

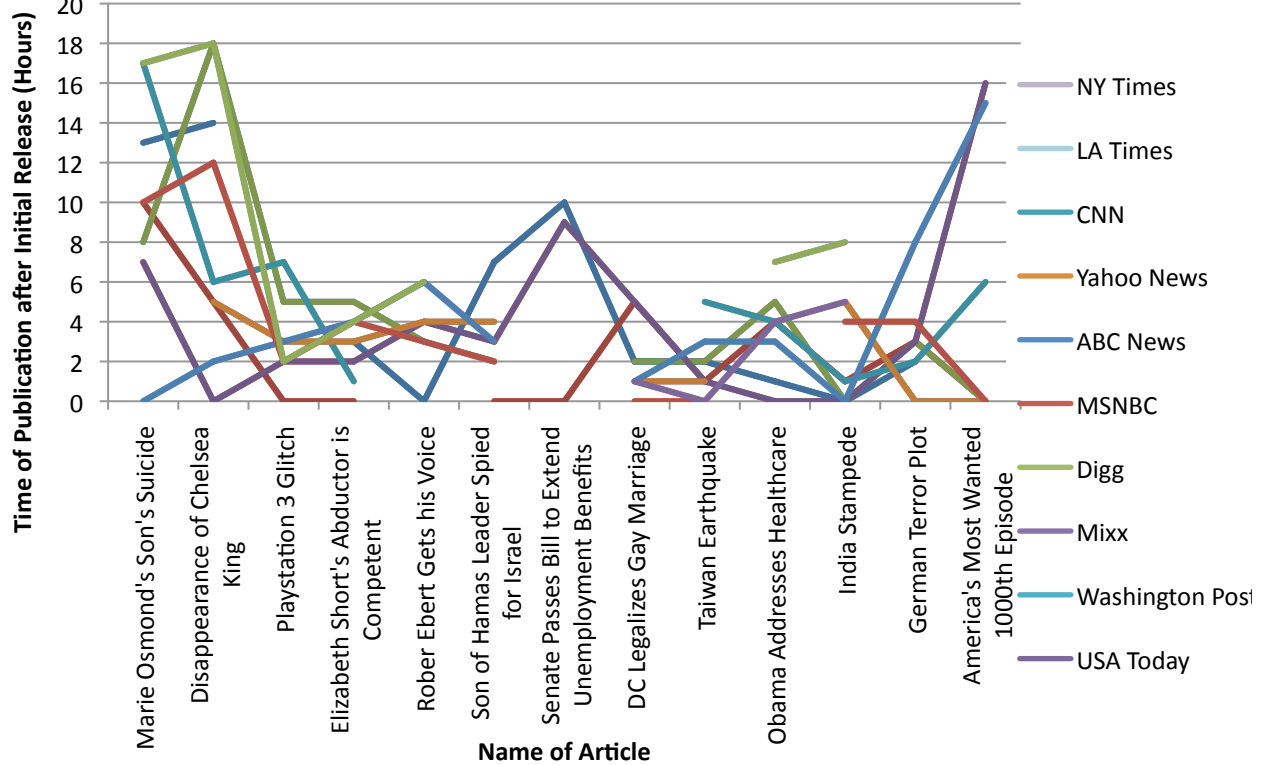
The Internet: Speed of Information Travel

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As the world becomes more technology oriented, there is an increasing dependence on the internet. It is used to spread information, whether as an original source or a secondary (through newspapers, televisions, etc.). The speed at which this travels was measured in this project.

A set list of sources of decided on. These included social networking sites, internet based news websites, and television based one. Every day, articles of three kinds were tracked: entertainment news, international news, and national news. The exact time of the publication of each of these articles on the predetermined websites were recorded. The sources researched were: Twitter, Mixx, Digg, NY Times, LA Times, USA Today, Washington Post, MSNBC, Yahoo News, ABC News, and CNN. The entertainment articles followed were: *Marie Osmond's Son's Suicide*, *Robert Ebert Gets his Voice*, *America's Most Wanted Reaching its 1000th Episode*. National news articles followed were: *The Disappearance of Chelsea King*, *the Ruling of Elizabeth Short's Abductor as Competent to Stand Trial*, *Senate Voting to Continue Unemployment Benefits*, *Washington DC Legalizing Gay Marriage*, and *Obama's Stand on Healthcare*. International stories followed were: *the Temporary Failure of Playstation 3's*, *Son of Hamas Leader Claims to Have Spied of Israel*, *Taiwan Earthquake*, *India Stampede*, and *German Terror Plot*.

