Off the Cuff:

How Fashion Bloggers Find and Use Information

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Abstract—The authors conducted an online survey to investigate the information-seeking be-havior and research methods of fashion bloggers—specifically, how bloggers find, use, and interact with information and information professionals. Based on qualitative and quantitative research, the authors posit three observations: the importance of appearing authentic and knowledgeable discourages bloggers from consulting information professionals for research assistance; blogging's inherently fast-paced nature stymies in-depth research; and fashion blog-ging hinges on information sharing, but a fair and consistent citation standard has not been established.

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INTRODUCTION

The investigation of information-seeking behaviors and research methods of partic-ular populations is a well-established practice in librarianship.[1] For example, one can easily find studies on how chemists look for information, how art historians do (or do not) use the help of librarians, or how lawyers engage with research and resources. The myMETRO Researchers Fashion Blogging Team chose to investigate the information-seeking behaviors and methods of fashion bloggers. The catalyst for this study was the myMETRO Researchers Pilot Project which focused on how informa-tion professionals could serve cutting-edge New-York-City-based trendsetters outside

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1. For more information on the general practice of studying information-seeking behavior and models of research, please see T.D. Wilson, "Models in Information Behaviour Research," *The Journal of Documentation* 55, no. 3 (1999): 249–70.

of the library world. myMETRO is the individual membership program of METRO, the Metropolitan New York Library Council, which in turn is a non-profit organization that develops and provides essential library services throughout New York City and Westchester County. As a world capital, New York City is a driver of many international trends, and research and information are at the heart of creating and developing these trends. The myMETRO Researchers Pilot Project positioned new and seasoned information professionals at the point where these trendsetters address the issues driving their industry. Four teams pursued a variety of topics including Occupy Wall Street, Lifelong Learning, Social Media, and the authors' team, Fashion Blogging.[2]

We chose to study fashion bloggers because it is a population not usually associated with libraries or traditional research methods. We saw this as an opportunity to reach out to individuals who do not necessarily view themselves as researchers or have any relationship with librarians or information professionals. Most library literature concerning blogs addresses two topics: how libraries can use blogs as communication or marketing tools, and how librarians are using them as information resources for their own professional development.[3]

In contrast, our study focuses on the creation of blog posts and the information needs and research methods required for these posts. The purpose of the study was to discover how fashion bloggers function as researchers and knowledge creators. The research we conducted, via surveys and e-mail interviews, sheds light on this process, albeit on a small scale.

For the sake of this article, we accept the definition of a blog as a contraction of the words "web" and "log," meaning they are Internet sites on which individuals regularly publish their thoughts on a particular subject. Blogs are composed of separate posts, often displayed in reverse chronological order, and they may contain text, images, video, and music.[4] Fashion blogs focus on fashion and style, and they generally encompass three sub-genres or types: street style ("blogs that highlight the 'best' of street fashion by capturing and posting photographs online"), personal style ("bloggers post pictures of themselves documenting their style"), and commentary and coverage of the industry's events, news, and shows.[5]

LITERATURE REVIEW

For this research study, the authors focused on literature from library and fashion publications that explores specifically how fashion bloggers find and use information. We purposely avoided literature on blogging and bloggers in general, and the broader fashion industry, as fashion bloggers are a unique subgroup.

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2. For more information on myMETRO Researchers project, please see Tom Nielsen, "Takin' It to the Streets: myMETRO Researchers Bring Library Science Skills, Expertise to NYC Communities," in *The Global Librarian*, ed. Jason Kucsma et al. (New York: ACRL/NY and METRO, 2013), 37–84.

3. Vivienne Eades, "Fashion Blogs: Too Trendy for Libraries or Useful Resources?," *Art Library Journal* 36, no. 2 (2011): 12.

4. Agnès Rocomora, "Personal Fashion Blogs: Screens and Mirrors in Digital Self-Portraits," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 15, no. 5 (2011): 408.

5. Barbara Leung, "The Rise of the Fashion Blogger: Actual Democratization of the Fashion Industry?," *Phreshly Squeezed* (blog), May 8, 2011, http://www.phreshly-squeezed.net/2011/05/rise-fashion-blogger-actual-democratization-fashion-industry/; Rocomora, "Personal Fashion Blogs," 407.

