

THESIS

OLD MEDIA, NEW MEDIA: IS THE NEWS RELEASE DEAD YET?
HOW SOCIAL MEDIA ARE CHANGING
THE WAY WILDFIRE INFORMATION IS BEING SHARED

Submitted By

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ABSTRACT

OLD MEDIA, NEW MEDIA: IS THE NEWS RELEASE DEAD YET?

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA ARE CHANGING

THE WAY WILDFIRE INFORMATION IS BEING SHARED

This qualitative study examines the use of news releases and social media by public information officers (PIO) who work on wildfire responses, and journalists who cover wildfires. It also checks in with firefighters who may be (unknowingly or knowingly) contributing content to the media through their use of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Though social media is extremely popular and used by all groups interviewed, some of its content is unverifiable (Ma, Lee, & Goh, 2014). More conventional ways of doing business, such as the news release, are filling in the gaps created by the lack of trust on the internet and social media sites and could be why the news release is not dead yet.

The roles training, friends, and colleagues play in the adaptation of social media as a source is explored. For the practitioner, there are updates explaining what social media tools are most helpful to each group. For the theoretician, there is news about changes in agenda building and agenda setting theories caused by the use of social media. Clues are found about the diffusion of this innovation as it applies to social media.

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OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The objective of this study is to examine the use of news releases by the transmitters (public information officers who work for incident management teams that manage wildfires) and the receivers, (journalists who cover wildfires) and what role friends and colleagues play in the adaptation of social media as a source. Is everyone filling in the verifiable gaps presented by social media with the more conventional ways of doing business, like the news release, and could the lack of trust on social media sites be why the news release is not dead yet?

This study contains the results of qualitative interviews with members of these two groups, as well as interviews with the firefighters and incident commanders who knowingly or unknowingly are transmitting information about wildfires to the media with their use of social media. This study examines how all the groups are using news releases and social media and whether social media tools are being used to support or replace the transmission of news releases. This study responds to these questions: Are social media usurping the news release? Are news releases used as the basis for social media products, or are the contents of news releases taken from social media sources? What social media tools are most helpful to each group? What role do news releases and social media play in agenda building and agenda setting? What can the use of social media as a tool for both groups tell us about the diffusion of innovation as it applies to these new electronic platforms for communication?

INTRODUCTION

One has to wonder if social media are killing the news release. The advent of social media has added more tools to supplement communications with the media and the public (Paun, Coman, & Paun, 2010). The news release has been a mainstay for communication between journalists and public relations specialists since the late 1800s (Bates, 2006). However, the little one- pager that tells important stories has evolved over time from carbon copies handed to journalists at a press conference to a few paragraphs transmitted across cyber space using email. New social media tools such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook now give journalists and public relations professionals many more options to tell stories. News releases from public relations specialists, or the information contained in them, now appear on websites, blogs, and Facebook pages. Journalists are also using Twitter, Facebook and web pages to broadcast the news. According to interviews from this study, both parties also use social media to mine for data about a topic. The PIOs call this monitoring, while members of the media call it trolling.

During the summers of 2012, 2013 and 2014 journalists and public relations specialists met in the field to tell the story of the worst wildfire seasons in the western United States in decades (Freedman, 2014; Palmer, 2012). This study will be able to focus on the reported experience of both groups involved in those fire seasons and what worked and did not work while the public waited for news of these disasters.

Ultimately, a better understanding of communication processes between the media and the wildfire incident management teams may help everyone communicate more effectively with the final receiver --the public. Identifying the tools used by both public relations specialists and

the media, and the potential influence of those tools on communication theory, may make everyone's job easier.

Though there seem to be many quantitative studies concerning how practitioners are using the Internet, few qualitative studies were found. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) said, "Quantitative data can add precision to design efforts at the front end of a [qualitative research] project." In that framework, this qualitative study will enrich the discussion about how mass media and public relations professionals are using the Internet and social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH PARADIGM, BIAS, AND SUPPOSITIONS

The Research Paradigm

This qualitative study uses participant observation and interviewing through collaborative interactions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) to examine the theories of agenda setting, agenda building, and diffusion of innovations.

Theories of Agenda Setting, Agenda Building, and Diffusion of Innovations

How media build agendas is changing. Agenda setting is defined as the process of the media portraying information about a topic, increasing public awareness of the topic, and making it salient to the public. By doing this, the media determine the issues the public think and talk about (Severin & Tankard, 1992; Arya, 2011; Fortunato, 2000). However, for this study, the part of the question to be addressed is who or what sets the agenda for the media? Severin and Tankard (1992) say that events occurring in reality are partly responsible and that the media are simply passing information about issues or events as they happen. Funkouser (1973) and Zucker (1978), as reported in Severin and Tankard (1992), recognized that the availability of information, events started by organizations, and reports by government agencies and experts, all contribute to influence how the media set the agenda. This study will add to the knowledge of agenda setting by examining how news releases written by PIOs and social media created by PIOs and other participant observers set agenda for the media.

Hale, (1978), Weaver and Elliot (1985), and Turk, (1986), referenced in Ohl et al (1995), all studied the effect media sources had over the media's agenda and referred to it as agenda building. These studies indicate that news releases have an effect on the media's agenda (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995). The question researchers were asking was if the media are

setting agendas by what they publish what informs *their* choices? How do *they* formulate or build these agendas they are setting for the public? To answer this question early researchers looked at the media's sources. Early studies about agenda building used content analysis and surveys to build on the theory of agenda setting. These studies found that sources wanted to publish information and the media wanted information to publish (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995). Researchers have also called this symbiotic relationship of agenda building, fact by triangulation, information subsidy, or the information triangle (Walters, Walters, & Starr, 1994). Much has changed since these early studies. The media and PIOs now have many more tools available to them in the form of social media. With budgets shrinking, along with the numbers of journalists at media outlets, more journalists rely on content produced by agency and corporate public relations specialists. Journalists are still interested in the truth; however, shrinking budgets and producing for the Internet and social media leave them little time to put together their stories. Nationally, 33% of local television news broadcasts consisted of packaged news stories. The rest was weather, traffic, and sports (Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013).

Michaelson argued (as quoted in Ayres, 1999), "Diffusion of innovation is the process by which any innovation spreads throughout the population." According to Rogers (1983), it is different from other forms of communication because it is about new ideas and what will happen with a new idea is unpredictable and it can lead to social change. There are many things that diffuse innovation. Rogers (1983) lists four elements one needs to diffuse an innovation, they are: the innovation itself; communication channels; time; and social system; or more simply, a group with a common goal. In this study, one could say the innovation is the use of social media by the media and PIOs. There are many communication channels including social media,

schools, and interpersonal communication, such as two people talking. Time is still a factor; how fast this innovation will be adopted may be difficult to determine, but when it is, it will be measurable. The last element needed for diffusion of an innovation is a social system. Journalists and public relations specialists certainly fit that bill. Ayres (1999) says that journalists believe the information on the Internet is unreliable and unverifiable. Journalists may be uncomfortable with using information that lacks cultural and interpersonal linkages. Rogers (1983) points to the importance of professional affiliation and even the links to friends as being vital for the diffusion of an innovation to take place. Not knowing where the information comes from can have disastrous consequences. In the days following the Boston Marathon Bombings, sites like Redit posted speculation about the bombers and even accused a missing college student from Brown University of being suspect. Some of these speculations were printed by the mainstream media, even though they were pure speculation (Henn & Cornish, 2013), and they were ultimately found to be false.

Literature Review

Most of the studies reviewed were quantitative in their approach to adding to the collective knowledge about the role news releases play in agenda setting, agenda building, and how moving to increased use of social media is demonstrating diffusion of innovation theory. Among the articles reviewed, fourteen used some form of content analysis. Fourteen articles were literature reviews. Four used experiment. Four were case studies. There also were three opinion pieces authored by respected researchers.

Based upon the literature reviewed, it is that several factors seem to be at play in influencing the continued use of news releases. They are:

- News releases are still viewed as reliable in both their form and function.

- The communication community is receiving training concerning social media, and the use of social media by corporations and public agencies is on the rise.
- Citizen journalists and Firefighters are contributing content to news stories via their use of the Internet (Ayres, 1999).
- Personal relationships, trust and face-to-face interviews are still highly valued and still part of the equation.

News Releases Remain Reliable in Both Their Form and Function.

The media like news releases. They have been around for a long time (Bates, 2006) and the Associated Press' style guide continues to give clear direction for writing them (Associated Press, 2007). A new computer program called AP Style Guard now allows news release writers to check their style, similar to the way Microsoft Word checks grammar and spelling (Equiom Linguistic Labs Inc., 2012). News releases remain in use and popular amongst institutional communicators because they contain information that is easily verified (Walters, Walters, & Starr, 1994). They contain email addresses, phone numbers and corporate names and addresses. Public affairs specialists (who send them) are usually known by the news media.

Up to now, conventional wisdom was that the majority of the reporting on environmental issues came from news releases (Grunig, 1977). Recently, the literature seems to point to several reasons that the news release is not dead yet. The news media are interested in verifiable information. Public relations people commonly use news releases for attention. They measure their success by how much information is printed from their news releases; while journalists see news releases as a way to cover events and news with minimal staff and time (Walters, Walters, & Starr, 1994; Curtin, 1999). Walters et al (1994) points to several studies, Turk (1985), Martin and Singletary (1981), Sachsman (1976) that all found that the majority of reporting came from

news releases (Walters, Walters, & Starr, 1994). Adding to the need for news releases is that newspaper newsrooms are dealing with a 30% drop in staff since 2000 (Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013). This makes sense since news releases are written in a style that caters to journalists and contain a verifiable source and contact information.

