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Media Coverage of Corporate Social Responsibility

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Efforts to encourage corporate social responsibility generate kudos, controversy, and media coverage. This paper offers a brief analysis of how journalists use the term to describe the impacts of firm behavior on the economy, society, and environment. I first review the many theories and definitions of corporate social responsibility (CSR).ⁱ Debates about CSR in academia, policy circles, and business arenas center on the set of policy issues involved, stakeholders affected, company motivations for participation, and implementation questions. After describing the likely market for CSR stories, I examine how reporters across countries and media outlets differ in their focus on issues, stakeholders, motivations, and implementation in CSR reporting. Results from the content analysis demonstrate how economic incentives shape CSR stories and suggest how coverage might change if more information were readily available on the impact of CSR.

Defining Corporate Social Responsibility

A simple model of CSR starts with the relationship between corporate officers and shareholders. Individuals investing in a firm expect managers to maximize profits. The problems of hidden actions and hidden information give managers some ability to put their own interests ahead of shareholders.ⁱⁱ One theory of CSR reminds company officials that their primary responsibility is to look after the interests of investors. Another theory of CSR stresses that at times companies impose costs on society without factoring these costs into business calculations. Economists refer to these as negative externalities, since the costs are external to the production decisions of firms. The CSR movement offers one way to get companies to incorporate their negative effects into firm decision making, such as attempts to get firms to recognize and reduce the impact of their pollution releases. Companies also generate positive spillovers through their operation, such as increases in education, health outcomes, and community development. CSR can be a vehicle to lead firms to produce more of these positive externalities.

The preferences of consumers, investors, and workers also give rise to firms' adoption of CSR. Some consumers have preferences over the ways products are generated. Individuals may care whether fragrances are tested on animals, whether coffee is grown in the shade of tropical forests, and whether chlorine is used in a production process. These consumers create a demand for products that have brand identities associated with concepts such as sustainable development. Socially conscious investors care about the way profits are generated by a firm.ⁱⁱⁱ These investors may be willing to trade off some profits for the knowledge that firms they support are less likely to generate negative impacts on society. Companies also use CSR as a way to build and sustain morale. Some firms use CSR as a way to attract and retain workers, with the firm's CSR efforts becoming a signal about the "type" of company it is.

In many countries multinational companies are seen as a resource that can be tapped to solve problems the government is unable or unwilling to tackle. CSR projects in some areas may become part of the price for gaining access to markets. Threats of

protest or boycott by NGOs may lead to further expenditures by firms on projects favored by governments or nonprofit advocates. CSR efforts can emerge from efforts by industry to head off stronger government regulations, since firms may prefer the flexibility of self-regulation. If compliance with CSR is less costly for some firms, they may support CSR efforts since this raises rivals' costs.

The multiple definitions of CSR make tracking a company's performance extremely difficult. Conflicts among these theories also raise questions about whether an increase in CSR activities by a firm is necessarily desirable. In the utilitarian framework favored by economists, efforts by firms to maximize profits, reduce negative externalities, or encourage positive externalities will increase social welfare. If CSR actions emerge from government pressure or NGO actions, there may be increases in welfare if firms are led to consider their impact on the environment. Yet there also may be pressures to adopt policies that are inefficient or generate income redistribution at very high costs. These efforts may be politically popular, but they can leave society worse off as measured by the standard of efficiency. Understanding the motivations and impacts of CSR is one of the many challenges faced by journalists who chose to write about this aspect of company performance.

The Market for CSR Stories

In his classic work entitled *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Anthony Downs (1957) identified four different types of information demands that people express. Producers want data that help with their business and production decisions. Consumers want news about prices and quality to help with purchase decisions. People pursue some information simply for entertainment and diversion. Voters and citizens need information to help them make informed choices in politics. CSR stories contain elements of all four information demands. Managers in some industries follow CSR stories to anticipate how their companies may be affected. Consumers may read about green products or individual investors may search out information on socially conscious investment funds. Reporters aiming to satisfy entertainment demands can frame CSR stories as about human interest, drama, scandal, violence, corruption, or protest. Because CSR stories often revolve around policy issues such as pollution or sustainable development, they also contain elements of public affairs coverage. To the extent that CSR involves public policy issues, however, coverage will be affected by rational ignorance. Even if individuals care a great deal about sustainable development or social policy, the likelihood their political action will make a difference leads them to remain rationally ignorant about details of these policies. This implies that journalists will not invest in story development or gather the skills necessary to cover policy details. This means that policy stories will be under covered in the press because individuals do not take the time to invest in learning about decisions they cannot influence.

