

Article 6

Journalists Strike Online: Visibility, Field and *The Huffington Post*

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Abstract

Online journalism's new economy of attention is bringing about profound changes in how journalism is defined and how individuals, organizations and causes achieve visibility. The 2011 strike against the online news organization *The Huffington Post* exemplifies how competing interests seek to circumscribe the field new means to gain attention. Journalists on both sides of the strike sought to discursively impose a vision of the field of journalism and define the relations between content producers and distributors. The institutionalization process that online journalism is currently undergoing involves both the reproduction of established journalistic structures and the opening of new possibilities through the struggles of actors in the field.

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Online journalism is undergoing a process of institutionalization in the US and elsewhere, which involves both the reproduction of established journalistic structures and the opening of new possibilities through the struggles of actors in the field. The 2011 strike against the online news organization *The Huffington Post* was an attempt by competing interests to circumscribe online journalism and demonstrates how journalists, writing online, employ new means to gain attention. This analysis of influential blogs about the strike shows how news organizations and journalists sought to define online journalism through traditional means of directing attention such as a strike and opinion pieces, and means specific to the internet medium. Controversy over the business model of *The Huffington Post* serves to highlight changes in journalism as it moves online.

The Huffington Post is a blog and internet newspaper that aggregates news and commentary from a number of sources and writers. In 2011, Visual Art Source (an art-focused publishing company) and The Newspaper Guild (a union for news writers) declared a labor strike against *The Huffington Post*, asserting that their members would cease to contribute to the online news site. The propensity to attain and direct attention is important at the institutional and individual level in the field of journalism and the strike was employed as a method for making certain aspects of the field visible. Refusals to write for *The Huffington Post* and the proliferation of articles about the strike sought to draw attention to a perceived injustice against contributors as well as transgressions against journalistic norms. While the strike is a political practice with a long historical precedence, this particular strike occurred primarily online and strategically employed means for directing attention and gaining visibility that are unique to the internet, such as blog reposts and hyperlinks. The strike, its methods for attaining publicity, and *The Huffington Post's* response highlighted the new forms of visibility entailed in online journalism, changes in the economy of attention, and the struggles to define the field of journalism in the digital age.

This account of the strike against *The Huffington Post* is primarily based on an analysis of online coverage. 25 articles regarding the strike were posted between February 10 and April 4, 2011, across 17 blog and news sites as well as the websites of the major actors in the controversy. The set of articles was limited to posts that contained original material on established blog websites with multiple authors. These include: *Truth Dig*, *Poynter*, *Media Bistro*, *The Wrap*, *Web Pro News*, *The Daily Caller* and *Mediaite*. Relevant articles were also included from the websites of print publications, television channels and their affiliated blogs. Finally, articles were included from the three major institutional actors in the strike: *The Huffington Post*, Visual Art Source and Newspaper Guild. The content of each article was analyzed in terms of a series of broad questions based on a preliminary reading of the articles: Who are the main actors in the article? What is the overall stance of the article regarding the strike against *The Huffington Post*? How does the article define journalism and journalists? And, if the article addresses the concepts of attention or visibility how are they understood?

Figure I: Dates and Sources of the Articles Analyzed in this Study

Date Published	Source
2/10/2011	Newspaper Guild
2/18/2011	Fox News Newspaper Guild
2/21/2011	Truth Dig
2/22/2011	Poynter
2/28/2011	Los Angeles Times Star Tribune
2/28/2011	Visual Art Source
3/1/2011	Newspaper Guild
3/2/2011	The Wrap
3/3/2011	Media Bistro The Wrap
3/4/2011	The Atlantic
3/5/2011	Guardian
3/6/2011	Web Pro News
3/10/2011	New York Times
3/15/2011	Newspaper Guild
3/16/2011	Newspaper Guild
3/17/2011	Examiner The Daily Caller
3/18/2011	The Huffington Post
3/21/2011	Mediaite The Huffington Post
3/29/2011	Mediaite
4/3/2011	Media Bistro

There are limits to the analysis of articles alone, as aspects of the controversy undoubtedly spread through personal communication channels including emails, phone conversations and face-to-face meetings (interestingly, many of the strike's major actors were based in Southern California). However, it was through the articles posted about the strike that writers were able to have their voice enter the public. However, instead of occupying a physical space, the writers constructed the strike through their accounts in blog posts. The digitally "mediated space of appearance," provided by the internet, attained preeminence in the controversy as the space in which "judgments and decisions are presented and represented, debated... and made" (Silverstone, 2007, p. 30).