Corporations are subject to public disclosure laws and a news release usually accompanies new information about corporate programs or actions (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995). The Securities and Exchange Commission did not decide to allow companies to use social media to report business and financial information on social media sites until 2013 (Gorenstein, 2013).

The Associated Press style manual is widely used by PIOs and is listed as part of the suggested resources in classes for PIOs. Releases are written in a form close to journalistic rules. Although Walters et al (1994) points out the variations in the quality and length of news releases, journalists count them as a major information tool, even when other sources are available.

The Communication Community is Receiving Training Concerning Social Media, and the Use of Social Media by Corporations and Public Agencies is on the Rise.

All this praise of the news release does not mean that journalists are not taking advantage of the information available to them using the Internet and social media, or more traditional sources such as interviews and news conferences. Programs designed to educate journalists and students of communication in the use of social media are creating new avenues of discovery for the media and helping them become producers and recipients of social media (Hirst & Treadwell, 2011; Hansen, Paul, DeFoster, & Moore, 2011). The media have not been comfortable with social media as sources because they are difficult to verify. However, they will use them at the beginning of a crisis when official sources are lacking. They also use interviews with people on the scene of a crisis (Duhe' & Zoch, 1994-1995), along with news conferences and speeches

(Kiouisis & Stromback, 2010). According to Wigley & Fontenot (2010) and Duhe' & Zoch (1994-1995), the media find many non-official sources, especially in the early stages of a crisis. Wigley and Fontenot (2010) studied the Virginia Tech Shootings and found that the media were using some citizen-generated content. They found 6.5% of the articles they collected contain some citizen-generated content from the Internet.

Educators and editors are teaching seasoned journalists and students how to use social media and these efforts are bearing fruit as journalists are graduating from observers of social media to producers of social media (Hansen, Paul, DeFoster, & Moore, 2011). It is needed. In 2012, the Pew Institute reported that 39% of those surveyed got their news from digital devices (Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013). Public relations professionals are also training in the use of social media as they practice their skills. The Public Relations Society of America suggested that public relations professionals add social media to their crisis management drills (Baron & Philbin, 2009).

Hirst and Treadwell (2011) found that although students use social media, and they understand that it could be a powerful tool, many reported they are uncomfortable using social media. Many students are not proficient or comfortable using social media for producing work related to their field. Adding social media to the curriculum throughout their education has been recognized as an important need to enable them to perform in the changing scene of journalism (Hirst & Treadwell, 2011).

Working journalists are also being trained. Newspaper editors are training their writers in the use of social media and improving their proficiency (Hansen, Paul, DeFoster, & Moore, 2011). For PIOs, news releases are only part of the package they are directed to deliver. On active wildfires, PIOs use a website called Inciweb that contains maps, photos, any news releases

issued and statistics about the fire as well as each incident's contact information. The purpose of InciWeb (<http://inciweb.nwccg.gov/>) is to provide a single source of information to the public about wildfires and to provide a standardized reporting tool for PIOs (National Wildfire Coordinating Group, 2013). The public and the media can follow InciWeb on other social media platforms such as Twitter, and RSS feeds. People learn information in different ways and they need sources they trust that illustrate information in different ways (Monroe, Pennisi, McCaffrey, & Mileti, 2006). As journalists and PIOs get more comfortable with this new media, could it spell death for the news release?

Citizen Journalists and Firefighters are Contributing Content.

Wigley and Fontenot (2011) found that in the case of the Gabriel Gifford shooting, 9.5% of the media used citizen-generated content, an increase of 3% from their study of the Virginia Tech shootings that occurred four years earlier. Not only are the media using more citizen-generated content, but also there is more citizen-generated content to use. As with any innovation, as the media have become more familiar with social media, the numbers of stories that use social media content has increased (Wigley & Fontenot, 2011).

Personal Relationships, Trust, and Face-to-Face Interviews are Still Highly Valued and Still Part of the Equation.

It is not just about news releases and social media-- relationships matter. Ohl et al (1995), compared news releases from two corporate public relations departments involved in a hostile takeover to the news clippings that resulted from those releases. They also interviewed journalists who wrote the stories found in the clippings. They found that although most articles were sourced from news releases, more details were revealed in the clippings when corporate spokespeople were made available and their statements confirmed the information contained in

the news releases (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995). However, though most news comes from news releases, journalists tend to shorten and edit the news releases (Walters, Walters, & Starr, 1994). During the 2011 Shadow Lake Fire, the PIO enlisted a volunteer team to create social media entries to disperse information directly to the public. However, most of the information this team used was from the news releases written by the PIO (St. Denis, Hughes, & Palen, 2012). McCaffrey and Olsen (2012) reported that where the public gets information about wildfires varies by region and depends on the amount of interaction and the relationship agencies have with the communities. Though government sources are preferred, they may not be highly rated. If the information source is deemed local, trustworthy, and allowed for some interactive exchange, it was preferred by respondents. Communication efforts by the agency incident management teams are important. The more communication there is, the higher the public rated the agency's communication efforts (McCaffrey & Olsen, 2012). Stidham et al (2011) compared the results of two case studies of fire information and found that where agency information was lacking the news filled gaps with inaccurate reports. The agency fared better with the public when they provided timely information and lots of it (Stidham, Toman, & McCaffrey, 2011). The National Basketball Association (NBA) is a great example of how such personal contacts can help an organization build good relationships. The NBA trains its players to talk to the media and is extremely proactive in helping the media tell their story (Fortunato, 2000).

News releases do make an issue salient, but do not by themselves create more support for an action or change public attitudes about fire management (Toman & Shindler, 2006). Duhe' and Zoch (1994-1995) stress the need for early communication to the media by public relations professionals and the fact that not only news releases are important, but two-way communication and response to public concerns go a long way when an organization wants to frame an issue

(Duhe' & Zoch, 1994-1995). In their case study of an explosion at an Exxon refinery, Duhe' and Zoch (1995-1995) found that quotes and information from Exxon's news releases made it into 41.6% of the news stories about the incident. In the early hours following the explosion in the absence of corporate information, emergency responders were the main sources for the media (Duhe' & Zoch, 1994-1995). Curtin (1999) found that some journalists viewed public relations professionals as cohorts who contribute to production of news rather than the enemy.

How did the Literature Review Influence This Study?

The literature review has been enlightening and added some elements to this study originally not anticipated. It appears that the use of social media is a popular way to gather intelligence about an event or issue by the media and is becoming more common as the media and PIOs receive training and practice in using these new electronic communication platforms (Walters, Walters , & Starr, 1994; Wigley & Fontenot, 2011). No one should underestimate the continued importance of personal relationships in creating news (McCaffrey & Olsen, 2012). However, the literature shows that most journalists and public relations professionals like news releases. It seems to be a familiar, dependable tool for both groups.

How did my Experience Influence This Study?

The way we do business is changing, but the media prefer accurate and verifiable information when they are gathering data for stories. They write and the written word is an important source for them. Given that the *AP Style Guide* gives a formula that the media prefers, and is comfortable for them, I can see that it is still a staple. How long it will last depends on the success of training efforts and the accuracy of material found in the various forms of social media. The biggest advantage for the media of the news release is that it is verifiable.

This study is limited in its scope. It deals only with public relations specialists working on wildfires in the western United States. There were only 25 informants. However, this study provides the potential for an important jumping off point for examining other incidents that could also inform the knowledge of agenda setting, agenda building and innovation diffusion.

RESEARCH METHOD

Other authors have studied the use of news releases using quantitative methods such as content analysis, experiments, and surveys. Few have used a qualitative method. Curtain, (1999) used qualitative interviews along with a quantitative survey to make the case that decreasing budgets were leading more editors to use more materials produced by public relations professionals. McCaffrey and Olsen (2012), used interviews to see how the public perceived the trustworthiness of sources of fire information. Taylor et al, (2007) as reported in McCaffrey, asked community members in qualitative interviews where they got their information about fire.

Qualitative interviews are the ideal vehicle for this study. Interviewing participants in these processes when there is little or no research on this topic will provide insights useful in this analysis and in future research efforts. Qualitative research interviews allow us to understand the perspectives of people on the scene, who work there, and are the experts (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In this microcosm of wildland fire information, participants in this study are experts who know this terrain well and their opinions add to our knowledge of how social media are changing how we communicate in time of crisis.

Seven journalists, three news directors, ten PIOs, two wildfire incident commanders, and three firefighters (25 participants in all) were interviewed using my participant observations and the snowball sampling method of asking others who to talk to. As an experienced PIO for the USFS, according the Lindlof and Taylor (2001), I am a participant observer. My role as a public information officer on wildfires in Colorado, Wyoming, California, and Oregon is well known. The informants to this study recognized me as such and I clearly identified my intentions as a researcher.

Protecting informants has been accomplished by not revealing their true identities in my thesis or other articles written from these interviews. All interviews were conducted via telephone. I asked them for their informed consent as stipulated by Colorado State University's Institutional Review Board.

My relationship w/ informants is collaborative. I am currently a PIO under the incident command system. Federal and local emergency responders managing response to disasters, such as wildfire and floods, use the incident command system. PIOs perform similar functions to public relations specialists. They answer questions about the emergency incident from the news and the public. They create communication plans, write news releases, social media content, and act as guides to an incident for the news media and points of communication between communities and the incident commander. I have been assigned to teams similar to the PIOs interviewed for this study. I was a PIO on the 89,000-acre High Park Fire in 2012. Members of the media also recognized me for my work as a PIO.

One qualitative study related to this topic and method was done by Taylor et al., (2007). They used a quick response research method used to study crisis on the scene. Taylor et al., (2007) used participant observation, interviews and focus groups to examine fire information efforts from the perspective of the information receivers on the scene of a wildfire. Kent et al., (2003), also conducted interviews and focus groups to report that local agencies were perceived to have the most useful information and that a lack of information caused homeowners to worry more about the wildfire. There is a need to fill this gap in knowledge. Qualitative research can add interpretations from informants to the knowledge of a theory or phenomenon (Severin & Tankard, 1992).