Much of the literature, both scholarly and popular, about fashion blogging concerns consumption (i.e., how the reader interacts with blogs), how fashion blogging relates to traditional fashion journalism, and/or the growing incorporation of bloggers into various sectors of the mainstream fashion industry. Very little scholarship examines the creation of fashion blogs from the bloggers' point of view: what goes into making a post or an entire blog; what type of research, if any, fashion bloggers conduct; and how fashion bloggers obtain and use information for the creation of their blogs. Even less research exists on fashion blogs in library literature. What is written focuses on how blogs serve as information sources for library patrons, not on the blog creators themselves or on library resources for fashion students and faculty. The oft-cited article "Inspiration and Information: Sources for the Fashion Designer and Historian" by Gaye Smith comes closest to what we hoped to achieve through our study of fashion bloggers.[6] Smith outlines where fashion designers and historians look for information and inspiration, emphasizing the importance of serials and magazines for following fashion trends and seeking visual information. Smith alludes to predictions of style, market trends, and visual sources of creative inspiration in her study. Vivienne Eades, a librarian at Middlesex University in London, offers a justification for fashion blogs as a legitimate source of information for fashion students in the article "Fashion Blogs: Too Trendy for Libraries or Useful Resources?"[7] While Eades does not look at fashion bloggers as a user group, the information-seeking behaviors she describes for fashion students might be relevant for fashion bloggers, as they can be one and the same.

We found three notable researchers who have investigated fashion blogs and bloggers: Dr. Alice Marwick, Agnès Rocamora, and Eleanor Snare. Dr. Alice Marwick, assistant professor in communication and media studies at Fordham University, explores online identity and consumer culture. Specifically, Marwick investigates social status and conspicuous consumption online as demonstrated by fashion bloggers. In her presentation "Conspicuous and Authentic: Fashion Blogs, Style, and Consumption," Marwick offers a succinct summary of the fashion blogging universe which provides a macro-level context for our study.[8] Although the bulk of her presentation focuses on how fashion bloggers exemplify conspicuous consumption in the twenty-first century (a topic not immediately relevant to our investigation), Marwick's research does expound upon topics that inform the analysis of our survey results, such as the importance of authenticity to the success of blogs and recognition of style curation as a valued and legitimate skill.

Eleanor Snare, who also studies the practices and social impact of fashion bloggers, completed a dissertation at the University of Leeds in 2011 on the relationships between fashion bloggers, the fashion industry, and contemporary social structures. Snare's research focuses on fashion blogs as "an important

6. Gaye Smith, "Inspiration and Information: Sources for the Fashion Designer and Historian," *Art Libraries Journal* 14, no. 4 (1989): 10–16.

7. Eades, "Fashion Blogs," 12–16.

8. Alice Marwick, "Conspicuous and Authentic: Fashion Blogs, Style, and Consumption" (paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, Boston, Massachusetts, May 26–30, 2011).

element of the contemporary fashion commodity chain."[9] Her dissertation expli-
cates the many tasks fashion bloggers undertake in order to run a successful blog.
Snare uses empirical knowledge gleaned through an online survey. She polled
fashion bloggers on what they do although she did not explicitly ask them about
how they conduct research or look for information.

Most relevant to our study is the work of Agnès Rocamora, senior research fellow
and senior lecturer in cultural and historical studies at the University of the Arts
London. Rocamora has written extensively on fashion blogs as a new medium and the
interplay between fashion blogs and traditional fashion journalism as evidenced in
magazines and newspapers. Rocamora's 2012 article "Hypertextuality and Remedia-
tion in the Fashion Media" was especially enlightening since it discusses some of the
practices that go into creating blog posts.[10] Rocamora explains that posts, fashion blog
posts in particular, are often composed of a series of links to other web material. Such
linking not only creates the content of the blog but also serves as the most basic and
most accepted form of citation in the blogosphere. Rocamora also notes the transient
nature of blog-post creation and the posts themselves; like much of the Internet's
content, blog posts are expected to be created and consumed quickly. Readers of
fashion blogs anticipate hyper up-to-date content, which increasingly involves "live
blogging," e.g., writing about an event in real time.

METHODOLOGY

The authors took a twofold approach to gathering information about the research
methods of fashion bloggers. First we distributed a public survey using a Google form
(http://goo.gl/x4Ji8). The survey questions asked bloggers explicitly what informa-
tion they need to write posts, where they find that information, and how they would
utilize the expertise of an information professional. Also included were demographic
questions and requests for details about their blogs. We constructed the questions as
simply as possible, avoiding words like "research," "methodology," "library," and
"citation," as these terms do not typically resonate with fashion bloggers and could
discourage participation in the survey. We also included a question asking partici-
pants if they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview.

Our distribution channels were the social media sites Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest,
Tumblr, LinkedIn, and the fashion blogging online community discussion boards.
We also sent targeted e-mails to fashion bloggers featured in the publication *Style
Diaries: World Fashion from Berlin to Tokyo*,[11] an international fashion blog directory.
We struggled to find a tone that was professional yet approachable; we discovered that
the world of fashion blogging is an informal and collegial one. In an effort to be taken
seriously and to not be perceived as "spam" or "pitches," the tone of our communi-
cation with fashion bloggers was initially perceived as too formal and thus blatantly
interpreted as originating from outside their community. With this realization, we ad-
justed the tone and became more informal and relaxed when using social networking

9. Eleanor Snare, "Work Hard, Consume Hard: Fashion Blogging as a Site of Labour and Production on the Fashion
Commodity Chain" (PhD. diss., University of Leeds, 2011), 2.