Moments of conflict or “social dramas” bring more stable processes of structure into relief, not only for social scientists seeking to study these phenomena, but also for the agents within the field itself (Turner, 1974, p. 35). The field at the center of this conflict is journalism, which specializes in making certain parts of the social world visible through the application of journalistic norms, values and practices (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 36) *The Huffington Post* as an institution within the field of journalism is engaged in this activity of making itself, its contributors, and particular stories and information visible. *The Huffington Post's* employees and contributors aggregate and present information to make it visible to the public. At the same time, through their contributions to *The Huffington Post*, these journalists and writers intend to increase the visibility of their own profiles or causes. The strike against *The Huffington Post* employs the same logic of visibility to gain recognition not only for the contributions of unpaid writers, but also to assert a particular conception of journalism.

Journalism as a Field

Journalism is a field, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (2005), in that it consists of a system of agents and their forces which determine a set of structures at a given time, wherein each of the agents is also defined by its particular position within the field (p. 30). As well as the common use of “field” to designate an area of expertise or a profession, Bourdieu’s use of the term draws on metaphors from physics, as the relation between entities in space over time, and, optics, as the possible or entire span visible through an instrument at a given [time](#). The visual connotations of field are particularly important in journalism in two significant ways. First, journalism specializes in making certain events, issues and individuals visible by organizing them in accordance with a set of journalistic norms, and practices, laying claim to “the legitimate vision of the social world” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 36). These norms are often implicit or unspoken but are at other times open to struggles between actors that attempt to impose a vision of the field itself. Second, visibility, exposure, or attention is essential to the cultural and economic capital of institutions and actors within the field of journalism. In sum, journalists and news institutions are engaged in dual processes of making aspects of the world visible and, themselves, vying for visibility. The struggle for visibility is also a struggle to define the criteria for ascertaining visibility.

The struggle to define a field often consists of attempts to conserve the privileged position of those already within the field or attempts by newcomers to better their own position or to gain entry. In other words, they pertain to the accumulation of cultural, social and economic capital. In online journalism, cultural capital is largely defined by visibility at the level of institutions that compete for audiences and journalists who compete for audiences and institutional affiliation. Social capital can be accumulated through institutional membership and the distribution of resources through networks. Economic capital is also crucial in the competition between media outlets and the viability of journalism as a profession. Another implication for defining the field of journalism relates to the quality of news; journalistic training and integrity have a role in providing the public with more reliable information. While journalism is never objective, some actors may be better placed to provide more reliable accounts than others. The strike against *The Huffington Post* represents a technique for gaining visibility employed by journalists that sought to assert a vision of the field itself.

Striking Against *The Huffington Post*

Strikes are a medium through which workers express their interests and their complaints. They can be directed against a single institution by its workforce and take the form of a physical picket line formed outside the geographical location of the institution. However, strikes can also take on more explicitly semiotic forms including general strikes or strikes in solidarity with other workers. The action against *The Huffington Post* retains the communicative structure of a strike even though the picket line is “electronic,” those on strike are not employees of *The Huffington Post* in the strict sense, and the target institution stands as a representative of the more generalized relations between online content providers and the owners of the means of content distribution (Rosen Lum, 2011). Strikes are always intended to convey meaning. However, in the case of this strike the representation becomes more important than the act of stopping work, and the public platform for the strike is mediated through the internet.

The original strike was declared on 28 February 2011 by Visual Art Source's publisher and co-editor Bill Lasarow on the editorial blog of the Visual Art Source website. Criticism had been directed at *The Huffington Post's* practices for some time. For instance, *The New York Times's* Bill Keller (2011) authored a scathing article "All the Aggregation That's Fit to Aggregate" addressing *The Huffington Post's* business strategy of using unpaid labor and aggregating news from other organizations. However, the site's critics gained more traction after America Online's (AOL) acquisition of *The Huffington Post* for \$315 million in February 2011.

The Visual Art Source strike was the first industrial action against *The Huffington Post* to gain notoriety. Staff writers for Visual Art Source previously contributed to *The Huffington Post* and material had been cross-posted on the two organizations' websites. The call to strike represented building criticism of *The Huffington Post* and constituted a struggle between institutions and agents within the field of journalism. To use Victor Turner's parlance, the strike was a "breach of regular, norm-governed social relations... within the same system of social relations... or field of social interaction" (1974, p. 38). The strike highlighted more lasting structural relations, or at least cleavages of the *longue durée*.