The sampling site for this study is Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, South Dakota and Nebraska. This is where I normally work and it was the area that had a high frequency of wildfires in 2012 and 2013. Data for my study was collected on how public relations professionals provided information to journalists during the wildfire events of 2012, 2013 and 2014. Wildfires usually occur in June through October in Colorado; however, the recent drought has meant that wildfires can burn through the fall and winter (Freedman, 2014; National Park Service, 2013)

DISCUSSION

The Journalists: “Being on the Scene is What Makes a Story.”

Two television journalists, three newspaper journalists, one free-lance journalist, one radio journalist, two newspaper editors and one radio station news director were interviewed for this study. All had covered wildfires, or in the case of the news directors and editor, had assigned others to cover these incidents. They all reported changes in how they do their jobs. In the 20th century, the news release, also called a press release, was a major source for journalists (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995). Earlier research concerning news releases and their agenda building function showed how content from news releases ended up in the news (Duhé & Zoch, 1994-1995).

Agenda Setting Tools are Changing

As pointed out earlier, agenda setting is the process of the media portraying information about a topic, increasing public awareness of the topic, and making it salient to the public. By doing this, the media determine the issues the public talks and thinks about (Severin & Tankard, 1992; Arya, 2011; Fortunato, 2000). Earlier research points to news releases as a source of information for agenda setting (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995; Grunig, 1977). Story ideas for most members of the media interviewed for this study came first from the on-line social networking site, Twitter. Other sources mentioned were newspapers for radio, listening to a police scanner, receiving a call from a PIO, or a member of the public observing a wildfire or other incident. TV Journalist 1 said, “TV Journalism is fast and you need to get fast at sensing a story, because you also have to put together the video, edit content for the web and meet a deadline.” This was also pointed out in Curtin (1999) in her study of information subsidies

offered by Romanian government agencies, and in Wigley and Fontenot (2011) as they compared the use of social media sources in stories about the Virginia Tech Shootings and the Gifford Shooting nearly three years later.

News Releases: No Longer Breaking News, But Sources for Statistics and Contacts

Rarely are news releases the start of news stories, as they were in the past. However, journalists depend on news releases for background data and statistics associated with a wildfire. “They are not the start. But they are useful to fill in the information, and they certainly are useful for the contact information to get a hold of someone,” said the freelance journalist. “News releases can be the start of a news story “if they are juicy enough. It has [to be] an emergency that everyone is craving information about,” said TV Journalist 1. “Only on a slow news day,” to quote a print journalist. All the journalists and news directors interviewed found news releases contained useful information that helps them find contacts to interview or to supply important verifiable data, such as the size of a fire or other statistics. “News releases have to be up to the minute and if you clip information out of them, you have what everyone else has,” said one print journalist, who works for a national publication. Conversely, many of the PIOs interviewed for this study saw everyone having the same information as a sign of success. “They [news releases] can be the start of a story,” said a news director. He continued, “I get so many emails every day, sometimes they just get deleted but sometimes I’ll see a release that comes out and will say something like we’re reporting our latest fire numbers or something like statistic in a news release that sparks a larger conversation.” According to Ma et al (2014), many find news on social media unreliable and so information subsidies that are verifiable still have some value.

Personal Contacts Still Matter

All of the journalists, editors, and news directors listed their personal contacts with the PIOs as important sources for information that was verifiable and quickly obtained. Other

sources included press conferences, the Inciweb site, and PIO updates. “If it is not fresh information, it is useless,” said one editor. A TV journalist said, “It has to contain up- to-the-minute information.”

One Radio News Director said:

So many things together; the press conferences, the daily updates and calling the incident command, local sheriff, local officials. I also look at statistics to give me some context how bad the fires are compared to last year. Social media is helpful as a tip service. The PIOs can use it to tell you where everything is going to be, if something else happens like a death... Sometimes you have to go to an event. Notifications let you know what is happening but you still have to go to see what we are hearing, seeing, experiencing and then commit journalism.

“But with social media you really need to confirm; you have to do follow up with calls,” said one freelance journalist. Personal contacts were also found to be important to the public in McCaffrey and Olsen (2012) as they looked at trusted sources for the public in the case of wildland fire.

Budgets and Added Social Media Duties Means Journalists Look at Other Sources

The Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism (2013) reported that newsrooms have had a 30% drop in staff since 2000. According to the journalists interviewed for this study, being first and different is important to the media.

Most of the journalists interviewed said that they would use eyewitness accounts for general information and for photographs. They do have sources they contact such as local volunteer firefighters that are more approachable than the federal crews, however many talked about trolling or searching for information on social media sites that they could use. Journalists

do this more when official sources are unavailable or at the start of an incident (Wigley & Fontenot 2010). They depend on the official sources for hard data, like the size of a fire, evacuation orders and the number of firefighters on the scene. Social media have not totally earned the trust of the media because they are not verifiable and lack those social connections that Rogers (1983) and Ma et al (2014) define for an innovation to be accepted. When asked about information from firefighters or first responders on the web one print journalist said, “I didn’t see that locally but that was something we were looking for. That was a little worry for me to use that.” Others are concerned about the use of information on social media. Henn and Cornish (2013) reported that information on Redit.com had falsely accused a missing college student of the Boston Marathon Bombing and was reported in a major metropolitan newspaper. However, others feel they are relying on locals from their own communities for information.

An editor said:

Yeah the benefit with that[is] there are firefighters who are in minor jurisdictions who have frankly have to fight the fire first before it gets turned over to somebody[meaning an incident management team] and then they are in a supportive role. But my advantage and the advantage of other journalists is that we see them all the time especially in rural areas and they may not contact us directly because they are busy, but they are going to maintain their Facebook page or their twitter stream as they can, like during their breaks. That has previously provided a pretty good resource of someone who has been on the line and come back and can say what happened and can give a little behind the scene sort of perspective.

One print journalist said, “yes we have gotten things from firefighters and it is very helpful, mostly photos, sometimes tweets about road conditions and things like that.”

News Directors and Editors Changed Behavior

Some organizations now have protocols for their journalists to follow about reporting using social media. Many news directors encourage or require journalists to get something online before they work on a piece for radio, television or newspapers. The TV journalists, and the print journalists, radio journalists and radio news director all said that news directors incentivized their journalists to gather followers by making it a performance element or offering prizes for those who had the biggest following. One print journalist said, “Our editor made the number of followers part of our review. We get feedback and it does have promotional value.” Being first and being different from everyone else seems to be the key to a journalist’s success. Expectations from the public are also changing. The readers, watchers and listeners are tweeting back or commenting more on Facebook. “Because they can,” said one journalist. One print journalist did say, “Training did open my eyes to a whole new world of users who consume their news differently.” One editor said that readers surveyed at one publication where he worked as a journalist said they understood that early reports may be flawed, but should be corrected as new information was found. However, he said, “They still wanted us to do it; they want information as soon as we get it even if it may be flawed.”

The news director and editors interviewed pointed to the fact that media are not the only tools that PIOs have to get a message out to the public. One editor even pointed to written orders given by an incident commander (IC) that listed priorities for the PIOs. “Community involvement topped the list and the media was number five,” said one news director. McCaffrey and Olsen (2012) reported that at a general level, government sources for information are preferred on fires. One has to wonder what effect this direct contact is having on the media’s ability to set an agenda and even what effect it is having on the information officer’s ability to

build agenda without the media. Many journalists and their managers said they were continuing to push for unfettered access to an incident. Many claimed that journalists in California have that kind of access. “Some journalists and editors are meeting with the new state emergency agency to see if we can work like they do in California,” said one editor. “If reporters are trained firefighters, and can pass the fitness test, why not allow such access in Colorado and elsewhere?” said one print journalist. “We know what we do is dangerous, and we are willing to take those risks,” said one editor. “I think we can help in other ways if you let us in. We could be another set of eyes and ears and prevent looting,” said one editor. However, there have been reports of narrow escapes. During the 2003 wildfire season, one journalist stayed too long as others were evacuating and when his truck would not start, a firefighter pulled him to safety just in time to watch his vehicle blow up (Hibberd, 2003).

What the Media Want the Public Information Officers to Know

“Please let me see it myself so that I can be a better witness for the public. Corraling everyone means that everyone tells the same story and sees the same things,” said one journalist. “It is frustrating to be kept on a leash. We’re not a threat, we’re ethical people trying to do our job,” said another print journalist. TV Journalist 1 said, “Getting information out that is accurate within 10 minutes of it happening, helps immensely.” The freelance journalist had a similar comment. The news director said, “Get on Twitter right away! Because if you don’t others will.” All suggested that you have accurate contact information and create a hash tag for your incident so that reporters could find information easily. A hash tag is a searchable keyword preceded by the # symbol without a space used to categorize tweets on Twitter.com (Twitter, 2015).

One print journalist said:

Nuts and bolts. We are always looking for timely and accurate. One of the things about fire, and it really isn't the PIOs fault and no one's fault, but the numbers change so much like how big is it. How big is it going to get? I understand and I think most news people understand it's such a volatile situation that it's hard to give concrete answers in a lot of situations but that is exactly what we are looking for. So, timeliness; [be] quicker at getting information out.

The news director said:

Get to the pitch. But the biggest one is not being able to connect with the person who is listed as a contact in a timely fashion or that person does not get back to you in a timely fashion. I've made call within 30 seconds of something being dropped in my inbox and I can't get a hold of that person for another hour. If you have link to a map or a graphic that would be helpful that would be good too. I was talking to someone about West Nile and if they had a map of where that was occurring that would have been helpful. Think about the electronic stuff too.

