility may be playing a role. Or ahead of that, perhaps it’s simply about trust—those respondents who favor televised or printed sources may just be more skeptical of the truthiness of text message senders, who literally could be someone on a street corner, but seeing actual visual images and transcripts of entire stories from a “real” news source on the screen or on the page renders the content more trustworthy.

On a smaller scale, I also find it interesting that while television and the Internet are ranked the first and second sources for breaking news, respectively—likely because of their instant natures—radio is not considered in the same “immediate” vein. Maybe this is because even though radio can provide instant information as easily and thoroughly as the Internet or television, respondents may not have “easy access” to an actual radio. For example, the Internet is accessible in a significantly large number of workplaces, and televisions are accessible basically everywhere else in America, but many people likely only listen to their radios in their vehicles during commutes, leading to less exposure to the medium.
Overall in the rankings, television and the Internet are clearly still the primary sources for breaking news information, but text messaging on average is now outranking radio and print (newspapers, magazines) as initial information sources. Although there was some support, such as with these rankings, documenting the increased use of text messaging as a breaking news information source, there was no strong support found for either of my research questions based on the evidence. However, the big rise in the rankings for text messaging may be an indication that, like the Internet not many years ago, text messages may eventually surpass traditional news providers as a primary source for breaking news information.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While convenience samples do have certain limitations, particularly that of generalizing findings to the larger population, at times convenience samples are still deemed an acceptable surveying technique. In *Analyzing Media Messages* (2005), Riffe, Lacy and Fico list three conditions for such justification, the third of which applies to this research: “The third condition … is when a researcher is exploring some underresearched but important area. When little is known about a research topic, even a convenience sample becomes worthwhile in generating hypotheses for additional studies” (pp. 99-100). Because there has been so little research conducted on text messaging habits thus far, use of a convenience sample here is justified.

In addition, the findings in this study present several opportunities for further, deeper investigation. A full-scale, longitudinal study of text messaging and breaking news information-gathering habits could track the frequency with which respondents turn to text messages as a primary news source as the practice becomes more accepted, since more familiarity over time with mobile phones and their features can lead to more acceptance.
Further, future studies could examine specific text message content to determine some of the general uses and gratifications of text messaging. For example, one could determine how many respondents use texting strictly for conversation and how many have subscriptions to various information providers, or one could determine how many respondents use only written-word text messages and how many use multimedia messages.

As for possible future gender and age group studies, more research could focus on the comfort or apprehension levels of males and females when adopting new communication technologies such as texting. Or one could focus, for instance, on the increased adoption of text messaging as a means of communication by older groups over time as they become more familiar with and more accepting of such interactions.

And for any study dealing with the distribution of news from one source to another, or to multiple destinations, a study dealing with the Two-Step Flow of information is essential. Determining who is acting as an opinion leader and initiating these messages, whether they be official news organizations or personal contacts, as well as who is listening to these leaders—especially to what extent—and continuing the spread of the data, can be highly valuable to all involved parties.

Any of these future studies would broaden the surprisingly small amount of research that actually has been conducted thus far. Though I didn’t reach a point of saturation with my quest for prior text messaging research, I thoroughly reviewed every study available to me, and of the 26 total sources I accessed, only 15 came from academic journals. For communication technology that has been available for 15 years and is so thoroughly penetrating the world market, more academic research on text messaging is absolutely essential.
Whether consumers of text messaging use it for entertainment purposes, such as giving shout-outs to friends on television, to communicate with loved ones during a crisis, such as the Virginia Tech school shootings, for legal evidence, such as a corroboration of under-oath testimony, or for breaking news information, such as the deaths of Heath Ledger and Gordon B. Hinckley, it is clear that, as Fernando (2007) notes, “it’s safe to say that text will change our world” (Dickson, 2007; Betancourt, 2007; Davey & Bunkley, 2008).