10. Agnès Rocamora, "Hypertextuality and Remediation in the Fashion Media," *Journalism Practice* 6, no. 1 (2012): 92–106.

11. Simone Werle, *Style Diaries: World Fashion from Berlin to Tokyo* (Munich: Prestel, 2010).

tools and sending e-mails. The survey went live March 2012 and stayed active until the end of April. During that time, we received thirty-one responses, nineteen of which indicated that we could contact the bloggers for a follow-up interview.

Recognizing that the information needs and information-seeking behavior of fashion bloggers is probably too nuanced to be described completely in a twenty-question survey, we included the question about follow-up contact. We composed eight additional questions, two of which were individualized to the blogger's survey responses. Through these questions, we hoped to gain detailed insight into how the information gathered was used and how fashion blog posts are created. The initial survey sought to have respondents identify information needs and information acquisition. The follow-up questions were designed to address the use of information to create new knowledge, i.e., blog posts.

RESULTS

Qualitative data is an important part of this study; therefore the majority of the survey questions were in-depth, open-ended questions about process and methods. Given the small sample size—thirty-one fashion bloggers took our survey within a two-month period—we understand that the conclusions drawn may not be representative of all fashion bloggers.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE BLOGGERS AND THEIR BLOGS

The fashion bloggers who responded to our survey represent a variety of ages and geographic locations. The majority (70.9 percent) fall within the nineteen-to-twenty-nine age group, while 9.6 percent of respondents are thirteen to nineteen years of age, 12.9 percent are thirty to thirty-nine, and 6.4 percent are forty to forty-nine. Our survey received responses from around the world. The largest percentage of bloggers said they are based in New York City (32.2 percent) with Los Angeles, Italy, and Manila (Philippines) tied for second place (6.4 percent). The thirty-one bloggers who participated in our survey represent ten different countries; the fashion industry is no longer tied exclusively to major cosmopolitan cities like New York, Paris, and Milan. Rocamora, in her study of fashion bloggers, found the same diversity in geographic location and perspective. "The newness of fashion blogs partly resides in the shifting approach to fashion they have conveyed, a fashion that is not centred on established designers and key cities only, on the voice of the traditional expert, but that echoes the openness and the decentredness pertaining to blogs' hypertextuality."[12]

In terms of gender, our survey participants are reflective of fashion bloggers as a whole. The majority (87 percent) of our respondents identify as female. According to Marwick, fashion bloggers are overwhelmingly female, especially high-profile bloggers who have received the attention of the fashion industry.[13] We did have a few male bloggers (9.6 percent), and one respondent did not answer the question.

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12. Rocamora, "Hypertextuality and Remediation in the Fashion Media," 101.
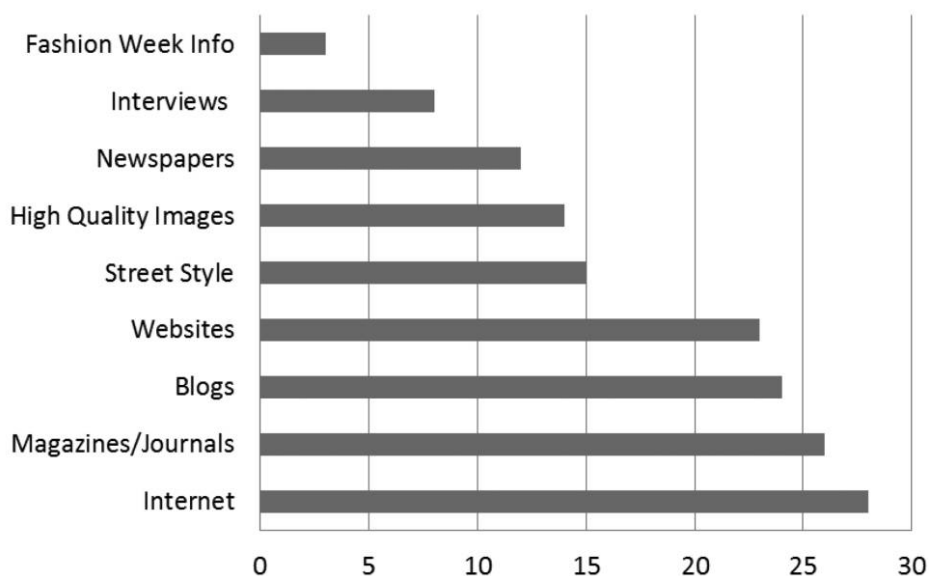13. Marwick, "Conspicuous and Authentic," 1.