As a representative of Visual Art Source's staff of writers, Lasarow formally declared the strike. His open letter committed the writers to the strike and implored other writers and organizations to follow suit. Addressing *The Huffington Post's* editor-in-chief Arianna Huffington, Lasarow stipulated two demands, "First, a pay schedule must be proposed and steps initiated to implement it for all contributing writers and bloggers. Second, paid promotional material must no longer be posted alongside editorial content" (2011). The first demand called for the recognition of an injustice perpetrated by Huffington against professional writers and sought for this injustice to be redressed through future payments for contributors. The more tacit aspect of this first demand sought to draw attention to the status of journalists as "trained and qualified professionals" (Lasarow, 2011). The second demand was more specifically intended to address the demarcation between "editorial content" and "paid promotional material;" the former belonging to the field of journalism and the latter being the purview of marketing and public relations.

Lasarow's open letter accused Arianna Huffington of unethical practices and hypocrisy, and the accusation was seconded by other writers that sought to propagate a scandal. The accusations were launched on behalf of contributors of *The Huffington Post* and journalists in general. John Thompson (2000) links the modern conception of scandal to the emergence of journalism as a profession. "Mediated scandals," for Thompson, are events in which surreptitious morally discreditable actions are disclosed by the media with potentially damaging results for the implicated individuals. Lasarow's (2011) denunciations of Huffington were moored to a discourse of ethics:

It is unethical to expect trained and qualified professionals to contribute quality content for nothing [and] cannibalize the investment of other organizations... It is extremely unethical to not merely blur but eradicate the distinction between the independent and informed voice of news and opinion and the voice of a shill.

Accusations are, also, always calls for recognition for those who have been wronged and recognition requires visibility. It is not enough to simply cease to write for *The Huffington Post*, but the strike has to be made public to demonstrate how journalists have been mistreated. Nor is it sufficient, because of the complexities of the issue, to accuse Huffington without attributing the wrongdoing to an understanding of power (Boltanski, 1999, p. 62). In fact, one blogger compares Huffington's argument, that "writers had a choice" to contribute or not, to similar proclamations "made by the managers of sweatshops in the Dominican Republic and Mexico" (Valen, 2011). The rhetoric of the strike borders on what Luc Boltanski calls the "grandiose affaire" in defense of the working class *en masse* (1999, p. 62).

Other writers such as Cassandra Yorgey (2011) and Lauri Lebo (2011) accused Huffington of hypocrisy, primarily based on the disparity between her stances in her book *Third World America* and her actual treatment of her contributors. The practices of *The Huffington Post* are no secret, but Yorgey conjectures "the average reader doesn't realize that nearly all *Huffington Post* writers work for \$0 [and] the average

reader has no idea how writing as a business works anywhere, let alone on the internet” (2011). As such, the strike was intended to bring attention to the issue and to build a scandal around Huffington as a public figure.

The publicity of the scandal also aims to highlight perceived transgressions of journalistic norms against which the strike’s proponents attempted to assert, or reassert, a dominant vision of the field. It was evident in the debate over journalistic distinctions that “in order to fight one another people have to agree on the areas of disagreement” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 36). The two conflicting parties ostensibly agree that journalism is a field for which distinctions among types of content and types of practitioners are required. The majority (80%) of the 25 articles surveyed for this analysis addressed distinctions between what is and is not journalism regardless of their stance on *The Huffington Post* or the strike. However, they emphasized different boundaries. Lasarow and the strike’s supporters insisted that journalism be delimited from public relations and advertising. Huffington’s representative replied in kind, but emphasized the division, at *The Huffington Post*, between paid staff and voluntary contributors over distinctions between editorials and advertising. *The Huffington Post* had difficulty maintaining the legitimacy of a distinction between staff and bloggers as the site transformed from a blog community to an online newspaper. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that bloggers contributed significantly to the website’s popular and financial success. The struggle to define and impose limits on the journalistic field has implications for the quantity of possible participants, and the quality of journalistic content.