Appendix 1

Survey

My name is Angela Smith, and I am an SUU Master of Professional Communication candidate. This research is designed to study text messaging habits in regard to breaking news stories. Participants will be asked to fill out the following closed-ended survey questions, which should take approximately two minutes. All questions should be directed to me at grad10@suu.edu.

**Participation is voluntary. You may discontinue the study at any time for any reason without penalty. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer. You may ask questions at any time.**

Please answer the following questions:

1. Approximately how many text messages do you usually send in a 24-hour period?
   a) 0-10   b) 11-20   c) 21-30   d) 31-40   e) 41+

2. Approximately how many text messages do you usually receive in a 24-hour period?
   a) 0-10   b) 11-20   c) 21-30   d) 31-40   e) 41+

3. Approximately how many text messages did you send about the death of Heath Ledger?
   a) 0-10   b) 11-20   c) 21-30   d) 31-40   e) 41+

4. Approximately how many text messages did you receive about the death of Heath Ledger?
   a) 0-10   b) 11-20   c) 21-30   d) 31-40   e) 41+

5. Approximately how many text messages did you send about the death of Gordon B. Hinckley?
   a) 0-10   b) 11-20   c) 21-30   d) 31-40   e) 41+

6. Approximately how many text messages did you receive about the death of Gordon B. Hinckley?
   a) 0-10   b) 11-20   c) 21-30   d) 31-40   e) 41+

Please answer the following questions:

7. What is your first source of information for breaking news events?
   a) Internet   b) text messages   c) radio   d) television   e) print (newspapers, magazines)

8. What is your second source of information for breaking news events?
   a) Internet   b) text messages   c) radio   d) television   e) print (newspapers, magazines)
9. What is your third source of information for breaking news events?
   a) Internet  b) text messages  c) radio  d) television  e) print (newspapers, magazines)

Please rank the following sources 1-5, with 1 being the first source from which you hear important news and 5 being the last source from which you hear important news:

   ____ Television
   ____ Print (newspapers, magazines)
   ____ Internet
   ____ Text messaging
   ____ Radio

Please provide the following information:

   ____ Male  ____ Female  Age ____  Major ________________________________
Appendix 2

Portfolio
Gladiators fill gap in NBC lineup

Sometimes a Christmas present just isn’t what it should be. Unwrapping a two-pounder fills us with soaring visions of a grand meal, only to find that it is, in fact, a tin of worms. But when the gift is a three-hour TV series, even a misfire can be kind.

Enter American Gladiators. The show airs on NBC Monday nights at 8 p.m. for the next 12 weeks. The new series is the perfect holiday gift, especially for those who love to watch as the superhumanly strong contestants battle it out in Rooms of America, wailing and thrashing as they attack each other in an attempt to be the last American gladiator standing. The show has a great deal to offer, from the classic fights to the new format of Rooms of America, which features a new set of American gladiators each week challenge.

New Year’s resolutions inspire fresh focus on past priorities

This year I am making a commitment to myself. I am going to find the one present that I have been searching for all year. It is a present that brings joy to the one who has everything. It is a present that is perfect for everyone. It is a present that is unique and personal. It is a present that is unexpected.

The present is a set of New Year’s resolutions. Each resolution is a step towards a better future. Each resolution is a promise to make a change. Each resolution is a way to improve. Each resolution is a way to live.

I have chosen to make my resolutions focused on the past. I have chosen to make my resolutions about the future. I have chosen to make my resolutions about the present.

I have chosen to make my resolutions to improve myself. I have chosen to make my resolutions to challenge myself. I have chosen to make my resolutions to push myself.

I have chosen to make my resolutions to make changes. I have chosen to make my resolutions to make progress. I have chosen to make my resolutions to make improvements.

I have chosen to make my resolutions to be better. I have chosen to make my resolutions to be stronger. I have chosen to make my resolutions to be healthier.

I have chosen to make my resolutions to be happy. I have chosen to make my resolutions to be successful. I have chosen to make my resolutions to be successful.

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By SEAN MILES
smiles@suujournal.com

A modern adaptation of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet begins a nationwide tour, starting with Cedar City on Wednesday.