Other characteristics of CSR stories predict they will be less likely to earn space in print and broadcast outlets.^{iv} In the United States readers and viewers express low interest in international stories. The marginal readers and viewers of U.S. media outlets and the younger demographic set of 18-34 year olds who are highly valued by advertisers are much less likely to express an interest in international stories. The transaction costs of

travel and setup costs involved in learning make international news more costly to produce. Lack of corporate transparency raises the costs of accurate reporting for journalists, who find it costly to go beyond company pronouncements in assembling a story about CSR. The difficulty of quantifying and measuring progress on issues such as the environment, sustainable development, and human rights makes it hard to assess CSR performance, although companies and NGOs are working to develop more accessible CSR indicators. CSR issues often involve concentrated costs (e.g., those borne by the company) and dispersed benefits. The logic of collective action means that beneficiaries may not join together to lobby for CSR changes. Political entrepreneurs and NGOs, who can earn a return in terms of policy change, ideological satisfaction, and fundraising, may represent their interests. Covering the CSR story can involve trying to determine the performance and motivations of NGO actors, which represents an additional challenge for reporters.

Journalists writing about the impact of CSR will find it difficult to assess the impact of company actions. Many corporate efforts are aimed at long-term effects. The causal chain that links a CSR activity with a real-world outcome may be very long, making it difficult to prove whether an effort had the intended effect. Good news will not be news for reporters interested in using an entertainment frame (e.g., scandal, corruption). Editors may simply suspect that corporate ethics is an oxymoron and be reluctant to trust company claims about CSR. The messages from researchers on CSR are mixed. Reporters talking with academics would be hard pressed to determine if CSR is profitable, implemented, driven by altruism or self-interest, or results in improvements in social welfare.

The incentives readers/viewers have to follow CSR stories and the costs facing journalists covering the stories generate predictable patterns in media coverage.^v Business press outlets will offer articles aimed at satisfying producer and investor information demands. The popular press will focus on entertainment frames in providing CSR stories. Papers such as *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, or *Financial Times* will provide more extensive coverage of policy issues as part of the hard news offerings that differentiate their products.

Evidence on CSR Coverage

The idea that corporations have social responsibilities first surfaced regularly in the press in the 1970s. Figure 1 shows that in the text of the *New York Times* there were few articles that used the words corporate social responsibility from 1900 through the 1960s. In the early 1970s there is a burst of coverage using this term, with stories focusing on consumer advocate Ralph Nader, pollution, and shareholder actions surrounding CSR debates. After the initial spike in the early 1970s the use of the term declines but stays much higher than the 1950s/1960s levels. The persistent coverage of CSR in the 1980s and 1990s in the *New York Times* is consistent with assessments that CSR became part of the expected costs of doing business. Figure 2 offers a similar pattern in coverage by the *Wall Street Journal*, where there was a marked increase in the use of the term in the early 1970s and then a decline.

To examine recent media coverage of CSR, I used Lexis to analyze how journalists use the term. After reading the academic, policy, and business literatures on CSR, I developed a list of terms relating to the issues associated with CSR, stakeholders affected, motivations for company participation, and implementation efforts involved. In each file I did an initial search looking for articles that contained the word “corporate” within twenty-five words of the phrase “social responsibility.” I then added additional words to the search (e.g., “environment”) to see what percentage of CSR stories focused on a particular aspect of firm behavior. The analysis spanned five years (1998-2002) and three different categories of media markets (region, business press, and general news outlets). Lexis divides world news into four categories of news sources: North/South America, Europe, Asia/Pacific, and Middle East/Africa. The business news file segments publications as business and finance, industry news, mergers and acquisitions news sources, and Knight Ridder/Tribune business news. Finally, the general news outlets are categorized by Lexis as major papers, magazines and journals, or newsletters.

