Narratives: A Visualization to Track Narrative Events as they Develop

Danyel Fisher, Aaron Hoff, George Robertson, Microsoft Research
Matt Hurst, Microsoft Live Labs
ON THE DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Foes Use Obama’s Muslim Ties to Fuel Rumors About Him

By Perry Bacon Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer
Thursday, November 29, 2007; Page A01

In his speeches and often on the Internet, the part of Sen. Barack Obama’s biography that gets the most attention is not his race but his connections to the Muslim world.

Since declaring his candidacy for president in February, Obama, a member of a congregation of the United Church of Christ in Chicago, has had to address assertions that he is a Muslim or that he had received training in Islam in Indonesia, where he lived from ages 6 to 10. While his father was an atheist and his mother did not practice religion, Obama’s stepfather did occasionally attend services at a mosque there.

Despite his denials, rumors and e-mails circulating on the Internet continue to allege that Obama (D-Ill.) is a Muslim, a “Muslim plant” in a conspiracy against America, and that, if elected president, he would take the oath of office using a Koran, rather than a Bible, as did Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), the only Muslim in Congress, when he was sworn in earlier this year.

In campaign appearances, Obama regularly mentions his time living and attending school in Indonesia, and the fact that his paternal grandfather, a Kenyan farmer, was a Muslim. Obama invokes these facts as part of his case that he is prepared to handle foreign policy, despite having been in the Senate for only three years, and that he would literally bring a new face to parts of the world where the United States is not popular.

The son of a white woman from Kansas and a black man from Kenya, Obama was born and spent much of his childhood in Hawaii, and he talks more about his multicultural background than he does about the possibility of being the first African American president, in marked contrast to Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), who mentions in most of her stump speeches the prospect of her...
CANNONFIRE
Joseph Cannon cannonfiremail@yahoo.com

Thursday, November 29, 2007

Has the Washington Post exposed a smear, or simply repeated one?

It's a little hard to tell whether this piece was intended as a hit. Read it for yourself: "Foes Use Obama's Muslim Ties to Fuel Rumors About Him."

What Muslim ties?

An early rumor about Obama's faith came from Insight, a conservative online magazine. The Insight article said Obama had "spent at least four years in a so-called madrassa, or Muslim seminary, in Indonesia." It attributed this detail to background information the Clinton campaign had been collecting.

After Obama denied the rumor, Jeffrey Kuhner, Insight's editor, said Obama's "concealment and deception was to be the issue, not so much his Muslim heritage," and he suggested that the source of the madrassa rumor was the Clinton campaign. The Clinton campaign denied the charge.

What "concealment and deception"? What "Muslim heritage"?

Alas, the WP never clarifies that the school was not a madrassa -- just an ordinary school in Indonesia that he attended between ages six and ten. Obama claims to be a Christian and no-one has ever presented any evidence that he is lying.

Here's the part the WP left out:

Part One
Part Two
Part Three

Want Free Money?
Can you name three major issues on which Obama has neither lied nor switched positions? The first to do so will win $50.

(Click for details.)

Housing Crisis Solved
A Plan That Works
Simple Solution A Must Read

www.ohioshinking.com

Joe The Plumber
Politics
Joe Thinks Obama's Economic Plan Is Socialistic. Read All About It Here.

By: BusinessWeek.com/2008-Elec

The son of a white woman from Kansas and a black man from Kenya, Obama was born and spent much of his childhood in Hawaii, and he talks more about his multicultural background than he does about the possibility of being the first African American president, in marked contrast to Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (N.Y.), who mentions in most of her speeches the respect of her...
On REAL reporting...

Here is an excellent opinion piece today by Glenn Greenwald, on the nature of REAL reporting, and how it has been, as the news media became so deathly afraid of contradicting our government, no matter how blantant and it chose to spew. (And, probably, largely also spurred along by Fox New's then newly emerging 'Fair and Balanced' aid and abet the Right Wing.)

It's sad really, that many of you out there may not be old enough to remember it ever being any other way, and as the proper norm. Well, it's not. Journalism's function is not merely to blindly spew out both sides of an issue, it equal weight. Check the facts, and if one side or the other is spewing bullshit, it is perfectly alright, and in fact to call bullshit!