USF sponsors Romeo and Juliet tour

The Utah Shakespearean Festival’s 2008 production of Romeo and Juliet is directed by Ann Tully and features Menasha Skains as Juliet and Timothy Pyles as Romeo. The tour will take the production from January to April across four states and will perform for roughly 70,000 students. Rights: Cristina Del Barrio portrays Juliet and Timothy Pyles portrays Romeo in scenes from the Utah Shakespearean Festival’s 2008 Shakespeare on-the-Schools production of Romeo and Juliet.

By ANNA COLE
coles@suujournal.com

Sundance fan scopes celebrities

Sundance Film Festival

As I drove up Park City from Red Ledges to Park City, I could not help but think of the famous saying “You can’t keep a good story down.”

While the mountains, the snow, and the snowmobiles may be the backdrop for the festival, it’s the stories of the past, present, and future that take center stage here.

I tried to stretch my imagination to understand the power of storytelling and the impact it can have on our world.

Celebrities and citizens alike hit Main Street in Park City for the Sundance Film Festival. The festival wrapped up Sunday with a variety of events and screenings.

I found myself in a sea of celebrities, including Tom Arnold and my personal favorite, Quentin Tarantino (whose favorite, Quentin Tarantino, who co-founded the festival, is a special guest this year).

I was able to meet many of the celebrities and have a great time. It was a wonderful experience, and I can’t wait to go back next year.

By ANGIE SMITH
smith@suujournal.com

FOOD IN REVIEW

Hermic’s nostalgia adds unique flavor

Walking into Hermic’s Drive In on Main Street is like taking a step back in time, into the early 1950s.

The restaurant is a throwback to a bygone era, with its wooden booths, chrome counter, and old-fashioned decor.

The menu is a mix of traditional American fare, including burgers, hot dogs, and fries, as well as some unexpected items like deep-fried mushrooms and onion rings.

I tried the pulled pork and it was delicious. The meat was tender and juicy, and the sauce had a nice smoky flavor.

Overall, Hermic’s Drive In is a unique and nostalgic experience that is definitely worth a visit.

By RICHARD PAYSON
payson@suujournal.com

Tuesday releases

The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters

by Brian Koppelman and David Levien

Directed by Gary Ross

Based on the true story of Billy Mitchell and Steve Wiebe, The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters is an inspiring tale of friendship, competition, and the spirit of gaming.

Billy Mitchell and Steve Wiebe are two video game champions who vie for the top spot in the classic arcade game Donkey Kong.

Their feud became the stuff of legend, and their battle for the world record became a symbol of the passion and dedication that drives the gaming community.

The movie is a heartwarming story of friendship, rivalry, and the love of gaming.

Source

www.buffer.com
Fat Friday

Mardi Gras event entertains, fundraises

By DANA BELL

Students crowded into the Sharwan Smith Center on Friday for SUU’s annual Mardi Gras celebration. Team Pelican of SUSSA activities vice president, said there were no complaints and said Mardi Gras went well. “I think people enjoyed themselves,” he said.

Pellicer said there were no complaints and said Mardi Gras went well. “I think people enjoyed themselves,” he said.

Leibhardt said he went to Mardi Gras a bit early and at 2 p.m. in the Starlight Room of the Sharwan Smith Center. The event was sponsored by SUU in 2002.

Mardi Gras was to have a variety of activities, attract a lot of students, and said it went well. “I really (liked) the festivities going on,” she said. “It was really memorable.”

Nick Yamashita, a sophomore chemistry major from Cedar City, said Mardi Gras was a blast. “I really enjoyed it. I went to the center and everything that they are,” Penrod said. “It was really memorable.”

Alicia Hoggan, a senior dance major from Fairfield, Calif., said the show has been delayed for about three weeks because of licensing problems. The original opening was supposed to be Feb. 20, Arave said.

The delay was because Stage 2 Productions could not get permission from the Center for the Arts to use the stage. “I was glad there was food,” he said. “I was glad there was food.”