Publication Times of News Articles from Various Sources



Source	Average Time of Publication after Initial Release (Hours)	Number of Times Article was not Available
CNN	4.153846	1
Yahoo News	2.23	1
ABC News	2.08	1
MSNBC	4	0
Digg	4.08	3
Mixx	2	2
Washington Post	3.69	1
NY Times	3.15	2
LA Times	5.15	4
USA Today	2.15	6

On every occasion, a news story article would not appear in at least one website, explaining the gaps in the graph.

Out of the sources used, Yahoo News was the leader in the number of times it first published the story, with five, while LA Times lagged back with an average of 5.15 hours between the initial publication of the article and its publication. But of course, the initial publication of an article in my

observed list does not mean that it was the first to release the information out of the entire World Wide Web. It was merely the leader out of the ones I watched. USA Today was the least “reliable”, if that can be measured in the number of times that it did not have a particular article. This may be because USA Today is more of a newspaper news source and does not publish as many articles on the internet as is printed.

On average, international stories were published the fastest out of the three types, with a publication time of 2.67 hours. It is because these stories that are important enough to be known internationally affect many people, so it is logical that they be published as soon as possible and in as many sources, so that it is accessible to anyone on the internet. National news stories were second in publication time with an average of 3.98 hours. Though these stories are crucial enough to make it into national news, it may not be applicable to the entire population and only those that are of interest to many are published. Also, these same headlines may be reported through television broadcasts, radio, or other sources, so there is not a need for it to be published immediately. Entertainment news articles had an average publication time of 5.82. This makes sense because this kind of news is only of interest to a certain audience. Since it is not applicable to the entire population, it is not necessary for it to be published right away.

Online and television news sites, on average, led the average publication time with a publication time of 3.52 hours. This is because its main method of informing people of news is through multimedia and sources that are quick to transfer information, so as soon as a story appears, it is easy for them to publish it quickly. Social networking sites were next with an average of 4.04 hours. Users of these sites are likely to use the Internet for other purposes, like checking the news, and as soon as they see something of importance to them, they will share it. Newspaper based sources were next with an average of 4.32 hours. This is because for these sources, the newspaper is their main source of

distributing information, not through the internet, so there may be a delay in the time that the article was published.

In some cases, if the article selected appeared on less than half of the websites, it was not included in the graph, below. This included the article *Whale Trainer Funeral Set for Monday* and *'Hurt Locker' Producer Banned from Oscars*. The lack of articles for the whale trainer's death may be due to the fact that this information was already published in a previous article that cited her death, deeming a separate article about it, unnecessary. The banning of the producer's small number of articles may be because the public just simply does not care about it enough for it to be published in many areas.

As with the articles, sources that only listed a few of the tracked stories were not included in the graph, below. These included: BBC News, Propeller, and Twitter. BBC, which is a British news source, did not include a majority of the US News, which is reasonable, since it focuses more on news of the United Kingdom and big international stories. Propeller, a social networking site, did not have many of these articles because of it is a site to post "your own stories", so there are more personal articles on the website than national or international news. With Twitter, the initial posting of a keyword on Twitter is nearly impossible to discover, so it was only recorded if it appeared in the Trending Topics section, which is a list of the top ten most popular word or phrases used. Only words relating to two of these articles appeared: the one about the failure of the Playstation 3 and the earthquake of Taiwan. The appearance of the Playstation can be linked to the fact that users of PS3 are likely to use other kinds of technology in their lives and are thus, likely to use the internet and report stories. Playstation is also a game console sold throughout the world, and with the high number of users, it is not surprise that it would appear as a Trending Topic. News of earthquakes, like the devastating one in Chile, have also been in recent news, so when the one in Taiwan was reported, more people paid attention to it. Not

only that, but it is also a large natural disaster that has the potential to inflict heavy damage on the area, and help may be needed.

This experiment could be improved in a number of ways. A larger sample of news articles should be used and also of a larger range of genres, so that trends that were observed here are more stable and be verified easier. Outliers would not affect a larger sample as much as mine, of fifteen. This also applies to the number of sources for the same reason. A larger number than twelve could be used. Also, articles tracked should not just be limited to the time the nine o'clock time that I had set. News happens twenty-four hours a day, and tracking articles that are reported during the day and night, could provide different results. There might be a greater influx in the evening, since people are returning from work and there will be more people on social networking websites. Articles should instead, be tracked at all hours of the day, so possible trends specific to the times, may be observed. There should also be a way to find the exact time a website was published. Though many have time stamps, some do not, and if it appears in the fifteen minute time interval that I refresh the websites, then it is recorded in an interval of fifteen minutes.