Figure 1. Information sources consulted by fashion bloggers.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND GATHERING RESOURCES FOR BLOG
POSTS

We asked the respondents to comment on which information sources they consult in the creation of blog posts (Figure 1). Predictably, the survey revealed that most bloggers conduct their research using the Internet (90.3 percent). Other research methods include photographing street style (48.3 percent) and interviews with industry professionals (25.8 percent). A few bloggers mentioned the importance of fashion weeks and the press, documentation, and other material related to fashion weeks (9.6 percent). Most of the bloggers tend to use magazines and journals (83 percent). Some respondents chose to use other blogs (77 percent) and websites (74 percent) to gather information regarding individual blog posts. Newspapers were also a valuable resource for the bloggers to use for their posts (38 percent). Almost half of all respondents (45 percent) agreed that high-resolution images are a key component of their fashion blogs. Many fashion blogs are image-centric, as fashion is a visual medium, and do not contain a large amount of textual content.

CONSISTENT DIFFICULTY FINDING INFORMATION NEEDED FOR
FASHION BLOGGING

Most respondents left the question blank that asked "What information do you need for fashion blogging that is consistently difficult to find or obtain?" One blogger stated that "nothing" is difficult to find when it comes to locating and obtaining information for her posts. Three other respondents stated that they know where to find the information they need. Among the challenges indicated were finding high-resolution
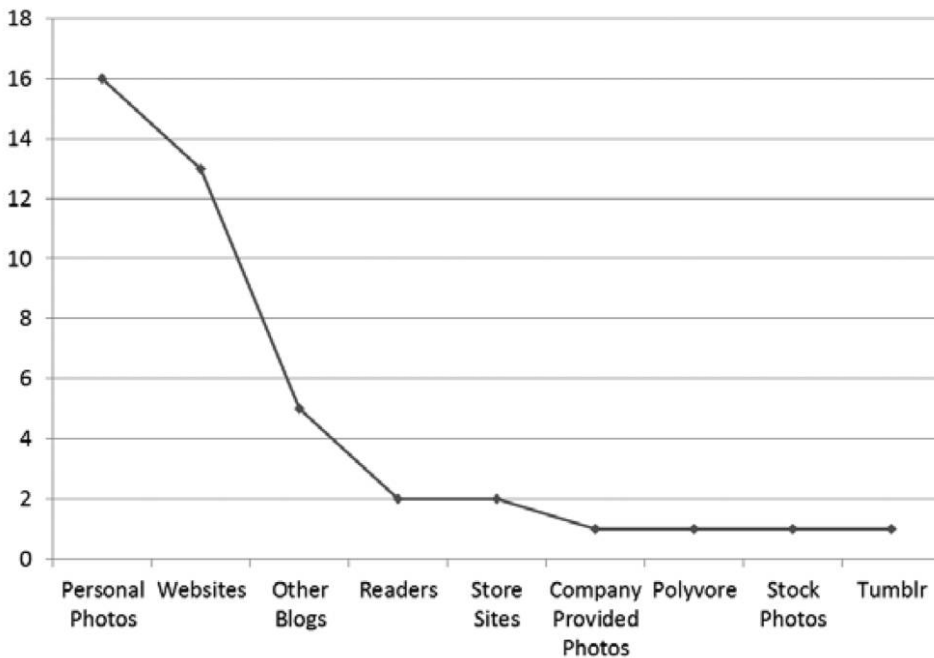
Figure 2. Sources of images used by fashion bloggers.

images (9 percent) and photographers (6 percent). Unique and original content was also mentioned as a challenge. One blogger noted that that she had trouble finding information about Search Engine Optimization (SEO), in that she wanted to know more about what it is and how it can benefit her blog. Two respondents noted that they had trouble obtaining media passes required to gain entry into events and fashion shows. Other respondents indicated that they needed help finding unbiased information and information on products and advice for transgendered individuals. One blogger stated, "I have the opposite problem; I have too much content, too many products to review (to the point that I now very rarely accept a product by mail) and an average of eight+ events/week to attend with generally very generous gift bags of products to try. Staying organized and on top of my calendar is the difficult part."

