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Journalists Worry about Credibility of Online News; Pubic Says It's Not an Issue
Survey Results to be released at Online News Association Conference

NEW YORK, NY - October 16, 2001— While journalists across all media say they're concerned about the standards and credibility of digital news, the online public says it's not an issue. In fact, 13 percent of online readers say the Internet is their most trusted source for news.

That's among the findings of the Online News Association's (ONA) Digital Journalism Credibility Project, to be released at the ONA's 2001 Annual Conference & Awards Banquet in Berkeley, California, October 26-27.

ONA, along with the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism, will host the Conference and Online Journalism Awards Banquet at the Claremont Resort and UC campus. The day-and-a-half conference will focus on the continuously evolving Internet as a primary source of news, and the complex challenges and opportunities it creates.

Directed by ONA and funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the credibility survey raises a key question about the gap between readers' and journalists' perceptions of online news: "Are the media's standards for evaluating credibility higher than the public's?" asks the study. "Or is there something the media perceives or knows about the ethics and practices of online news that the public does not know?"

Findings of the yearlong study also show younger members of the public and younger members of the media are more likely to say online news is credible than their older counterparts.

 "The results of the study are fascinating," said ONA President and Wall Street Journal Senior Editor Rich Jaroslovsky. "They suggest that while the importance of this medium continues to grow, we have a big job to do in our own newsrooms – making sure our standards of accuracy, fairness and integrity are high, and educating our colleagues in other media about that fact."

Howard I. Finberg and Martha Stone, Co-Directors of the ONA Digital Credibility Study, will discuss the details during a special conference session. "Through the Knight Foundation grant, we were able to survey both consumer and journalists' concerns about digital journalism credibility, and to interview scores of online industry experts and practitioners about how they are working to address those concerns," Stone said.

"We now better understand the concerns of journalists who participated in the survey about this new and evolving media," Finberg added.

In addition to the presentation of the ONA study, the conference will feature a general panel on online credibility and ethics. The panel includes representatives from Consumers Union, CNET Networks and MSNBC.com.

The credibility study and panel are among the many conference programs. Other highlights include a keynote address by Walt S. Mossberg, Wall Street Journal Personal Technology Columnist, a special session on "Attack on America: Online News Put to the Test," breakout sessions on multimedia story-telling, effective online design, new forms of journalism and the newsroom of the future, and a banquet to announce the winners of the Online Journalism Awards competition.

A dozen media and technology companies are sponsoring the conference. The Platinum Sponsors are **Knight Ridder Digital** and **Futuredex**; gold sponsors are: **Videoaxs.com**, **CBS Marketwatch** and **CNET Networks**; pioneer sponsors are **MSNBC.com**, **washingtonpost.com**, **BusinessWeek Online** and **Britannica.com**; Friends of ONA are **latimes.com**, **USC Annenberg Center for Communication** and **PR Newswire**.

With more than 700 members, the Online News Association is composed of professional news writers, producers, designers, editors, and photographers who produce news for the Internet and other digital delivery systems, as well as academics and others interested in the development of online journalism. ONA, in partnership with Columbia University, administers the prestigious Online Journalism Awards.

The 2001 Annual Conference and Awards Banquet are open to all interested parties. For online registration and conference details, visit the ONA Web site at www.journalists.org. Organizations interested in sponsoring or exhibiting should contact Mark Leonardi, Mark@mla-events.com.

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