From Glenn Greenwald, Nov. 30 2007:
Brooks: McCain and Obama

By David Brooks

SALEM, New Hampshire: Both Barack Obama and John McCain attract independents. Both have a candor that appeals to voters and media-types alike. Both ask their audiences to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Both offer a politics that is grand and inspiring.

But they are very different men. Their policies obviously conflict, but their skills, world views and moral philosophies set them apart, too. One man celebrates communitarian virtues like unity, the other classical virtues like honor.

Obama’s great skill is his ability to perceive and forge bonds with other people. Everybody who’s dealt with him has a story about a time when they felt Obama profoundly listened to them and understood them.

One of mine came a few years ago.

I was writing columns criticizing the Republican Congress, but each time I’d throw in a few sentences slamming the Democrats, subconsciously trying to make myself feel good. One morning I got a phone message from Obama that roughly said: David, if you want to criticize, you have to be able to praise as well.

He is an exceptionally skilled politician.
McCain and Obama

Jan. 9th, 2008 at 2:04 AM

They’re Very Different Men, notifies International Herald Tribune:

Their policies obviously conflict, but their skills, world views and moral philosophies set them apart, too. One man celebrates communitarian virtues like unity, the other classical virtues like honor.

The central issue in this election is the crisis of leadership.

Voters are reacting against partisan gridlock. Obama and McCain both offer ways to end this gridlock. Obama wants us to rise above it by rediscovering our commonalities. McCain hopes smash it with fierce honesty and independent action.
As Electoral Fortunes Rise, Fundraising Tends to Follow

By Matthew Mosk and John Solomon
Washington Post Staff Writers
Wednesday, January 9, 2008; Page A06

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's top fundraisers said last night they believe her strong showing in New Hampshire will match the crush of donations Sen. Barack Obama began to collect out of Iowa, and will keep them on even financial footing as the two top Democrats sprint to Super Tuesday.
Hillary Clinton’s California Campaign
by: Bob Brigham
Tue Jan 08, 2008 at 17:12:36 PM PST

While our friends at California Majority Report are denying Hillary’s campaign is dead, tomorrow’s Washington Post mentions the shifting dynamics ahead of the February 5th Democratic Primary:

One Obama fundraiser used the word “tsunami” to describe the flow of money coming from people seeking to find a place inside a campaign that has substantial new momentum. In addition to banquet halls for events in Boston and New York tomorrow, the campaign added an event in Los Angeles for Jan. 16.

“Of course, everybody’s calling and checking in,” said Suzy Tompkins Buell, one of Clinton’s top California fundraisers. “I’m just saying to them, you’ve got to understand, the process has just begun. Those voters [in Iowa and New Hampshire] represent a very small percentage of this country and it’s got to take all that into consideration.”

My absentee didn’t hit today (probably tomorrow). What do you think will be the headline in my local paper tomorrow?

UPDATE: Talked with Mark Buell tonight and next to Hillary, he seemed like the happiest guy on earth, particularly at a secret dinner with a bunch of non-secretaries. By the way, that guy is not named ‘Bill’ and married to a candidate. What a fabulous race and a great time to be a political junkie. I’m not going to bother writing about last paragraph here because it pretty much sums up my stance and goes far beyond T-Mac. Yet despite me rooting against Hillary, I have a hard time feeling anything but optimistic about the growing progressive movement.

One final thought after re-watching the speeches. Damn, if we don’t have a great pool of public speakers, we’re in trouble. Tonight, Hillary was better than her husband on most nights, Obama lacked some of the confidence but still rocked and John Edwards gave a better speech tonight than any speech I saw from a Demo hopeful in 2000.

I asked earlier about the headline tomorrow. I’m thinking: Clinton Comeback.
Clinton Stuns Obama; McCain Wins

Hillary and Bill Clinton after Mrs. Clinton won the Democratic primary Tuesday night in Manchester, N.H. More Photos>

By PATRICK HEALY and MICHAEL COOPER
Published: January 8, 2008

MANCHESTER, N.H. — Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York rode a wave of female support to victory over Senator Barack
Gender Race

MANCHESTER, N.H. — Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York rode a wave of female support to victory over Senator Barack Obama in the New Hampshire primary on Tuesday night.