While accuracy was important to journalists, the competitive, fast-paced world of reporting carries some risk that there would be mistakes made. Journalists will use what they have (Wigley & Fontenot, 2011). Though they prefer to see it themselves, and use trusted sources, they will use eyewitness accounts and information from social media and the Internet. Though journalists use news releases, they are used more for the data they contain such as statistics and contacts. Rarely are they the start of a story, which means their usefulness in building agendas has been diminished with the availability of other social media sources such as Twitter and Facebook. The public in general according to Ma et al (2014), and McCaffrey, and Olsen (2012) still does not trust what they see on the Internet.

Public Information Officers (PIOs) Are Not as Dependent on the News Media to Transmit Messages and Set Agenda

Strategizing About Messaging Indicates Agenda Building

While most Journalists said Twitter was usually how a story starts for them, most PIOs agreed that there was no one method that works for everything.

“Depends. Sometimes it is very remote and the press is not right there. [A]press release can still be a good choice. Because it has all the info, contacts etc.,”said PIO3.

All ten respondents agreed. The message seems to be a major determinant for deciding how to communicate. The “it depends” answer really signaled a thought process that was building agenda for their incident and or their agency. As expressed by PIO4, “The most effective? It depends on what our message is going to be. TV is effective, newspapers too”

Everyone had a different answer after saying it depends or it is complicated. PIO5 said, “For western fires our daily update via email.” Some PIOs are thinking about how to get the message out before the fire season even starts. Wildfires are good examples of events in reality that can set agenda that Severin and Tankard (1992) discusses. However, the fact that PIOs are thinking about the messages they will be putting out before an event even happens, points to the more formal agenda building that agencies do by issuing reports or making information available, as described in Funkouser (1973) and Zucker (1978) and reported in Severin and Tankard (1992).

PIO 7 addressed this directly:

If it is the local unit working with the media, the best way is to have a pre-incident [before fire season starts] meeting so that people can get to know each other and know what to expect.

Though no one mentioned agenda building, discussions concerning the message and telling the whole story certainly point to an attempt to build some agendas with the press and directly with the public.

PIO 5 said:

On type one incidents [large fires], it is not hard to get the word out. There is so much interest. [It is] important to have messages prepared for teachable moments. We do use social media more but community meetings, media tours etc., on-camera interviews, all this helps us tell the complete story.

Are PIOs Able to Set Their Own Agendas by Going Directly to the Public?

On some of the bigger wildfires, PIOs indicated that that they have had up to 250,000 followers on Facebook. That many followers may indicate that PIOs are able to set agenda on some wildfires. That number also raises a question: If you have that many individuals paying attention, how does that inform the theory of the press's role in agenda setting?

Having so much direct contact with the public is different from what Funkouser (1973) and Zucker (1978) argued, as reported by Severin and Tankard (1992), when they recognized that the availability of information, events started by organizations, reports by government agencies and experts, all influenced how the media set the agenda. It is unlikely that Funkouser's (1973) and Zucker's (1978), pre-social media studies could not have foreseen the ability of organizations to speak directly to the publics they are intending to influence. PIO5's answer illustrates how the distribution of these press releases are allowing them to communicate more directly with the public, and allowing agencies other methods for building agendas:

When you send those press releases, you send them to a large email list. If people ask to be put on that list, we are bound to do that. I've noticed over the last couple of years that

it seems like more and more of them are just getting their information off our website or our team Facebook page. But a lot of times they don't go on Facebook and Inciweb is known to be a little cantankerous at times so a lot of times they just ask to be on our email list and if there is any other info we send that too, so we continue to use email to get information out.

PIO 9 also mentioned a list of tools, strategies and how things are changing:

We get elected officials briefing packets for them when they show up and we can't forget our own folks we go to the morning briefing too to let them know what we are hearing and we send out information packets in camp and bulletin boards in camp... With community meetings, we are trying to do more live streaming for public meetings and briefings and then people were able to ask questions via Facebook.

Sometimes, PIOs are directly involved in producing content. PIO 7 gave a good example:

[We had] a fire in the backcountry. It was not accessible and we could not get any media to the fire to get any good quality video, so we created our own stories and got it out to the press that way. I had a line-qualified trainee ... working with the [firefighting] module. She acted as our imbedded reporter and we submitted it to the local paper.

This supports Curtain (1999) and her finding that sometimes, public affairs professionals act as cohorts to journalists in the agenda setting process, which can be attributed to the media's effort to contain costs. More recently, according to the Pew Research Center, traditional news outlets continue to reduce staff, while social media outlets have increased staff, and there has been an increased investment of social media sites (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Firefighters Sharing Information Concerns PIOs Because of the Messages They May Send

Though some PIOs said that Tweeting and Facebooking about a wildfire was not the job of the firefighter, many also said it is difficult to control, and they encourage firefighters to act responsibly. The comments from respondents inform the theory of agenda building in that many of the PIOs are concerned about the messages that are being conveyed and management's ability to control the message. Mostly these PIOs were concerned that, if there was a fatality that, the family of a fallen firefighter would find graphic pictures of the incident on the web before being notified of a death, or that homeowners affected by a wildfire would see pictures of their property burning on the Internet, causing them distress. All of the PIOs expressed the need for firefighters to act responsibly in their social media activities. They do have reason to be concerned. Collecting information from firefighters is similar to collecting information from citizen journalists. Media journalists interviewed for this study said they did "troll for information" from firefighters and first responders. This matches findings by Wigley and Fontenot (2011) that as the news media have become more familiar with social media; the numbers of stories that use social media content has increased.

PIO 1 said:

On the ____ fire, we developed social media standards. [We said to the firefighters] be safe and don't let that distract you. Tweet good info and tweet responsibly. There is no way to control it, but we can give them guidance on social media. On a fatality, information will get to family. Crew leaders police what firefighters are doing.

"Joke for government to try and control this. We remind them what they send will be seen," stated PIO2.

“Dangerous,” said PIO 4. “We discourage it. It takes control of info away from mgmt. Can be inappropriate like pictures of Yarnell body bags...”

PIO 6 shared some frustration:

The wrong message can go out pretty quickly. Someone had done that and didn't realize that when they sent it, it went out to the whole community and the people who were evacuated... they could see the pictures with the flames coming up behind their home.

PIO 8 had a different take:

I think it is inevitable... If firefighters are doing the right things and they are saying the right things and behaving as professional wildland firefighters no matter what their position is, then I am just not sure there are any controls over Facebook, Instagram and the whole suite of social media for them to hook up on the line. Most times they are too busy to do that and often times there's not a good connection down in the hole they are in to do that but inevitably they will come back to the incident command base and tweet and Facebook posts to their loved ones and friends, and we just ask them to do so cautiously and be respectful of the positions that they have and the duty they have to the American taxpayers that they are performing, and I think 99% of the time we are going to be fine, and one percent of the time we will be asking somebody to stop or take down that post, something, and it's OK, and we just need to take a deep breath.

PIO 9 told us what their team advises:

...If your job is a firefighter there's concerns if you are taking a picture or something, that situational awareness is your number one priority and you need to be fully engaged in your task that day. There is a reason why we have PIOs on incidents and so we don't

have a problem taking photos, but that is not your job. If they want to let their family know where you are, they [should] share those official sources like the InciWeb site...

PIOs Build Agendas on Social Media by Being as Reliable as a News Release, Not Fast

Information for social media tools comes from the same places as the information for news releases. Sometimes, depending on the message, it comes from the news release, other times it comes from other sources. For most PIOs interviewed, they are not pulling it from existing news releases, but rather gathering information from fire plans, and individuals working on their team. Everything is verified, just as they would do for a news release.

PIO 3 had an interesting insight:

...We get information just by working on the fire. We glean information from the daily updates and even the photos we take. We put some of those on Facebook and twitter. Some of the information we get [is] from the daily updates [news releases]. We get info from operations. We share information on road closures. Citizens will also make comments and supply information. Both Facebook and Twitter are another way for the public to ask a question. I see no difference between someone calling and asking a question and someone asking a question on Facebook. ... You can really get a feel for how the citizens are feeling.

PIO 1 said, "Subject matter experts, we write copy [content]. Some info comes from press releases and some from evacuation orders."

PIO 4 said, "Mostly from Incident Commander, and team, Nat'l Weather Service."

"Definitely, operations or the IC before it is released. If we hear something it goes thru ops or the IC before it can be released," stated PIO 5.

“The same place I get info for Press Releases, from my IC, operations, morning briefing, the incident action plan, and depending where the incident is from the local agency administrator and their public affairs people and whatever they have,” said PIO 10.

Though news releases are reliable and informative, the PIOs interviewed are using social media to disseminate similar information. They collect and verify it the same way they do for a news release. Social media sites allow them to add a two-way communication channel to their toolbox. Comments made on Facebook or tweets on twitter can be negative and positive and for the entire world to see. The news release is not the only communication tool because of how PIOs are collecting and constructing posts on Facebook and Twitter and placing pictures on Instagram and Vimeo. All of the PIOs listed many sources for information; all of the sources were within either the incident command team or close partners such as the Red Cross and local law enforcement. Though they allow citizens to comment or ask questions on their sites, they insure that their agency or incident command team information is just as verifiable as what is contained in a news release. As Paun, Coman and Paun (2010) point out in their study of Romanian institutions, social media are supplementing not replacing the other communication tools. Information is not coming from news releases and just being re-broadcasted on the web. Content is being created in a similar way to how information is gathered for a news release, but it is appearing independently or in addition to a news release. These interviews paint a different picture than a recent study by St. Denis, Hughes, and Palen (2012) of the 2011 Shadow Lake Fire. The PIO enlisted a volunteer team to create social media entries to disperse information directly to the public. However, most of the information the team in their study used was from the news releases written by the PIO.