THE ROLE OF IMAGE SEARCHING AND ACQUISITION

We asked respondents to describe the role that searching for and acquiring images plays in the creation of their blogs posts (Figure 2). Sixteen commented that that they utilize their personal images and therefore do not have to worry about copyright issues. Others noted that they use other websites (41 percent) and blogs (16 percent) as a major source for images used on their own blog. Some respondents said that they credit the sites from which they take these images and use hyperlinks to link back to the original image. Several respondents noted that other image resources that they consult are websites like Tumblr, Polyvore, and Stock Photos. One respondent said that companies would send products to photograph.
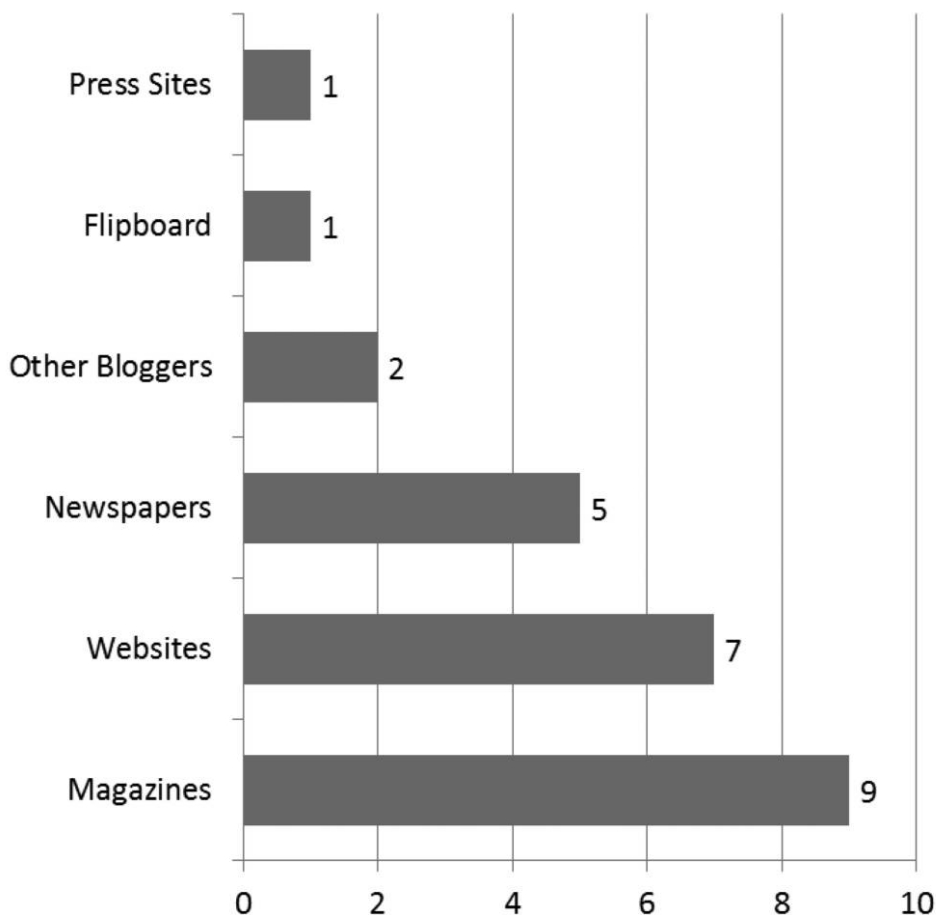
Figure 3. Information subscription services used by fashion bloggers.

IMAGE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

Given the importance of images to fashion blogs, we were interested in whether or not bloggers use image services such as Getty Images, iStockPhoto, or stock.xchng. Only two (6.4 percent) respondents subscribe to an image service, which often has copyright clearance included in the cost of the photograph. Services mentioned specifically include Fashion Gone Rogue, Weheartit, and stock.xchng.

INFORMATION SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

In addition to images, we asked the fashion bloggers which information subscription services they use (Figure 3). Most bloggers (29 percent) reported that they use magazines such as *Vogue, GQ, V Magazine, Glamour, Elle, InStyle,* and *Details* to assist them with the creation of their blog posts. Others (22 percent) use websites such as Refinery 29, Chictopia, and Style.com. *New York Times* and *Women's Wear Daily* (WWD) were popular sites as well (16 percent). Two bloggers responded that they

consult other bloggers for information. One respondent mentioned the social reading application Flipboard, and another said that, when she has time, she goes to press sites to locate information for her posts.