The lower barriers to participation in publishing on the internet have enabled more people to become producers, but this may also have a deleterious effect on the quality of news. Bourdieu poses the question: how can one “simultaneously defend the conditions necessary for the production of certain kinds of specific, specialized works, without abdicating all democratic concern?” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 46). These concerns over news production in the digital age mirror Walter Benjamin’s (2008) observations of the newspaper, which are worth quoting at length:

For since writing gains in breadth what it loses in depth, the conventional distinction between author and the public that the press has maintained is disappearing in a socially desirable way. The reader is at all times ready to become a writer – that is, a describer or even a prescriber. As an expert – not perhaps in a discipline, but perhaps in a post that he holds – he gains access to authorship. Work itself has its turn to speak. Literary competence is no longer founded on specialized training but is now based on polytechnical education, and thus becomes public property (p. 359-360).

Benjamin was acutely aware of what was lost in the rendering of writing into information in the newspaper publishing industry and he simultaneously praised the potential of newsprint to provide a new mode of expression for the working class, or at least participants from a diversity of fields. *The Huffington Post* does provide a platform for people from various occupations to garner a more or less direct audience for their respective causes. There are definite benefits to the permeability of journalistic barriers that allow non-professional writers to appear in public. On the other hand, this permeability may also allow advertisers and public relations professionals to appear under the pretense of journalism, and the lower barriers to producing news may erode the integrity and reliability of information available to the public. The conditions for entry into the field of journalism and the criteria for gaining increased visibility are defined by, and also define, the dominant vision of journalism. The status of individual journalists is also intimately linked to the amount of visibility attained by the institutions for which they produce content.

Visibility in Online Journalism

Journalists are not only engaged in an act of making certain issues or stories more visible, but also compete for visibility to be successful in the field. Journalists and bloggers are likely to gain in status as well as exposure by being published in *The Huffington Post*. Patricia Nickel (2011) argues, with a focus on the academic world, that institutional affiliations are collected as status signs to emblazon authors’ resumes and online profiles. This notion is readily transposed from the academy to the field of journalism. “Affiliation function” works by “qualifying the text in relationship with an institution and... allows for the institutional extraction of value from those individuals who ‘author’ it” (Nickel, 2011). The issue of

increasing visibility for journalists, or exposing journalists to a larger audience, featured as a significant aspect of the discourse in relation to the strike against *The Huffington Post*. Around half (56%) of the articles mentioned the exposure or visibility that *The Huffington Post's* writers garnered from their contributions, and some posts even described this as a form of non-monetary payment. Tom Hayes' (2011) article for *The Huffington Post* "OK, Call Me a Digital Scab" emphasized this new economy of attention in an account of the unraveling controversy. Journalists, according to Hayes, will continue to make a living from their trade, but they will do so in new ways that require them to be "entrepreneurs" instead of "employees" and to market themselves with "loss leaders, like an unpaid post here and there." In this new environment, Hayes claims, "attention is cash;" the new currency of the economy of attention is "traffic, cross-links, friend shares, tweets and retweets;" and *The Huffington Post* has built a powerful infrastructure to concentrate the attention of a large, otherwise dispersed, internet audience.

This visibility and status is a significant enticement for authors, especially those seeking a first foothold in the field. Articles siding with the strike framed the issue of exposure as a pretense to exploitation. Yet cultural capital is not always convertible into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 16). For example, Yorgey of the *Examiner* wrote: "The argument HuffPo makes is basically that they pay in exposure, however one cannot pay rent or purchase groceries with exposure" (2011). Institutions such as *The Huffington Post* develop means to convert attention (audiences) into revenue through advertising, but writers are deprived of this direct revenue opportunity. News institutions, journalists and issue advocates are enmeshed in multiple competitions for visibility within the changing field of journalism. The strike, as a technique for making visible, bolstered its potential attention through an increase in the number of participants and through its publicization by various institutions.

The escalation of the strike unfolded in three ways: additional media workers went on strike; the strike gained publicity through a collection of online news posts; and, online journalists developed strategic networks to direct flows of attention. This escalation of the strike represented a "mounting crisis" wherein the initial breach threatened to spread and become generalized to the "dominant cleavage in the widest set of relevant social relations to which the conflicting or antagonistic parties belong" (Turner, 1974, p. 38). Lasarow (2011) may well have been right in his pessimistic prediction that Huffington would reply: "Who needs these people anyway? They are not even employees." But mounting public criticism could inflict damage to *The Huffington Post's* reputation. The swelling number of media workers associated with the strike and connections between various institutions lent increased social and cultural capital to the strike.