While many journalists were concerned about the lack of timely responses, most PIOs were concerned with accuracy. News releases are dependable sources that the media have used for a long time (Bates, 2006). PIOs strive for the same accuracy with social media, but the respondents here are sticklers for accuracy. PIO 8 offered this advice to Journalists:

Be patient. In the middle of a burning period, it's really hard to tell what's going on. We have people in the field that have to come back and report. We have to interpret infrared and things are not as instant as they would hope. Be patient and we are working as fast as we can to get them the best most accurate information that we can. We're not keeping secrets we're not holding things back to piss you off. We're holding back to confirm that that acre is burned that house went up in flames that that family is safe and those firefighters are deployed and we are waiting to confirm. We want to know as well and as fast as they do, but we have to do it right and accurately.

Accuracy and time are important. However, Journalists are picking up more information on the scene from first responders and witnesses. Wigley and Fontenot (2011) found that in four years the media's use of citizen-generated content was up by 6.5% in two national shooting incidents. Just as PIOs can take their message directly to the public, using social media, the media can troll the Internet for citizen-generated information to use in their stories.

Relationships Still Matter to Get the Word Out and Build Agendas.

PIO 8, PIO 6, PIO 3 and PIO 1 had no doubt that "one-on-one" is always the best way to communicate with the press. The more communication there is, the higher the public rated the agency's communication efforts (McCaffrey & Olsen, 2012). Stidham et al (2011) compared the results of two case studies of fire information and found that where agency information was lacking, the press filled gaps with inaccurate reports. The agency fared better with the public

when they provided timely information and lots of it (Stidham, Toman, & McCaffrey, 2011).

PIO 3 listed the tools they used on the fire, where they communicate directly with the public:

We use the trap lines [a list of places a PIO drives to, to deliver information]. Points on a trap line can include bulletin boards at a group of mailboxes, a local general store, the bait and tackle shop, REI, the chamber of commerce, the only restaurant in a small town, or a big resort facility such as Timberline Lodge; we'll talk to people at stores post offices, libraries, not only by posting the update, but really, just pressing the flesh is really effective. Because if you take the time to talk to the shopkeeper, then [for] everyone that comes in, that person can relay your messages to those people too.

Some researchers agree. Monroe, Pennisi, McCaffrey, and Mileti (2006), found that people learn information in different ways and they need sources they trust that illustrate information in different ways. However, PIO 8 seemed to agree with the Journalists as to how to get them their story:

Face-to-face, nose-to-nose, a conversation as close to the source for the information [as possible]. If they are doing a story about showers, [then,] near or in the showers, [on the fire line, then] on the fire line. If they want to talk about strategy, I think the planning group. [Get them] as close to the news as they are trying to gather [for a story].

“Facebook, Twitter, Inciweb, forest or agency websites and partners like county websites, community meetings, I guess the one-on-one with locals, on trap lines again it is one-on-one,” said PIO 6.

According to McCaffrey and Olsen (2012), where the public gets information depends on the amount of interaction and the relationship agencies have with the communities. Though government sources are preferred, they may not be highly rated. If the information source is

deemed local, trustworthy, and allowed for some interactive exchange, their respondents preferred it. Ohl et al (1995) found that although most articles were sourced from news releases, more details were revealed in the clippings when corporate spokespeople were made available and their statements confirmed the information contained in the news releases (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995).

Journalists May Need Access to Stay in the Agenda Setting Game, but Safety is a Concern.

One issue that seems to differentiate the journalists from the PIOs is the need for the journalist to interpret the scene for the public. PIOs want journalists to transmit their messages. While the PIOs want to help journalists tell their stories, they are also very concerned for their safety and the safety of employees that would guide or meet the journalists on the scene. Access was mentioned as a problem for many of the journalists interviewed. Therefore, we added a question about access for the PIOs.

PIO 7 said:

I would say [to a journalist], take the time to learn basic fire information, fire terminology and fire behavior and it will be a tool that you can use throughout your career. One of the best examples I have is in Northern California last year. California has different rules about media being able to access the fire on state land without escorts but when it gets to federal land they can be excluded. So I had a member of the media who wanted to go out to an area and she was turned away. She came in and asked for an escort and I took her out to the fire and as we turned a corner. I saw fellers getting ready to drop a tree across the road. I saw that, backed around the corner, and got out of the way. She almost jumped out so she could take a picture. Had she been there without an escort she would have gotten a tree dropped on her. So, the take away message from that was she had a lot to

learn about fire, but it was important for her to know that for her own safety. I know that is not how it is in other parts of the country, but Calif. is that odd ball that lets folks go out there on their own.

PIO 8 had the opposite view about access:

I think I have come full circle. Where I thought that was a really bad idea, when I first heard about it where journalists could just run amuck. But there is somewhere between full access and modified access where we know where you are, we really don't want you down in that area because we are going to ping pong [burn by dropping little firestarter balls from helicopters] here are some areas [that are safer] or we are going to drop slurry [fire retardant] and we don't want you there. But for the most part you are free to go and be careful, be heads up, and if you want an escort one of us that is field qualified or with the type 1 safety officer that we say great, that you do grab one of us because we can get you to places that you may not know about. For the most part, I've come to the thought that for the most part, heads up watch out, heads up stay the hell out of the way. If you can do that, they seem to be able to do that in Calif. They haven't lost any reporters there haven't been any airplane crashes because of reporter is beneath the plane or helicopter or whatever. They do it on the Black Hills and they seem to have some success with that all access kind of a thing and making media a priority. We have to realize as hardcore firefighters, the ops and the ICs have to realize that in order to stay relevant and let people know what you are doing you have to have those great story tellers out there in places where they can tell those stories and it isn't in fire camp waiting for a piece b-roll to come in from some pool reporter who was allowed to go look at the big flame. So yeah, I really thought it was a bad idea and I am really warming to the idea of Journalists.

With all the information on the web and available to the public directly from the agency, what role does the eyewitness journalist play in their agenda setting function? It seems that is one thing that sets them apart from what the public can glean from an agency website. The Pew Research Center (2014) reported that people would be interested in articles written by a media outlet's staff if it was a good read. Do these eyewitness accounts offer something for the public that an agency written report does not? Is access the key that sets them apart?

There is a Need to Re-explore Agenda Stetting and Agenda Building

Journalists are not the only communication tool any more. When a PIO has an audience of 250,000 for a remote wildfire what role is that playing for the pubic in telling them what to think about? What role does trolling the Internet for citizen, firefighter or first responder accounts play in agenda setting? The literature search for this study uncovered more than 15 pre-social media studies concerning agenda building and agenda setting. There were two studies found that concentrated on using social media for agenda building and agenda setting. Traditional media suffered with the advent of the Internet and social media (Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013), Recent reports say that hiring journalists is on the rise for social media news outlets (Pew Research Center, 2014). Are people longing for those eyewitness accounts that corporate and agency websites do not offer?

What about the Incident Commanders and Firefighters?

Though PIOs may be able to speak directly to the public using social media tools, and possibly set agenda themselves, the media, in the words of one news director interviewed are still "committing journalism." Social media have given journalists some new tools to gather information that allows them to find the content of citizens, first responders (Wigley & Fontenot, 2011) and in this case, firefighters to use in the pieces they create.

Two incident commanders and three firefighters were interviewed to see how they perceive the use of social media, information, and the work of the PIOs and the journalists. Incident commanders (ICs) lead the teams that manage responses to natural disasters such as wildfires (National Wildfire Coordinating Group, 2014). The two interviewed here work mainly on wildfires, but have also managed responses to other natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes. Firefighters are responsible for fire suppression they also can be activated to help with evacuations and other natural disasters (National Wildfire Coordinating Group, 2014). ICs and firefighters understand the importance of the agency and team setting and conveying messages, or from a theoretical standpoint, building agendas for safety, wildland fire management, and evacuations.

All Agree that Face-to-Face is Usually Best

Some Firefighters interviewed see the media as “in the way” and interested in anything sensational that will sell newspapers or television programs. Nevertheless, ICs see them as a yet another way to convey messages such as area closures, evacuation orders and warnings about air quality, to name a few. However, both groups also report that face-to-face is usually the best way to communicate with the media. When asked about the best way to communicate with the media IC1 said:

You know I would imagine it is the interview process. We do a lot more social media type of stuff too... News releases- we put those out 2-3 times a day. I think probably those are the most effective. I think Inciweb has been really successful. Though, it has some issues. They also really like it when we have a Facebook and we put out tweets. So it is out of my realm, but that seems to be hugely successful. Inciweb, they [the PIOs] up date that all the time...We are mindful about what the community wants, especially if

they want public meetings. Communities, like in _____ last year we had to do public meetings every night. If a fire is near a community, we always have information boards and have a PIO there to talk to people at the grocery store or somewhere like that.

IC2 also pointed to the great effects visuals and maps have on telling their story and said, “If you have visual aids you can take something complex and break it down to smaller parts, which can help you get an effective message out there.”

Everyone is Aware of Social Media

The ICs and the firefighters are all aware of social media; some use them more than others do in their personal lives. All (firefighters included) recognize that you have to be mindful and cautious about what you put on those sites, and all interviewees gave examples of inappropriate postings, such as, tweeting a home unit about a serious injury before fire officials could contact a family, and pictures appearing on social media of property burning. They also recognize the usefulness of social media.

Firefighters Differ in Their Opinions of Firefighters Using Social Media

All of the firefighters had differing opinions about using social media on wildfires. Some thought it could be hurtful to the families of fire victims. Firefighter 1 said:

Terrible idea. [There was one case where] a wife found out about someone being injured, before you can notify them in a respectful and kind way. I do not [think] you should be releasing any of that information out to the public...I struggle with it. I don't like it for a lot of reasons. It's too personal and too sensitive. If you're putting a picture of a tree on fire and we're not in the middle of a wilderness that's not that big a deal but it always seems to impact others. I don't think they [firefighters] understand the downstream effects that stuff has.