[Read Full]

[#] This pretty much sums up Hillary, she cried and then women voted for her? The hottest position on the planet is in line and she went for women sentiment. This is the world we're talking about, I hope this primary doesn't reflect America's total view on Hillary. Obama is a much more transparent, fresh and determined candidate than Hillary who obviously is a tool of her husband. The best for her and everyone is to team up with Obama and take office and do some good. Issues like the gender sentiment and gender parade seems trivial compared to foreign policy, war and the imminent recession.

[*] For Obama, the majority still can sway in his direction.[Read Full]

[*] Exit Poll shows majority of women voted for Hillary;[Exit Stats],[Read Full]

Labels: Obama 08, US 2008

POSTED BY GHOST PARTICLE AT 12:25 PM
Tuesday, January 8, 2008

Clinton stuns expectations of pollsters and traditional media - not Obama

Looking at the New York Times' site a few minutes ago, I was surprised to see this headline for the New Hampshire primary results:

Clinton Stuns Obama; McCain Wins

Um....what?

Hillary Clinton may have defied the very recent expectations of pollsters, pundits, and reporters in the traditional media by rebounding quickly from her loss in Iowa. But she has long been touted by her own campaign (and many Beltway pundits) as the inevitable Democratic nominee.

Media outlets rushed to crown Obama as the front runner after his huge win in Iowa, and now that Hillary Clinton appears to have narrowly captured New Hampshire, their narrative is a big mess.

Hence the absurd headline, "Clinton Stuns Obama."

I watched Obama's speech live not too long ago, and he didn't sound stunned. Neither did his supporters. They're ready to take this to the next level.

Of course Obama's campaign was hoping and working for a victory in New Hampshire. But they have done extremely well against a formidable Hillary Clinton operation. Clinton is winning a close race tonight in a small New England state - not a blockbuster. If I had to guess the word of the day is inevitable - this race is just getting started.
Cheyenne, Wyoming (CNN) -- After losing Democratic contests in the delegate-rich states of Ohio and Texas this week, presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama won the Wyoming Democratic caucus Saturday.

Obama led rival Sen. Hillary Clinton by 61 percent to 38 percent, with all of the precincts reporting.

The caucus thrust the state, which has only 12 delegates, into the spotlight because the close race between Obama and Clinton means that every delegate counts.

Although Wyoming typically is not a stop for Democrats looking for delegates to clinch the party's presidential nomination, its numbers could make a difference this year because of the delegate deadlock.

With slightly more than 600 delegates left at stake, every remaining contest is crucial to both...
ON THE TRAIL WITH BARACK OBAMA

SATURDAY, MARCH 08, 2008

Obama Wins Wyoming

Thank you Wyoming. I mean that.

From CNN:

CHEYENNE, Wyoming (CNN) -- Presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama has won the Wyoming Democratic caucus, CNN projected Saturday. Obama led rival Sen. Hillary Clinton at 59 percent to 40 percent, with 96 percent of precincts reporting.

The caucus thrust the state, which has only 12 delegates, into the spotlight because the close race between Obama and Clinton means that every delegate counts.

Although Wyoming typically is not a stop for Democrats looking for delegates to clinch the party's presidential nomination, its numbers could make a difference this year because of the delegate deadlock.

With slightly more than 600 delegates left at stake, every delegate is a valuable resource in the race. Obama's win in Wyoming gives him an early boost in the delegate fight.
Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama Face off Today in Wyoming Caucus

Hillary Clinton looks to keep her momentum going today in Wyoming as Clinton and Obama square off. Not often considered a swing state for political primaries, Wyoming finds itself in a rare position today with a unique opportunity.

CASPER, Wyo. - Sen. Barack Obama sought to regain lost momentum in Wyoming’s caucuses days after rival Hillary Rodham Clinton’s nearly clean sweep of major primaries in their tight Democratic presidential race.

