

**The Publicity Club of New York presents  
WEBLOGS: WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW AS PR PROS  
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Well, good afternoon, everybody.

The Publicity Club of New York is supposed to make these people smarter about media, is that what you said? (Peter Himler, PCNY President and Moderator: Smarter, less annoying, more helpful, you know, the whole gamut.) OK, well my specialty is the smarter part. I try to make people smarter about media, that's my job. I teach journalism at NYU, that's the purpose of my weblog. The sites associated with my colleagues here on the panel are ones that you should all know and follow just if you want to be a cool, hip person in New York and if you want to know what's going on in the world of New York media, then all of the sites represented here today are important for you to know.

How many of you know what weblogs are? Raise your hands. OK, how many of you use them semi-regularly? That's pretty good. How many people don't know why everyone's buzzing about them and can't see what the fuss is about? How many people don't know what the fuss is about and are embarrassed to admit it? See, it's a lot of you. Well, there are reasons why the newspapers and the trades and even the big news organizations are buzzing about blogging, and some of those reasons actually go quite deep into the history of media and the history, in fact, that has created your field. So I'm going to give you a little history lesson that brought us to this point.

Public relations is something that people do for a living, as a profession, as something that you can join. Has a history, it started pretty much around the turn of the century, early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and it was a reaction to a particular event. And it was in reaction to an event in the world of media and politics which is that public opinion, public sentiment, the reaction of large publics had become much more a factor in world events, had become something that statesmen and businessmen and corporate leaders and military people could not ignore in any calculation they made. And the reason why public opinion was suddenly a new factor in events, of course, had to do with the growth of the media and the growth of national media, national magazines, newspapers that spread the same word across the nation, the telegraph, which gave instant communication to news. And this recognition that, for example, in peace negotiations after World War I, every statesman there would have to play to public opinion at home because during the negotiations themselves reports were reverberating, people were reacting, his aides were telling him, "That really caused a furor at home," that changes his stance in the negotiations. Public opinion is a factor in events, and public relations arose to deal with this factor. Just as the profession of journalism arose to take this new power to inform public opinion and professionalize it, add standards, add values, training. All these things happened at the same time. And that's how you got here today.

Well, all these things are coming undone. Today. And that's how we got to this luncheon. Because that very kind of power over public opinion to speak from the center to the nation is what's slowly being undone in the world of media as we shift from a one-to-many world to a many-to-many world where there are many producers and many channels and where the barriers to entry are not as high. And so the media world is being turned, to some degree, upside down by changes in media and in communication generally that are driving change all over the world. And in my world, the world of journalism, the world of the press, it simply means that the press isn't owned by a few anymore. The press is not owned by a few anymore. And that thing that we call the press, which is just sort of part of the media, a particularly socially important part, has in fact been spread. It's still owned by *The New York Times*, it's still owned by *Newsday*, it's still owned by major media. But it also has new owners, individuals; people who were formally part of the audience are now part of the press because of weblogs, because of citizens' media, generally.

I'll wrap up in this way: blogging is sort of the visible tip of something that is much bigger that it, and is going to change the world and is in fact changing the world right now. And that is the evolution of all the tools of mass media, from professional hands and corporate hands into public

hands. The digitalization of media has also been the democratization of media tools. Everybody has a digital camera, right? Everybody now is going to have digital video. You can edit digital video on a home computer, you now have a TV studio in your living room and it's that effect where the rapidly falling cost and difficulty of communication is turning the form people formerly known as "the audience", which is what I call the public, "people formerly known as the audience", into producers of media themselves. And blogging is a part of that, but it's only one part of that. So that's the bigger picture we should focus on.

If you come to NYU, you see, we try to make you smarter.

Thank you.