While others agreed that there have been some inappropriate posts, they also thought that it offered a truer picture of what happens on a fire line, and suggested that everyone needs to be careful of where and how they post. Firefighter 3 said:

I think it is a great thing actually it gets things out there and shows people what we do. You know a lot of people are really confused about what we do and it shows people what really happens out on the line. Some of the communications coming directly from the fire fighters is some of the most accurate on the ground information the public can see.

The ICs' comments were similar to those of the PIOs in that they recognize that inappropriate posts can happen, but there is little they can do to prevent it. They do caution their employees at all levels of what their job is. They remind them to be careful about what they post. IC 2 said:

I was the one responsible to contact the home agency when _____ had an [injury]. [I] did this within 40 minutes of him getting off the hill. In addition, his home unit knew about it before I called them. Because people have their own twitter, Facebook what have you. So, the speed at which communication travels is a lot faster than it used to be. Our team will mention it [appropriate use social media] and if they [firefighters] have or get question to defer it to a PIO. If someone comes up and puts a microphone in front of them to get tied in with an information officer. Because we want to have a common message, the right one, the correct one.

Like the PIOs, incident commanders realize that it is difficult to control the use of social media. They remind firefighters about their mission, Incident C 1 said:

I have concerns about it [social media]. But I am not naive enough to think that we can do anything about it, but to remind people that we are public servants and we need to be mindful about what we are putting out there. It's here and it is here to stay. Things can

get viral. I usually give a spiel about taking pictures of people's houses that have burned and how those things can be damaging and hurtful. They're out there to swing a tool and do a hose lay and they really should not have time to be standing around taking pictures.

Firefighters also reported training concerning the use of social media, but said it was mainly telling them what not to do, not what they could do.

According to IC 2, there have been some operational use of social media to communicate among crews, and the incident command teams are experimenting with using Quick Response (QR) codes to disperse information amongst the firefighters and allow them to report safety concerns. QR codes are like bar codes on grocery products, but they can contain much more data as well as links to social media sites (How QR codes can grow your business, 2011). More informally, firefighters interviewed also reported contacting other crews using tweets and Facebook about road closures and what they were doing on an incident. Firefighter 2 said:

... It is a good way for us to communicate. It's easier, cause we can go on our Facebooks and we can contact crews in this region have a pretty good idea of what is going on. We can see what others who we are friends with are doing.

What Firefighters Want Journalists to Know

Though firefighters interviewed had mixed opinions about using social media, they all shared similar opinions about journalists. One firefighter sees the media as being in the way and acting unsafely. While many journalists are asking for more access to fire incidents, firefighters characterize journalists as obstructionists who need to be blocked from access. Firefighter 1 said:

... They know their job is to sell and if I were in charge I'd never let them on a fire. Yep the roads are closed. Here's the basic info and that is all you get. They do more damage than good. They freak people out. I heard my house was safe now it's not safe. The only

thing they get is a 10,000-foot view if it was up to me. The faster they can get information the better they like it, but it's never enough.

Other firefighters pointed out that they are not PIOs and they have many bosses including the incident command team, the land management agency or local county sheriff and they do not have all the answers. They also depend on the PIOs to brief the media about the fire so that journalists can ask the firefighters questions that the firefighters can answer. Firefighter 2 said:

I'd appreciate it if journalists understood we are frequently walking several fine lines when we talk to them. So try and understand. [We are] trying to answer their questions and be good representatives of the incident but to the agencies whose gloves we are wearing there can be a conflict there. I think it is important for them to understand that coming in. So, if we are not forthcoming with answers to their questions it's not that we are trying to keep things from the public, we just want them to go through the proper channels, which is where proactive and well trained good PIOs can come into it and not shilled off because I do think it's important for them to talk to a ground pounder but they need to know there are limitations on what we can say. I think a well-briefed press corps should know that.

Incident Commanders Want Journalists to Know About Safety and Efficiency

Understandably, ICs want journalists to understand that safety is always the first thing on their minds and why firefighting takes time and what it takes to run a response to a natural disaster. Here is what IC1 wanted Journalists to know:

I think there are a lot of misunderstandings about how we work and how we spend tax payer dollars and how we seek efficiencies. Safety is always first and foremost and I always highlight that when I am speaking to journalists. I want them to understand. They

can't understand why we don't have a bunch of crews up there putting that fire out. We don't just send people up to a 50-foot flame front to put it out. I just try to educate them about safety and efficiency. And we find that people are really interested if we show them around camp and how many people it takes to support all those fire fighters out on the line.

Creative Operational Changes to Insure Appropriate Content for Social Media

One of the PIOs, an IC, and a firefighter all reported on the creation of Facebook pages where firefighters could post photos and news about what they were experiencing. If inappropriate content appears, the PIOs can remove a post. This allows the firefighters to post, but keeps the inappropriate posts to a minimum.

However, as the diffusion of this innovation happens, agencies, crew leaders and ICs will be able to clearly illustrate to the crews what is appropriate for posting and what is not by showing examples. Maybe some easy- to- use tools such as QR codes will assist them in their efforts to steer firefighters in the right direction and to appropriate outlets for posting while they are on an incident.

This use of social media tools for operations further indicates the acceptance of social media and the diffusion of this innovation (Ma, Lee, & Goh, 2014).

Another tool is becoming available for the efforts of agenda setting by journalists, as firefighters make information available online and journalists search for that information.

As reported in other studies, PIOs or public affairs organizations are no longer the prime source of data, as journalists produce stories that make an issue salient to the public and set agenda (Wigley & Fontenot, 2011; Arya, 2011; Cloutier, 2015; Ma, Lee, & Goh, 2014). PIOs are still the desired official, and accurate sources, however, their efforts for accuracy, though

appreciated by journalists, slows the flow of information and means that journalists look elsewhere for information while they wait for official sources (Wigley & Fontenot, 2010). The Tweets and Facebook postings of firefighters are some of those sources.

Besides training firefighters on what not to do, ICs and PIOs may want to consider suggesting what types of items would be useful to post and how to talk to the media. They could consider the firefighters as another tool to provide important messages about wildland fire management. PIOs might want to provide a list of items appropriate to post such as hose lays, newly dug fire line, (all without structures in the background of course), and other items that would further illustrate the messages that the team or agency needs to broadcast. These interviews also indicate that training firefighters about limiting the media access to the fire does not end with a road closure. If they do not want journalists to see their Facebook pages and Twitter sites, it may also be appropriate during an incident to exclude the media from their personal information by paying attention to their privacy settings on the social media sites they use. Land management agencies that supervise firefighters may want to follow the example of the National Basketball Association who train their players to be their best representatives, which helps them set positive agenda about the NBA (Fortunato, 2000).

Diffusion of the Innovation Known as Social Media is Well on the Way to Acceptance

As mentioned earlier, according to Rogers (1983 page 5), “diffusion of innovation is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is different from other forms of communication in that it is about new ideas.”

Everyone interviewed for this study is using some form of social media for their work in communicating about wildfires. In October of 2014, even the USDA Forest Service started

allowing its employees to post on Facebook. It was the last of the federal land management agencies represented in this study to have a full presence on Facebook. However, use is not the only way to judge the acceptance of an innovation. Newness of an innovation, perhaps, expressed in terms of knowledge, persuasion or a decision to adopt is also important (Rogers, 1983). This qualitative study does see a signal of acceptance of this innovation called social media. However it is a small study, of a small subgroup. Further qualitative and quantitative studies would be more definitive. Larger studies of different segments of journalists and public affairs professionals may provide more information.

Questions Asked and their Linkages to Diffusion of Innovation

All participants indicate the innovation of social media was being communicated through the defined social systems and activities they support, such as training, reading articles in journals produced by organizations that support the work of the group, speaking to friends, and just using social media.

Attending Training and Reading Articles

The Public Relations Society of America suggested that public relations professionals add social media to their crisis management skills (Baron and Philbin, 2009). The Pew Research Center (2014) reported that half of Facebook users get their news from digital sources, making it imperative that PIOs and journalists understand the medium. All of the PIOs reported that they had attended training. Half reported that the training was online in the form of a webinar. Four of the PIOs have taught webinars or classes that the author had attended. Journalists, news directors, some editors, firefighters, and incident commanders also reported attending some training on social media. However, most of the training was in the form of a webinar or a tutorial using social media. Using this innovation to spread the innovation seems to be an excellent

indication of diffusion of innovation. The same could be said for trade journals. TV Journalist 2 said, "It is hard to miss them [articles about social media]. If you try to crack open a magazine and you try not to read the articles on social media, you might as well not read the magazine. All of them are about social media." Both the PIOs and the Journalists mentioned receiving articles to read via the social media site LinkedIn.

PIO 4 said, "Mostly stuff from LinkedIn. LinkedIn used to be just an annoyance now it has lots of good stuff."

PIO 5 said, "Mostly from Facebook online. Social media from social media."

Training together and reading articles about this innovation certainly show some amount of homophily, which Rogers (1983) defines as affiliation or communication with a similar person. Training and reading articles shows that many in these fields are thinking that social media are important to their work.

Journalists Talk About (and Complain About) the Added Work Load of Social Media

"We talk about it a lot," said one of the print reporters. Reporters said that they have two jobs now. Reporting in their respective media, such as radio, television, newspapers, or magazines, and, reporting on line. TV Journalist 1 said, "My news director told us to get something on line before the broadcast. The web is king."