EMPLOYING THE SERVICES OF PROFESSIONAL RESEARCHERS

We were interested in surveying fashion bloggers to find out what kinds of tasks they would want a professional researcher (librarian or other information professional) to perform or assist them with if they were able to employ such services. Most bloggers (32 percent) responded that they either would not use a professional researcher or provided no answer to the question. Others stated that if they were to utilize the skills of a professional researcher, they would have the person investigate fashion forecasting, blog optimization, employing photographers, avenues for inspiration, celebrity culture and images, and/or proper image editing and acquisition. Others would like help with pricing, reader needs, image organization, unique content creation, fashion week scheduling, fits for various body styles and gender identities, effective social networking, and interview question construction. Most of these tasks are normally associated with the work of a personal assistant or an intern, not a researcher. One blogger responded that she needs help "organizing . . . my own images." A second stated, "I'd love a personal photographer for taking pictures when at fashion weeks and other go outs. But otherwise I like to do everything myself. I'm not very trustful [*sic*] when it comes to these kinds of things." As these quotes illustrate, fashion bloggers' immediate needs are not research-related but rather personal and organizational in nature.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Although our sample size is small compared to the ever-growing number of fashion bloggers, there are general conclusions we can make about how this user group approaches research and information-seeking. Based on our study, we posit three observations about the information-seeking behavior of fashion bloggers:

1. The importance of appearing authentic and knowledgeable discourages bloggers from consulting information professionals for research assistance.
2. Blogging's inherently fast-paced nature stymies in-depth research.
3. Fashion blogging hinges on information sharing among bloggers and other online sources, but a fair and consistent standard of citation has not been established.

AUTHENTICITY

As is evident in the literature on fashion bloggers and the comments gathered through this study, a blogger's success is most often evaluated based on the notion of authenticity or having a unique voice. Bloggers must demonstrate that their opinions have value and credibility; otherwise they will not obtain or retain readership and advertisers. "The indication of individual identity through the curation and display of clothing and accessories is in keeping with the ethos of social media, which emphasizes

authenticity above all."[14] To achieve this legitimacy, a blogger's opinions have to be rooted in a vast knowledge of fashion and style. Doing research and consulting an information professional for help would give the appearance that the blogger did not have sufficient knowledge to manage an influential blog. When asked "If you could employ the services of a professional researcher, what would you have that person do?" one respondent stated, "I wouldn't. That would take a large part of my work away that I truly enjoy doing." A respondent from Spain stated, "I prefer to be my own researcher." It is clear that the surveyed fashion bloggers hold authenticity in high regard and are reluctant to transfer responsibility of knowledge acquisition and curation to a professional, non-fashion blogger researcher.

Personal fashion blogs are based primarily on personal experiences and style and are made up of self-generated content. Often the information needed for a new post literally resides in the fashion blogger's closet, and thus few secondary sources are required to create a personal fashion blog post. As one blogger stated, "for me it's not difficult to find the information for my fashion blog because all the texts are made by me." Since much of fashion blog content is opinion-based, it is not obvious or appropriate to conduct research in the traditional sense. One blogger noted, "I am not sure that [hiring an information professional] would be useful for my blog, since I use mine mostly . . . [to] express personal opinions." These bloggers view themselves as individualists in both their style and opinions and therefore are hesitant to consult sources outside of themselves and their experiences.

Since fashion bloggers operate in an environment where authenticity (or perceived authenticity) is the defining indicator of success, librarians need to present themselves not as information providers but as a toolkit for better information acquisition. Information professionals seeking to serve fashion bloggers are advised to focus on marketing access to diverse and rich fashion-related materials, especially periodicals like *Women's Wear Daily*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and trend-forecasting periodicals such as *CAUSeffect*, *Close-Up*, and *Collezioni*. Most bloggers are independent and not in the financial position to subscribe to these often costly resources.

FAST FASHION BLOGGING

Blogging, fashion and otherwise, is a fast-paced endeavor. In order to attract and maintain readership and attention in the Internet's crowded information sphere, a blog must provide frequent and timely updates. As media theorist and "net critic" Geert Lovink puts it, "Technology such as the Internet lives on the principle of permanent change . . . the 'tyranny of the new' rule."[15] Fashion blogging especially is subject to the "tyranny of the new." "Witness the live streaming of fashion shows, events once the preserve of an elite given the privilege to see the collections months ahead of their appearance in print media and in shops. In their constant, often daily, updating of sites with new posts, fashion blogs feed into this tyranny of the new,

14. Alice Marwick, "Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity and Self-Branding in Web 2.0" (PhD. diss., New York University, 2010).
15. Geert Lovink, *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (London: Routledge, 2008), xi.

constructing, more than any other media, fashion as transient, passing, already gone."[16]

Not only must bloggers create content at a rate that keeps up with the industry and the expectations of its readers but that also remains competitive with other blogs. As one blogger stated, "It's very difficult to not write about the same news and write fashion news before other bloggers!" The pressure that fashion bloggers experience to update their blogs constantly with new and unique content causes some to prioritize quantity and speed over well-researched, quality posts.

Fashion blogging's rapid pace does not lend itself to the in-depth and complex research that is often the purview of librarians and libraries. The fact that over 90 percent of fashion bloggers reported that they find the majority of their information on the Internet supports this information-seeking practice. For information to be useful to a fashion blogger, it must be rapidly and readily accessible, without the need for complex searches or time-consuming investigations.