Brooks said the goal for Mardi Gras was to have a variety of activities, attract a lot of students, and said it went well. “I really (liked) the festivities going on,” she said. “It was really memorable.”

Journeys concert combines dance, technology forms

By DANA BELL

Journeys Faculty Dance Concert featured a variety of dance numbers including ballet, tap, and modern styles. According to the prologue, the Journeys production is adapted from the novel, "The Princess Bride" by William Goldman, who also wrote the screenplay.

Assistant professor of dance art, Wade Miller, combined dance, technology, and music to create a unique and entertaining experience for the audience. "We are using music in a way that is not usually done," he said. "We are using technology to enhance the dance experience." The concert took place on Monday, March 12, in the SUU Auditorium.

The Journeys Faculty Dance Concert featured a variety of dance numbers including ballet, tap, and modern styles. According to the prologue, the Journeys production is adapted from the novel, "The Princess Bride" by William Goldman, who also wrote the screenplay.

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Whenever I’m ill, all I want to do is snuggle up in my cozy blue-striped pajamas with my green velour blanket and watch dozens of movies from my living room couch until my medicine knocks me out, which is precisely what I’ve been doing the past three days.

What I didn’t expect, though, was to completely disregard all of the handsome new releases and instead fall in love again with Alfred Hitchcock.

I first saw The Birds when I was a wee lass and visiting my dad one Saturday night. I was concurrently terrified, disturbed and fascinated with Hitchcock’s creation and have regularly screened the flick ever since.

My most recent viewing of the fowl-fest was over the weekend with my wingman Skott, who hadn’t seen The Birds since the 20th Century.

And, on a sidenote, Skott graciously humored me when I rewound and rewatched (laughing hysterically the entire time) my favorite scene — the part near the beginning when Melanie Daniels is in the motorboat trying to look cute for Mitch as she approaches shore and she’s unceremoniously dive-bombed in the head by a wayward seagull. Classic.

Everything about The Birds is perfect. The dialogue. The costumes. The tension. The attack sequences. The sound effects. The running children who look genuinely horrified as they bounce stuffed crows on their shoulders. Sheer Hitchcockian brilliance.

But somehow, in all of my adoration for all of these years, I had never noticed something rather significant about The Birds. It has no soundtrack.

And here I thought No Country for Old Men was innovative!

For a film to stand on its own, with no Danny Elfman or Hans Zimmer/Lisa Gerrard masterpiece to back its emotional states, is unheard of. And for me to go decades before noticing a lack of music in a movie is equally unheard of.

In fact, I even recently wrote a paper about how essential music is in movies, television and video games.

Yet there I was, nestled under my fuzzy blanket for one hour and 49 minutes before realizing that there was, in fact, only the screeching of birds and screaming of bloodied victims filling my ears.

Wow. That is some serious skill.

Suffice it to say that the next time I fall ill, I will most definitely host another date night with the filmmaking prowess of Mr. Hitchcock.
Sizzling

Firedancers, roasted meats prominent in cultural luau

By Anna Cole

The Polynesian Club sponsored a luau Saturday evening, entertaining guests with dancers and foods from several different Polynesian islands.

The evening’s name was representative of what one would find at a Hawaiian luau, said Janice Ursua, a sophomore undeclared major from Kauai, Hawaii, and member of the Polynesian Club.

Basically, this is what you would see if you went to a Hawaiian luau, she said. You see some sort of Pitcairn Island girls, for the Polynesian islands you might be, this is what you’re going to get,” she said.

Guests were served their dinners to a background of the students’ performances.

The Polynesian Club sponsored a luau in Kauai, Hawaii, and a member of the Polynesian Club, dances;

Members of the Polynesian Club sponsored a luau in Kauai, Hawaii, and a member of the Polynesian Club.

Back to top

Beliss generates bliss

Beliss, a biweekly symposium with the companies Beliss and Melissa Underwood, perform a festive sort of indie-pop in the vein of late Elliott Smith than The Rentals.