Radio and newspaper journalists are taking photos and video and television journalists are writing copy for Facebook or the web. They all tweet and have thousands of followers on Twitter. Most said that their organizations also have hired web and social media experts to help them make the most of their social media pieces. Everyone talks about who to follow, who has the best tweets, and what are the best practices on social media. "We all talk about, who to follow all the time," said TV Journalist 1. "Some [organizations] are known for their great

tweets while we complain about others, who are scorned for and their slow moving information,” said one of the print journalists. The fact that their colleagues are talking about social media follows what Rogers (1983) said about a social system being important for an innovation to take hold.

However, they are not all the way there yet. Journalists also complained about the lack of verifiable information. “You have to be distrustful of tweets, need to verify. If I am comfortable with the source, I’ll use it,” said one print journalist. “During [one fire], there were lots of rumors on social media. You just have to be careful,” said a print journalist. Knowing the network was one of the ways that diffusion of an innovation in news sharing on social media was identified in the Ma et al (2014) study concerning diffusion of innovation in news sharing (Ma, Lee, & Goh, 2014). A News Director said:

We have conversations a lot in our newsroom about strategy and how to get more mileage out of it. We let people know a story is coming up, here is a short story about something we are working on and we will have a full story coming up next week. So it is like an appetizer of the story we are working on next week. We can always aggregate back to our own work in our web post so the reporter who is following a story, say on airtankers, they can refer back to what we reported earlier and then hyperlink back to that so we don’t have to say the same thing again. So over the last 3 years we can be our own stories. So we talk about our web content for a story as well as the _____ [on air] portion and we have a web person that helps us w/ that.

The TV Journalists and the print journalists all said that their organizations had hired someone to advise them on social media tasks. Hiring of journalists for social media sites is on the rise also (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Use of Social Media Further Shows Diffusion of this Innovation

All of the PIOs are using social media, but many also referenced the use of Internet sites when talking about their use of social media. All of them mentioned using Facebook and Twitter. Other sites were also mentioned. PIO 5 mentioned using Goggle Voice recently. PIO 8 likes Instagram. An incident management team can only work for 14 days. That means you get a new set of PIOs on an incident every 14 days on a large wildfire that takes a long time to control. Keeping the use of a certain Facebook page up after the creator of the site leaves takes some additional coordination. The U.S. Forest Service, up until September of 2014, would not allow the use of Facebook for public information on the National Forests or the wildfires that occur there. The frustration of the PIOs shown by the comments listed below may be relieved, now that the agency is allowing their local units to post information on Facebook. This could also be a signal that this innovation is being more widely accepted according to Rogers' (1983) definition.

PIO 3 said:

I use Facebook, twitter, [within] the rules with the federal agencies. It's sort of Facebook mostly. Because sometimes someone does not want us to use it. And when you start one you want to make sure a team that is following you keep it up because people who are following you get really frustrated if it gets shut down.

PIO 5 said:

Twitter, but it depends, if it is a Park Service fire we have a little more leeway in our social media abilities we can post to twitter, we can post to Facebook, if a Park just got a Picasa account, we can post photos to that, in addition to using a park internal homepage.

PIO 6 had this to say about the Forest Service:

...I don't know what the Forest Service hang up is. Yeah, I find it really frustrating.

There are ways around that, but the public doesn't care if it is a park fire, BLM fire or FS fire, or whatever, to them they still think we are all game rangers, you know. They don't know the difference they just want the information and if you don't have ways to get it to them in a timely manner you're behind the curve to begin with.

As the PIOs list the many social media sites they use and the USDA Forest Service now has a presence on Facebook, social media have entered the main stream. It appears that the four elements Rogers (1983) lists to diffuse an innovation; the innovation itself, communication channels, time, and social system, are all currently in place according to our interviews. We can see a rapid increase in use of these platforms, acceptance by many organizations, training and discussions among friends, and wide acceptance as the USDA Forest Service finally comes on board using Facebook, the social media site mentioned by most PIOs. However, a recent study by Ma et al (2014) found that there is still mistrust by social media users about news they find on social media. Ma et al (2014) concludes that more time is needed for complete acceptance of social media as a news source among users.

Further Study is Needed

Social media are changing how we communicate. However, according to journalists, PIOs, firefighters, incident commanders interviewed for this study, most see social media as one of many tools for communication. Cloutier (2015) listed fifteen predictions for PIOs in 2015. At the top of the list was the prediction that social media would become the primary channel for emergency information. Researchers will need to watch carefully for full diffusion of this innovation.

CONCLUSION

News Releases are Still Reliable Sources. However, Their Form and Function is Changing

So, why aren't news releases dead yet? Journalists and PIOs interviewed for this study still find news releases to be useful tools. Firefighters and incident commanders understand the function of a news release. However, the news release is now a workhorse instead of a racehorse. For the media and the PIOs, news releases deliver verifiable data and important contacts that journalists need to tell the whole story. Journalists value the statistics and information news releases contain. However, other sources found on social media are faster, though not as accurate (Henn & Cornish, 2013; Ayres, 1999; Arya, 2011; Stephens, 2009; Ma, Lee, & Goh, 2014; Wigley & Fontenot, 2010; Wigley & Fontenot, 2011). Because news releases go out under an agency or team moniker, they are checked and rechecked for accuracy. They are usually timed, meaning, there are deadlines for the PIOs sending them. They are sent out a few times a day when a wildfire fight has just been initiated. Fewer news releases are issued when things slow down.

However, the form and function of the news release has changed. They are not only for Journalists now. They are sent to anyone who wants to receive them. They mostly appear as the content of an email and are delivered to a long list that includes journalists, citizens, congressional staffers, local government officials, county commissioners, agency employees, and whoever else wants to be on the email list. They appear as documents on webpages and social media sites such as InciWeb, blogs, Facebook, and Instagram. News of their issuance is usually tweeted with a link to a web site where they can be retrieved or put on an RSS feed (really simple syndication feed) associated with many websites. They now contain links to social media

sites and webpages where photos, video, and maps can be obtained and interested publics can comment or send pictures and other information. So will news releases die? Eventually they may. That said, many things have to happen for the news release to completely disappear. The biggest hurdle is improving the reliability of information on social media. Since they are custom made for journalists, social media would need to serve that audience equally as well.

For the PIOs, news releases were the main agenda building mechanism when television, radio and newspapers were the dominant mass communication tools. Now, the information highway offers PIOs and the agencies they work for the opportunity to contact their audiences directly. In some instances, they have had hundreds and thousands of followers on Facebook or Twitter. Now more rural communities are gaining wireless access to the internet so rural communities that are most interested in wildfires where they live can log on to find out what the managing agency is saying about a wildfire near them. Others, who are interested from miles away, have the same access and the same information. Social media gives the PIOs an incredible opportunity to go directly to the public, and the PIOs interviewed here recognize it, are using it, and will be using it even more according to some predictions (Cloutier, 2015).

Citizen Journalists and Firefighters are Contributing Content

For the journalist, social media offers advantages in the distribution of news and the collection of data to tell stories. Journalists still depend on news releases for verifiable data and contacts. Though there is the possibility of agencies being able to set their own agendas, journalists are finding opportunity to tell stories in different ways, and faster than ever. Content from social media is readily available to journalists almost instantly. Some journalists do search social media sites and the web for firsthand accounts of wildfire action. Firefighter accounts, pictures, and information on Facebook especially have been helpful to the media as they tell a

wildfire story. However, journalists need to exercise caution, as there have been accounts of misinformation on social media sites (Henn & Cornish, 2013). In some ways, social media have not fully experienced total acceptance because many mistrust it (Ma, Lee, & Goh, 2014). Access to the scene seems to be the biggest obstacle for journalists in being eyewitnesses for the public. Access may give them the difference they crave from what appears on the agency Facebook page, allow them pick up readers, and continue to set agenda by providing good reads.

Firefighters need to be aware of how their posts on Facebook or tweets might be reused and perceived by others. They might want to consider that, though they think journalists should have no access to wildfires, they may be giving journalists access through a firefighter's own words and pictures on social media sites. Contributing to an incident's Facebook page may allow them to stay out of trouble with their employers and allow agencies to have unified messages about important issues on a fire.

Personal Relationships are Still Highly Valued

Face-to-face, interviews are still valued and are part of the equation for building and setting agendas. Trust in who is telling you something about wildfire is one of the key reasons social media have not totally usurped the news release in setting agenda. One cannot verify who the tweet or Facebook page is coming from. Live interviews with real people on the scene allow journalists to do something that the agencies do not. Eyewitness journalists can give an honest and impartial account of an event. Access to the scene is key to allowing journalists to be the eyewitnesses they want to be. As the agencies are able to talk directly to the public using social media, journalists need to distinguish what they do from what an agency's Facebook page contains. The public trusts what agencies have to say about the incidents they manage (McCaffrey & Olsen, 2012). Honest, eyewitness reporting that allows journalists to tell great

stories may keep them in the agenda building game and allow them to have as many social media followers as newspapers had subscribers (and perhaps even more) in their prime. However, agencies do have justified concerns about safety, and PIO 8's recommended modified version of access, where journalists are only kept out of areas of dangerous fire operations, such as back burning, may satisfy both sides.

Social Media Training and Use of Social Media Is Rising

One key component of the diffusion of an innovation is training (Rogers, 1983). With few exceptions, everyone interviewed for this study had received some training about social media. Many had read articles about social media and their use on social media sites such as LinkedIn or Facebook. Many news organizations reported hiring social media experts to help their journalists use social media effectively to gather information and create appropriate content for their organizations. All of the PIOs interviewed here also have received training concerning the use of social media. Use of social media is required by news organizations and many journalists say that they now have to produce content for social media before they produce content for their publication or broadcast. PIOs are delivering content on social media and still holding community meetings, writing news releases, doing interviews, and posting information at community gathering places such as Red Cross shelters and local community grocery stores. Everyone seems to understand that social media afford them a wider audience, but they have not replaced all of the other things communicators have to do to keep the public informed. One key to all of this seems to be the lack of verifiable data on social media sites. PIOs are combating doubts by striving to be as accurate as their news releases. They have not been able to improve their speed, and other social media sources are faster at providing information, but not as accurate as

official sources (McCaffrey & Olsen, 2012). PIOs want confirmation of all of their information and that takes time.