Librarians might not be able to assist with the immediacy of individual posts. However, they could aid fashion bloggers by providing access to information that would allow their posts to have original content as well as help to better equip bloggers with the skills and strategies necessary to quickly find quality information. One of the survey respondents supported this idea by stating that she would use an information professional to "find unique and different stuff." The blogger who employs an information specialist or librarian could provide a more nuanced perspective based on meaningful investigation, operating within a larger context.

LINKING = CITING?

In both the survey responses and the follow-up interviews, bloggers stated that most of their images and blog posts come from personal photography and their own experiences. However, blogging also depends heavily on text and images borrowed from other online sources. Rocamora refers to this concept as hypertextuality. "With the World Wide Web, however, and the blogosphere in particular, hypertextuality has proliferated. It is the very structure blogs rest on. When the reader clicks on a link, images (both still and moving), words, and sounds can come at once on the screen, quickly succeeding and completing each other."[17] She continues, "Fashion blogs constantly relate to other blogs, be it through directly linking to them in a post or by including them in their blogroll, the list of blogs and the related links bloggers favour."[18] Blogs refer to each other or "cite" not by using an official citation standard such as *Chicago Manual of Style* or *MLA Style Manual*, as is customary in traditional scholarship, but simply via the practice of "linking" or creating a hyperlink that refers back to the original source. As Noor Ali-Hasan and Lada A. Adamic explain in their article "Expressing Social Relationships on the Blog through Links and Comments," "Citation links are made by bloggers within their own posts and can reference an entire blog or just a particular post on that blog. By their nature, they occur at a fixed

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16. Rocamora, "Hypertextuality and Remediation in the Fashion Media," 97.
17. Ibid., 95.
18. Ibid., 96.

time point, but may be repeated."[19] Citation links are used in the blogosphere to create relationships between blogs and bloggers, build a community around a topic or idea, and acknowledge the work of others. However, as a standard by which information is ethically used and shared, the citation link system is incomplete due mainly to the unstable nature of the Internet; web pages can modify their URLs, be relocated to different servers with entirely different URLs, or simply cease to exist. Additionally, privacy settings on blogs and other sites can also be altered, restricting access.[20]

Since there are no clearly defined standards, the question then becomes one of best practices for citing information sources. When asked during a follow-up interview, one blogger said, "If there are any phrases or images I would like to borrow, I always make sure to cite all my sources by posting the links on where the reader may find them." When asked to describe their practice of image searching and acquisition, many respondents said that they freely use images from other sites and expressed that they did not worry too much about copyright. Bloggers cite images by either listing the name of the website or blogger or providing a link to that blog. One stated, "In my full knowledge and opinion, it is very much acceptable for anyone and everyone to reuse all images off the World Wide Web PROVIDED they clearly and VISIBLY cite their references and all links to where they originally 'borrowed' the images from [emphasis in the original]." So much of fashion blogging is linking to other posts; it was a general consensus among the respondents that this is considered the accepted citation style of the fashion world.

The flipside of linking to a website or blog with regard to copyright and citation is whether or not bloggers are concerned with others linking to their own blogs, which can sometimes include original content. Do they use a Creative Commons License to protect their posts, or do they use watermarks on their images? One respondent answered in the follow-up interview that she did not believe she was a well-known blogger so that this was not currently an issue. She was "genuinely concerned about other bloggers or anybody who does not ask permission to use my original images. There is no current policy that protects all users on the Internet for the images that they upload to be used without their consent. Right now, the Internet can access anybody's images and anybody really can own any image found on the Internet unless specified. Sad to say that not even watermarks on the images can deter people from editing them to claim it as their own."

What is most interesting about this sentiment is bloggers' desire for protection of their own images and texts while simultaneously assuming the right, entitlement, and flexibility to freely use third-party content without going through official clearance channels. This behavior is symptomatic of information sharing and exchange on the Internet, especially in the blogosphere which encourages and is built upon easy and seamless knowledge exchange.

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19. Noor Ali-Hasan and Lada A. Adamic, "Expressing Social Relationships on the Blog through Links and Comments," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media* (Boulder, CO: ICWSM, 2007), 8, http://www.nooratwork.com/pdf/ali-hasan_adamic.pdf.

20. Ziv Bar-Yossef, Andrei Z. Broder, Ravi Kumar, and Andrew Tomkins, "Sic Transit Gloria Telae: Towards an Understanding of the Web's Decay," in *Proceedings of the 13th International World Wide Web Conference* (New York City: IW3C2, 2004), 328, http://www.iw3c2.org/WWW2004/docs/1p328.pdf.