Twelve national convention delegates are at stake Saturday in caucuses around the state, a small but critical prize in the close race for the party’s nod. The epic battle between Clinton and Obama has given the state’s Democrats — outnumbered more than 2-to-1 by Republicans — a relevancy they haven’t experienced in a presidential race in nearly 50 years. (Yahoo News)

Clinton lowers expectations in Wyoming

CHEYENNE, Wyo. - A day before Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama were to compete for a small scattering of delegates in Wyoming, Clinton cast herself as the underdog and said the odds are not in her favor. Clinton’s campaign has sought to set low expectations for the Saturday caucuses in Wyoming as well as next week’s primary in Mississippi, states where her campaign believes Obama has a better shot at winning.
Destiny's Child

No candidate since Robert F. Kennedy has sparked as much campaign-trail heat as Barack Obama. But can the one-term senator craft a platform to match his charisma?

BEN WALLACE-WELLS

Posted Feb 22, 2007 12:28 PM

Shortly after Barack Obama was elected to the United States Senate in 2004, he began residing, Monday through Thursday, in a one-bedroom apartment a few blocks from the Capitol. For a forty-three-year-old man who had been married for thirteen years and who had two young daughters, it was an isolating experience. The building has a yoga studio and a running track and a decidedly own-and-urban view of some ratty rooftops in the city’s tiny Chinatown district; its decor, glass and brick, is less U.S. senator than junior management consultant. In his return to bachelor life, Obama found himself “soft and helpless. My first morning in Washington, I realized I’d forgotten to buy a shower curtain and had to scrunch up against the shower wall in order to avoid flooding the bathroom floor.” The other new Democrat elected to the Senate that year, Ken Salazar of Colorado, took an apartment in the same building with his brother John, who...
May 04, 2008

Why Johnny Can't Read (Or Drive)

Obama's Methaphor Mangler was in overdrive when he appeared on Meet The Tim:

SEN. OBAMA: ...You know, when you're running for president, your life's an open book, and I think that people have a right to flip the hood and kick the tires, and, and this is one element of a much larger track record...

I don't think this interview was a buzzer-beating home run. And no question on Bill Ayers, Barack Obama and the Chicago Annenberg Challenge.

PILING ON: On the topic of Rev. Wright and why he might have thought Obama was posturing in his early denunciations, this was comical:

MR. RUSSERT: He said in a letter to The New York Times, he suggested that you apologized for not letting him do the invocation. Is that true?

SEN. OBAMA: Well, what happened was is that, you know, I was sorry that he felt, that he felt hurt by that decision. And, you know, that is--that may be a fault of mine that I own up to, which is, is that I'm concerned...
Challenges

- Sifting through large volumes of text

- **At Microsoft:** Business intelligence, marketing, sales, product planning

- **Outside Microsoft:** All of the above, plus analysts, news junkies, Remco Chang...
Questions

- What is the temporal trajectory of Obama?
  - Has he gained or lost media popularity?
  - What was happening with the Obama campaign in January? In March? How were these months different?
- What is the story of Microsoft in 2008?
- Did the “I’m a PC” campaign change people’s discussions around Vista?

“Topic Detection & Tracking” (Information Retrieval)
Some approaches

Textual, temporal, spatial
"Whether he wants to take a formal role, whether there’s something that’s a good fit for him, I think that he and I would have to discuss it."

3 hours ago [Financial Times] (567 occurrences)

McCain attacks Obama over Biden comment
Chicago Tribune, United States - 1 hour ago
As McCain hammered Democrat Barack Obama's economic plans for much of the day, Obama played down his running mate's prediction of an “international crisis” ...

Video: Obama On The Defensive CBS
Obama: McCain will 'endanger' US BBC News
'Crisis' Common for New Presidents – But Would Obama Face Tougher ... FOXNews
New York Times - ABC News
all 1,705 news articles »

Obama Answers on Experience, Improves on Commander-in-Chief
ABC News - 4 hours ago
Barack Obama has shored up his experience rating to the point where it now surpasses George W. Bush's in 2000 and matches Bill Clinton's in 1992, ...