All that said, diffusion of the social media innovation may not be complete, but it cannot be denied it is having an impact on how people transmit and receive information. One question that researchers may need to address is how people study the acceptance of an innovation. Does the massive change this innovation is making mark its full diffusion?

This research indicates that social media are changing the agenda setting landscape, especially during times of natural disasters such as wildfires. The filters of factors that existed before such as difficult terrain, travel time, and even who can transmit are gone. Citizen journalists, first responders, neighbors, and even firefighters are now providing information in record time to journalists, who do not even need to visit the scene. The carefully researched and crafted definition of the media's ability to set agendas is being rearranged in ways that could not have been imagined just a few years ago. It is complicating the jobs of PIOs and Journalists, but at the same time, social media are creating new avenues to provide information and tell stories in real time about natural disasters such as wildfires. Journalists can search social media sites for photos and accounts. Agencies can provide accurate, unfiltered information that people may need to survive a disaster, and get instant feedback on the actions they plan to take.

In addition, the receivers and transmitters have also changed; there is a growing tension between journalists who want access, and incident managers and PIOs who want to control the scene for safety and for those who may be affected by or working on a wildfire. Another area of tension exists with the notions of timeliness and accuracy. Although journalists want to be accurate, they are under tight deadlines and pressure to compete with their peers. Journalists want information quickly and are willing to accept some risk that the information they are

transmitting may be inaccurate. The public also wants fast and accurate information and social media may allow agencies to provide it unfiltered and unmediated by journalists. Agencies see no benefit in releasing information before it is verified. In fact, it can reflect badly on managers if their information is incorrect. Trust and personal communication can mitigate some of these tensions.

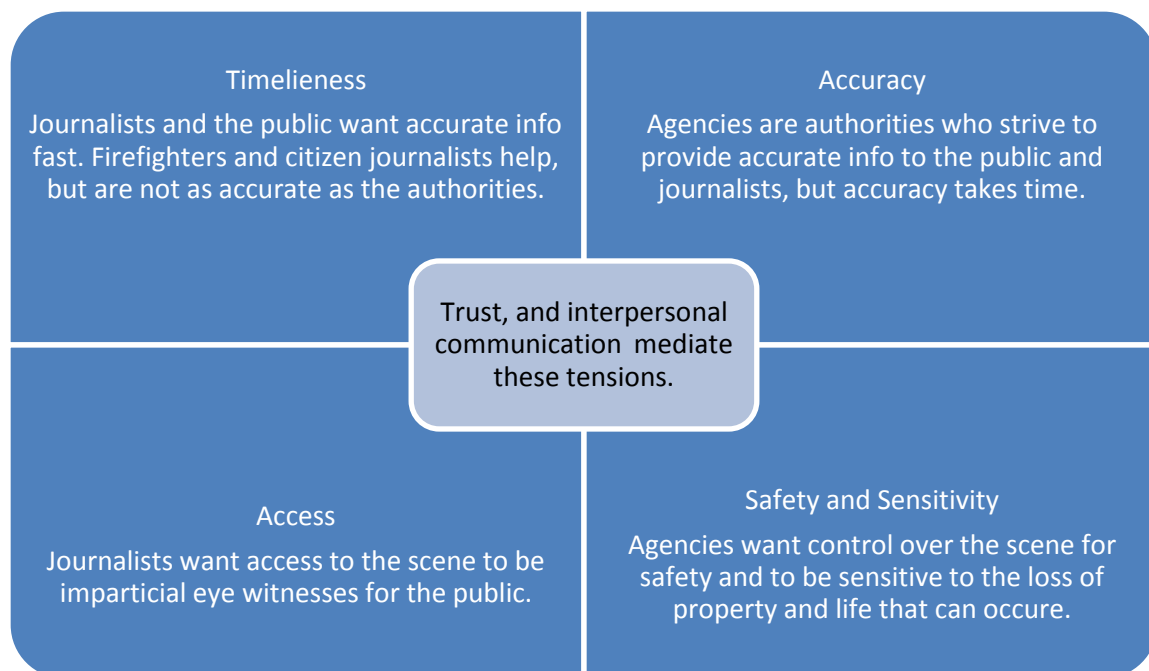


Figure 1: Tensions

Recommendations

More research is needed on how social media are affecting the theories of agenda setting and agenda building. In some cases, the agenda setters have changed. The sources for building agenda have also broadened to include citizen journalists and others just tweeting to their friends and families about their work as firefighters. The detailed content analyses once done on press releases and then checked against news clippings needs to be carried out in some new fashion on social media.

Additionally, researchers interested in the diffusion of innovation need to keep watching social media. The trust and verification issues mean that it is not quite there yet (Ma, Lee, & Goh, 2014).

Journalists should beware of social media sources they are unfamiliar with, and in some cases, wait for good information by trusted sources.

PIOs need to provide information on social media sites as quickly as they can. Social media may mean you can provide smaller parts of the story that have been verified, but not the things you are still waiting for. Training firefighters, and in a broader context, employees of other organizations about the use of social media concerning the work place needs to be part of everyone's new employee training. Training should include what is appropriate and helpful to post along with what is not appropriate to post.

The Incident Command System Position Manual (1981) states “The information officer is responsible for the information about the incident to the news media, and other appropriate agencies and organizations.” This was written before the edge of the forest became a popular neighborhood. Now these forest neighborhoods are commonly known as the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Mega fires, such as the High Park Fire and the Waldo Canyon Fire have displaced thousands of residents from their homes, making the need to reach out to affected citizens a primary focus of a PIO's job. Other disasters, such as floods and hurricanes, have had similar results. Community meetings, bulletin boards, trap lines, and website development were all born out of the necessity to contact affected citizens directly. Now, social media are further removing the filters and allowing agencies to provide authoritative and accurate information to the general public. Though news releases offered a concise and easy way to provide information, agencies may want to consider changing their form again in an effort to streamline the flow of

information and save time by providing information on their social media sites and allowing for comments and messages. Such a move may allow faster information and reduce the tensions and inaccuracies caused by the time demands of journalists and the public's need to know now. If agencies allowed more access to the media in safe areas, they may reduce the need for media tours and re-direct the PIO section to provide more information on social media and more activities to citizens directly. PIOs trained to create social media have to be part of every incident. Agencies can contribute to full diffusion of this innovation by using it and making it a larger part of their communication plans.

Other new technologies may not allow agencies to maintain control of the scene, as reporters with backpack satellite video cameras and drones can remotely gather information and capture images in real-time from within the fire line. This may mean agencies may have to accept that they are even less able to prevent scenes of homes burning on television. Just as reporters do not mention the names of rape victims in the news, journalists may need to self-police themselves to not show homes burning, or gruesome scenes of disasters.

The National Wildfire Coordination Group represents a wide range of agencies that manage wildfire (Black, 2013). They have created uniform standards for incident management teams and recently completed an incident management organizational succession plan. The National Wildfire Coordination Group (2009) task book for PIOs lists a much broader scope of skills and tasks for PIOs than the 1981 position manual. However, it does not specifically list tasks related to social media. The National Wildfire Coordination Group many want to update the task book for PIOs to include social media content. As more information about the scene of a wildfire is made available from other sources, this group may need to further address the duties

and skills needed for PIOs. As the agenda setting landscape continues to change, the effective use of social media will assist the agencies in their important agenda building efforts.

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APPENDIX

Question Guides Used

During Interviews

Questions for Journalists and Editors:

- A. Where do your story ideas come from?
- B. Are press releases the start of a news story for you?
- C. Where else do you get information about a story topic?
- D. What is your best source of information? And Why?
- E. Have you attended or arranged for any training or seminars concerning the use of social media?
- F. Have you read any articles in trade journals about the use of social media?
- G. Has a friend or colleague spoken to you about the use of social media?
- H. Has training, seminars, or articles in trade journals changed your behavior?
- I. If you could tell public information officers on fires and other incidents one thing about supplying information, what would it be?

Questions for Public Information Officers:

- A. How long have you been a fire information officer?
- B. What do you think is the most effective method for communicating with the press?
- C. What else do you do to get a story out?
- D. Do you send press releases?
- E. Have you attended any training or seminars concerning the use of social media?
- F. Have you read any articles in trade journals about the use of social media?
- G. Has a friend or colleague spoken to you about the use of social media?
- H. What social media tools do you use on a regular basis?
- I. If you use social media, where do you get information to construct these other tools?
- J. Some firefighters have Twitter and Facebook accounts where they transmit information about the fire and the work they are doing. What do you think about this practice?
- K. If you could tell journalists anything about how you submit information to them, what would it be?
- L. Question added: to later interviews: Journalists would like full access like they have in California. What do you think about that?

Questions for Incident Commanders and Firefighters:

- A. How long have you been fighting fire?
- B. What do you think is the most effective method for communicating with the press? What about the public?
- C. What else does your team do to get a story out on your fires?
- D. Do they send press releases?
- E. Have you attended any training or seminars that included the use of social media?
- F. Have you read any articles in the news or in trade journals about the use of social media?
- G. Has a friend or colleague spoken to you about the use of social media?
- H. What social media tools do you use on a regular basis?
- I. Some firefighters have Twitter and Facebook accounts where they transmit information about the fire and the work they are doing. What do you think about this practice?
- J. If you could tell journalists anything about how you submit information to them, what would it be?