Independent Fashion Bloggers (IFB), a professional fashion-blogging network, does offer some guidance for its bloggers. Taylor Davies, author of the post "Legally Blog: Know Your Rights," provides basic explanations of key copyright concepts such as fair use, plagiarism, and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA).[21] While this document is certainly a step in the right direction toward standardizing sharing among blogs, the counsel offered is often vague and cursory. For example, Creative Commons Licenses, which in many respects are tailor-made for blog content, are not mentioned at all. Additionally, when discussing fair use, the document states, "Generally, say you republish a photo from another source to comment on it, or someone takes a paragraph from and then comments on it, that's okay. If you're not adding anything, taking a photo from somewhere else and commenting on it it's usually okay."[22] Unfortunately, the oversimplified language of this seemingly authoritative document does not arm bloggers with the tools needed to navigate complex and serious copyright concerns.

In another post, "Should Start-Ups Get Permission to Use Blogger Images?," Davies questions the practice of aggregator sites drawing content from fashion and style blogs and instructs bloggers on how to protect themselves from sites borrowing their content.[23] While the intended audience of this post is probably style bloggers (those bloggers who post images of themselves and do not rely on images from the open web or image services), the focus of IFB's statement on copyright concerns the protection of content creators, not proper and ethical information use.

Traditional journalism, faced with dramatically changing consumption and distribution of news content, particularly because of news aggregators and social media, is also looking to standardize the practice of hyperlinking. Simon Dumenco, *Ad Age's* editor-at-large, announced the creation of the Council on Ethical Blogging and Aggregation at the 2014 South by Southwest (SXSW) conference in Austin, Texas.[24] The Council, whose members include key executives in the journalism industry such as Cyndi Stivers of *Columbia Journalism Review*, Sheryl Huggins Salomon of The Root, and Evan Hansen of Wired.com, seeks to establish ethical guidelines for content aggregators and blogs by way of the Curators Code. David Carr, media and culture columnist at the *New York Times,* describes the Curators Code as "a symbol resembling a sideways S to express that a piece of content came directly from another source, and a different figure—a curved arrowlike symbol—to signal what is commonly known as a 'hat tip,' or nod to a source that inspired a further thought. The Curator's Code supplies the appropriate symbol and then the blogger or writer simply puts in a hyperlink behind it as they normally would."[25]

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21. Taylor Davis, "Legally Blog: Know Your Rights and Protect Your Content," *Independent Fashion Bloggers* (blog), April 30, 2012, http://heartifb.com/2012/04/30/legally-blog-know-your-rights-and-protect-your-content/.

22. Ibid.

23. Taylor Davis, "Should Start-Ups Get Permission to Use Blogger Images?," *Independent Fashion Bloggers* (blog), April 20, 2012, http://heartifb.com/2012/04/20/should-start-ups-get-permission-to-use-blogger-images/.

24. Alyssa Skelton, "Council Created to Regulate Aggregation, Bloggers," *Mashable*, March 12, 2012, http://mashable.com/2012/03/12/ethical-aggregation/.

25. David Carr, "A Code of Conduct for Content Aggregators," *The New York Times*, March 11, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/12/business/media/guidelines-proposed-for-content-aggregation-online.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

While IFB and the Council on Ethical Blogging and Aggregation are attempting to encourage online content creators like bloggers to use information ethically and with respect to copyright laws, it will take time to determine whether such actions will change information use and sharing on the Internet and create a reliable and definitive citation system. Bloggers of all types, not just fashion bloggers, are certainly in need of guidance and instruction on intellectual property and copyright. Librarians and information professionals trained in these areas are the ideal partners in this endeavor, and this opens up the possibility for enhanced collaboration between the fashion blogosphere and the library world.

FUTURE RESEARCH

As this project came to a close, the authors identified several unanticipated avenues for further research. In the literature, especially trade periodicals and newspapers, fashion bloggers are often contrasted with traditional fashion journalists. A deeper examination of the parallels and deviations between how fashion bloggers and traditional fashion journalists find and use information would be an interesting and logical next step.

Additionally, when constructing the literature review for this article, we encountered several books authored by prominent fashion bloggers. While many bloggers said that they did not need professional assistance with daily posts, we wondered if they would need research assistance with a more substantial publication such as a book.

Finally, our survey revealed that fashion bloggers are confident researchers. One blogger stated, "It's not difficult to find if you know where to look. For me it's been this way." Another indicated, "Nothing is hard to obtain in this day and age if you know where to look," and a third stated, "I tend to find all that I need." To assess the veracity of fashion bloggers' confidence in researching and information gathering and use, a thorough content analysis of each survey respondent's blogs and how information is used therein would prove instrumental.