They often mix with a sense of calm such as this kind, generally on Melissa’s side, let alone him in more substantive matters. Beliss, though, manages to stay on the path of any potential musical pitfalls. Each track as an emotional journey to be heard from song to song.

Six students received SUU Writing Contest Scriblerian Awards in four different categories Friday after a reading of their winning works in the Alfond Lounge.

Beliss, from top left: Daryl Brown, a Salt Lake City resident, performs a traditional fire-knife dance; the SUU Ballroom Dance Company performs a routine; Daryl Brown, a Salt Lake City resident, performs a traditional fire-knife dance; the SUU Ballroom Dance Company performs a routine; and Beliss, a Salt Lake City resident, performs a routine.

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Thursday, April 24, 2008

**Green**
Continued from Back Page

Buying recycled products can save money. Making a wise choice on recycled products can save as many as 17 trees and will save 75 percent less water than making paper from virgin fiber, says the EPA. So the next time you purchase paper of any type be on the lookout for the blue recycling symbol on the package or in the advertisement. The EPA says guidelines on the content of all types of recycled products are available at the Web site of its recycling program. Paper is the country’s No. 1 disposable material. For every 100 pounds of household trash, 55 pounds are paper. Separating paper and other paper products makes sense for the economy and the environment.

**Bells**
Continued from Back Page

directing a handbell choir at his high school, he said.

"It has taken years to get to where we are," he said.

Wylie said most people only want to join something once it has been well established, so what was difficult at first to recruit and keep ringers.

"We must actually have extra ringers for the first time ever," Wyllie said.

The choir now boasts only one or two ringers in a season compared to about five per season in years past, Wyllie said.

Wylie said when she first started the choir she placed an advertisement in the BYU newspaper in order to recruit ringers.

"Now people come through word of mouth," Wylie said.
While sifting through ideas the past week for what I would write in my final Movie Maven blog entry, I considered chronicling the high points of the classic Bedknobs and Broomsticks, the low points of the ridiculous One Missed Call and the rom-com points of the sublime Roman Holiday, but, admittedly, I wanted to write about something more endearing and bittersweet: the fated Fox series Firefly and its companion film Serenity.

In my few months in the newsroom I’ve picked up a few non-journalistic habits: quoting shows from MTV, testing my geographic knowledge with online games and watching lots and lots of movie trailers on my beautiful, giant iMac, to name a few.

I also gained a love for Joss Whedon.

For years I’ve meant to watch Firefly, and it’s been sitting in my Netflix queue for months, but I finally watched it and loved it.

I never thought I’d be one for western sci-fi, but the balance of a low budget, tremendously clever wit, heartfelt tragedy and brilliant music were a perfect fit for me.

For weeks I watched and re-watched every episode of Firefly, plus the commentaries and bonus features, and I didn’t want it to end. The crew of the ship was the perfect dysfunctional family and my parasocial partners-in-crime, and I had just learned all of the words to the theme song (“… take me out to the black, tell ‘em I ain’t comin’ back …”).

Luckily, Marc and Rachel also loaned me Serenity (yay, thanks!).

The film picks up shortly after the series storyline ended and takes it to new levels of coldness, darkness and genuine heroism. And Jayne was back with lots of guns and muscles and attitude. Exactly what I had hoped for.

I look at Firefly and Serenity much like I do the Lord of the Rings films. They focus on a mismatched group of people on a quest — simple on the surface, but so well-written in their mannerisms and dialogue and interactions that they become essential cogs in the gears of fantasy, and if any part is missing the machine suffers horribly. Even casual fans recognized this.

How many freshly cancelled, very short-lived television shows are resurrected by the dedicated public to become a motion picture and subsequently increase in popularity? Now that is a mark of true quality.

Fortunately for Mr. Whedon, the cast and crew of Firefly and everyone who “gets it,” Serenity granted the closure we previously lacked.

And to the executives at Fox: “I don’t care, I’m still free. You can’t take the sky from me …”