Video: Obama's Triple Threat CBS
George Jonas: When Obama says ‘change’, what he means is ‘identity’ National Post
Even in ‘Red' States Obama Has Big Lead Over McCain in Newspaper ... Editor & Publisher
Detroit Free Press - The Associated Press
all 4,827 news articles »

Obama brushes aside GOP criticism of his tax plans
The Associated Press - 1 hour ago
(AP) — Democrat Barack Obama on Wednesday brushed aside Republican charges that his tax plan amounts to socialism, but acknowledged it involves “spreading ...
Obama
Earthquake in Peru buries 35
Earthquake in Iran kills 40,000

peru(35)
earthquake(33)

quake(34)
iran(32)
gorbachev(4)
bush(1)
summit(0)

22 29 1 8 15 22 29 1 8
Jun 1990 Jul 1990
Narratives
Social Streams

- From Microsoft Live Labs
- Large-scale blog scraper
- Collects news stories that are linked to from blog entries
- American political blog selection

Public application: Political Streams

http://socialstreams.livelabs.com
Political Streams

NEWS ATTENTION

- On Al-Qaeda Web Sites, Joy Over U.S. Crisis, Support for McCain
  tracked for 11 hours | Washington Post

- U.S. gap between rich, poor widening
  tracked for 8 hours | Seattle Times

- Palin says she considers herself intellectual
  tracked for 9 hours | Associated Press

- Al-Qaida-linked Web site backs McCain as president
  tracked for 11 hours | Associated Press

- Sarah Palin: Dumb and dumber
  tracked for 4 hours | Capitol Hill Blue

BLOGS ATTENTION

- Palin Clothes Spending Has Dems Salivating, Republicans Livid
  tracked for 11 hours | The Full Feed from HuffingtonPost.com | The

- Republicans Disgusted By RNC Spending On Palin
  tracked for 20 hours | Marc Ambinder | Unknown Author

- GOP Pulling Its Ads From Bachmann’s Race, Media Buyers Say
  tracked for 7 hours | The Full Feed from HuffingtonPost.com | The

- Early Voting Sees Reports of Voter Intimidation, Machine Malfunctions
  tracked for 9 hours | Democracy Now! | mail@democracynow.org

- Obama and the Marxist Socialist radical members of Congress
  tracked for 11 hours | The Real Barack Obama | Procrustes

PEOPLE ATTENTION

- Barack Obama
  tracked for 3 days

- John McCain
  tracked for 3 days

- Sarah Palin
  tracked for 14 hours

- Joe Biden
  tracked for 13 hours

PLACES ATTENTION

- United Kingdom
  tracked for 9 hours

- Russia
  tracked for 1 hour

- Saudi Arabia
  tracked for 19 minutes

- Africa
  tracked for 1 hour

- Europe
  tracked for 4 hours

- Asia
  tracked for 16 minutes
Cutting down the data a little

- For each blog entry
  - For each article mentioned
    - Apply document summarization to extract approximately ten keywords

\[(date, \text{blog entry}, \text{article}, \text{tag})\]

- For each day, we count all tuples that contain a selected tag
Computing Related Words

For each event that uses this keyword
    Accumulate all other words used by the event
Return top \( n \) list of these words
Four Forms of Correlation

- Date-based correlation
- Global correlation
- Most-correlated term search
- Dependant correlation search
Strengths and Weaknesses

✓ Very simple
✓ Very interpretable
✓ Details on demand
✓ Social view means that uninteresting news stories are filtered out

✗ Can’t see entire database at once
✗ Social view means that some stories slip under the radar
✗ Words fall out of context: “development”, “environment”
Thank You

Please think about ways to display context!

Danyel Fisher
danyelf@microsoft.com

Aaron Hoff, George Robertson, Matt Hurst

Thanks to the Social Streams Team
All Keyword Blog Events

- Ply
- Fast-growing
- Emirate
- Vibrant
- Writ
- Attractions
- Consultants
- Dubai
- Architects
- Ideas

Date (GMT)