The Newspaper Guild's decision to join the strike escalated the controversy. The Newspaper Guild is a national union of media workers with 26,000 members including freelance bloggers and traditional employees. This was a significant boost to the 50 employees of Visual Art Source who initiated the strike (Nelson, 2011). On March 16, 2011 Rebecca Rosen Lum posted on The Newspaper Guild blog: "The Newspaper Guild is calling on unpaid writers of *The Huffington Post* to withhold their work in support of a strike launched by Visual Art Source in response to the company's practice of using unpaid labor."

Rosen Lum reposted the original demands of Visual Art Source and added ways in which guild members and non-members could further the cause. The Newspaper Guild already expressed criticism of Huffington on their blog. A post by Lauri Lebo on February 10, 2011, entitled "Hey Arianna, Live Up to Your Ideals!" criticized her business practices and implored her to live up to the support for workers that she purported in her own writing. While the striking media workers generated the drama to be covered in the press, The Newspaper Guild's publicity resources and online news coverage were the strike's major sources of power. In other words, the "mediated image" of the strike defined its reality, and the mediated space was the only site where the strikers appeared in public (Silverstone, 2007, p. 4, 27).

The strike was reported across a number of media outlets, and in the fashion of online content, the original declaration and demands were reposted with links to direct readers to the original blog. The ways in which new media direct attention differ from that of traditional mass media and shape the type and temporality of attention available to online strikes. Daniel Dayan (2009) argues that the recurring schedules of central television demand a "collective attention, of simultaneous viewing" (p. 22). The propensity for television to draw attention to a set of events or issues, or its agenda-setting function, plays

a key role in constructing a political community (McCombs, 1972). While television and print maintain a presence in the current media environment, the strike against *The Huffington Post* was primarily publicized online through blog posts and the new modes for directing attention that have emerged in the online media environment.

Dayan (2009) contrasts television with the types of attention that are propagated online. While the former is contemporaneous, directed and singular, new media attention is polyrhythmic, discontinuous, fragmentary and erratic (p. 22, 26). For Dayan, new media content lacks the publicness attained by traditional media, and instead tends, "to circulate along personal networks without ever being ascertained by a gate-keeping institution. They tend to function like rumors." (p. 24) Dayan's conception of new media delimits it to two roles, either, anticipating the "monstrations" of central television or responding to them. (p. 20) Premonstration and remonstration are important concepts in understanding the relationship between traditional and new media with regard to their presentation of news. However, the division of labor proposed by Dayan omits types of publicness enabled through new media, the role of new online gatekeepers, and strategies that do not rely on a relationship to print or television.

The degree of potential visibility for an article or institution online is largely dependent on network visibility, its prominence within a network or set of networks. In this way, networks are a source of social and cultural capital. In addition to an analysis of the content of the set of articles related to the strike against *The Huffington Post*, each of the relevant links between articles were recorded. 35 percent of the articles about *The Huffington Post* strike linked back to Visual Art Source's original announcement of the strike. On the other hand, the article from the *Guardian* was the only one to link back to *The Huffington Post*, specifically to an article about Huffington's book, and did so on March 3rd, 2011, approximately midway through the date range covered in the sample of articles. *The Huffington Post* did not post an article directly addressing the strike until March 18th, but their site includes relevant contextual information including their "About Us" page. Even after *The Huffington Post* addressed the strike directly, most articles failed to link to their website. The quantity and quality of links to a website can serve to make the linked website more visible. For example, one way to increase the traffic to a site is to create links to the site from other locations. Conversely, declining to link to a particular web property is one way to deprive that site of attention.

The Huffington Post's Response

The Huffington Post already has a high level of visibility, but in this case, was forced to directly address the controversy. Institutions such as *The Huffington Post* have taken up the role of news gatekeepers online, and rather than a dichotomy between traditional media that guaranty publicness and new media which cannot, there is a hierarchy of more and less visible news institutions with new centers emerging on the internet, as this medium becomes a more important resource and people spend more of their time online. As such, the division of labor between central media and new media is complicated by divisions internal to the online environment (Dayan, 2009, p.26). *The Huffington Post* is one such institution that has become an established online news source, drawing over 26 million visitors per month (Lasarow, 2011). A large amount of its content is, in Dayan's terms, "remonstrated" (p. 27). That is, many of *The Huffington Post's* stories are cross-posted on other sites, and the site specializes in aggregating news from other sources. But the organization also employs regular staff to gather and report news on regular journalistic beats. As such, *The Huffington Post* acts as an online gatekeeper for original and reposted content, a hub of connections and content for an online audience who may not have the time or ability to otherwise navigate the multitude of content on the internet.

Mario Ruiz, the Senior Vice President of media relations for *The Huffington Post*, authored a post responding to critics. First, *The Huffington Post* employs staff writers; second, writers post on the site of their own free will and retain ownership of their work; and third, the site provides writers with a large readership, and this attention represents a payoff for their work. The first argument addresses journalistic norms recognizing distinctions between journalists and bloggers, as Ruiz (2011) claims:

We employ a newsroom of 160 full-time editors and reporters, 17 of whom we've hired since last Monday. However, we make a distinction between our newsroom staffers and our group bloggers.

According to Ruiz, newsroom staff are trained professionals belonging to the field of journalism, while most of the bloggers "are not professional writers" and consist of "officeholders, students... professionals... professors, entertainers, activists and heads of nonprofits" and, as such, their contributions do not qualify for monetary reimbursement. His second argument relates to intellectual property asserting that "*The Huffington Post* makes no claim of ownership over their posts, and bloggers can cross-post on other sites." The final counter-argument made in Ruiz's blog post addressed visibility as the reason why writers contribute to the site for free, asserting that it is:

the same reason they go on cable TV shows every night for free: because they are passionate about their ideas, want them to be heard by the largest possible audience, and understand the value that that kind of visibility can bring.

In short, writers contribute to *The Huffington Post* in return for the visibility it brings them and their cause. The strike represented a reaction against broader cleavages that are emerging as a larger portion of journalism moves online, and Ruiz attempts to impose a new vision of the field accounting for technological and economic changes.

Ruiz attempts to redefine the field of journalism in a way that respects traditional criteria but adapts them to the digital environment and the interests of *The Huffington Post*. However, on March 29, 2011, the well-known blogger Jonathon Tasini filed a class-action lawsuit against Arianna Huffington and Kenneth Lerer of *The Huffington Post* "on behalf of more than 9,000 writers and other content providers and [asked] for at least \$105 million in damages" (Ortutay, 2011). The controversy began a new stage in the legal courts in addition to the court of public opinion.

Conclusion

This account of the strike against *The Huffington Post* is not intended to adjudicate between the arguments of each side of the controversy or somehow resolve the conflict. Rather, I attempt to highlight the ways in which online journalism operates through new modes of visibility and attention that pose difficulties for the way in which journalism has traditionally been framed and monetized as a profession. A number of topics have been raised including: the new economy of attention and means through which attention flows are directed; the dramaturgy of strikes and the expressive mechanisms of online strikes; the links between visibility and economic, cultural and social capital; and, struggles to demarcate the field of journalism. These topics are likely to require increased attention as online journalism is institutionalized and social dramas are played out in online settings.

The strike against *The Huffington Post* exemplifies the importance of the space of "mediated appearance" in contemporary social dramas, even those that employ conventional techniques such as strikes and genres such as scandal (Silverstone, 2007; Thompson, 2000). The strategies of visibility employed by the strike's advocates must be understood in terms of their social and technological contexts. Cleavages between content producers and distributors of online news and the norms were brought to the fore and this liminal moment provided a space in which competing interests were able to compete to reshape journalistic norms. Online articles constituted the primary means through which the strike was articulated and controversy around *The Huffington Post's* practices was debated. The means through which attention can be gained and directed via the internet differ considerably from print and broadcast media. As the internet becomes an increasingly important source of news, further conflicts will undoubtedly arise between parties trying to impose their own visions of the criteria for visibility.

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The Huffington Post was founded by Arianna Huffington, Kenneth Lerer and Jonah Peretti. The site began as a blog community for liberal elites; over the next five years it increasingly became an online newspaper.

Visual Art Source is an art-focused publishing agency based in Southern California that encompasses a portfolio of online and print publications including Art Scene. Visual Art Source came to an agreement with *The Huffington Post* in 2010 to cross-post their original material from their sites on *The Huffington Post*, but the deal broke down in early 2011.

Support for the strike came primarily from an internal faction of The Newspaper Guild called the guild freelance unit. The call to strike was also associated with the larger Communication Workers of America.

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