Table 1 shows that media coverage of CSR increased markedly in 2000, surged again in 2001, and continued to grow in 2002. Between 1999 and 2000, for example, the number of articles mentioning CSR went from 88 to 168 in North/South American news sources and from 105 to 244 in European news sources. In 2001 these figures climbed to 315 in North/South American sources and 674 in European outlets. While the growth in attention leveled off in North/South America in 2002, it continued to increase rapidly (to 1092 articles) in European news sources. The pattern of increased coverage between 2000 and 2002 holds across regions of the world, across types of general news outlets, and within segments of the business press. The figures for the Knight Ridder/Tribune business news, however, reflect that attention to CSR has not grown substantially in smaller local U.S. papers.

Reporters covering CSR across the world tend to focus on the same top three issues: community, environment, and health. Table 2 shows there is some variation by region in the issues mentioned in CSR stories. More attention is focused on AIDs in stories from Africa. Human rights issues are more prominently discussed in North/South American outlets and European news sources. There was an increase in corporate governance mentions in CSR stories between 2001 and 2002, especially in North/South America. Activists play a larger part in stories originating in North/South America. Shareholders are mentioned in one third of the CSR stories in North/South America, though they appear less frequently in stories from the Asia/Pacific or Middle East/Africa regions. Government appears in at least 40% of all CSR stories worldwide. Protest is more likely to be mentioned in North/South American or European outlets. Profits are mentioned in 36% of North/South American stories, versus 21% of articles from Middle East/Africa. Business ethics are also more likely to appear in North/South American stories. Europe has the higher percentage of stories mentioning implementation issues such as annual reports. Codes and accounting appear more frequently in North/South American news sources. The UN is mentioned as an actor more often in reports from the Asia/Pacific or Middle East/Africa regions.^{vi}

Business news sources serve the demand by producers for information relating to production and distribution and the demand by consumers for investment information. Table 3 shows that coverage of CSR is similar across the three Lexis categories of business news. There is an increase in focus on corporate governance issues in the business press in 2002. CEO pay is not linked to CSR reporting. Scandal and ethical frames are less likely in merger and acquisitions coverage (which is much more likely to mention the role of the media in CSR activities).

Among general news outlets, demand for entertainment should be stronger among major newspapers than among newsletters (which may serve a producer information demand). Table 4 shows that scandal, moral, and ethical frames occur more frequently in major papers than in newsletters. Human rights are more likely to appear in major paper stories, as are mentions of activists. References to brand are more frequent in magazine articles. Both newspapers and magazines explicitly mention reputation in their coverage of CSR. There are relatively few mentions of monitoring or certification in general news stories, though the UN appears in at least 10% of all stories. Major papers are more likely to refer to corporate governance in CSR stories. Newsletters are more likely to mention NGOs and issues such as AIDs.

The impact of market incentives on CSR reporting is evident when coverage in major papers is compared to business/finance news sources. Major papers are more likely to focus on human rights, community, activists, scandal, moral, and protest elements. All of these have strong human interest angles that appeal to entertainment demands. The business/finance press are more likely to focus on information relating to production and investment decisions. Articles in these business outlets are more likely to mention investors, managers, ethical investing, the media, codes, and accounting.

Analysis of information on the web offers another way to see how market incentives affect the way reporters cover CSR. Many motivations account for information posted on the web: individual self-expression; attempts by governments or nonprofits to influence policy debates; efforts by businesses to market products and services. To analyze CSR information on websites, I used in Table 5 the set of terms referring to CSR issues, stakeholders, motivations, and implementation as search terms on Google. The search using corporate social responsibility yielded approximately 980,000 website hits via the Google search engine. Relative to North/South American media coverage, CSR mentions on the web are much more likely to mention specific issues (e.g., environment 60%, health 61%) and the details of implementation (e.g., annual report 40%, monitoring 30%). Websites are less likely to talk about angles such as scandal (2.4%), boycott (1.4%) and activists (8%). Since some websites may not be commercial, they can provide more detailed information about CSR (which would be costly for media outlets to provide in print) and can avoid the pressure to use entertaining frames to attract viewer interest.

Google also allows one to search postings on group discussion boards. Since these boards allow individuals involved in organizing CSR activities (including protests) to communicate, they offer a comparison of how conversations among those involved in

CSR differ from information exchanged through the media. There were 34,300 references to CSR on the discussion boards tracked by Google. Table 5 shows that relative to North/South American news sources, references to CSR on discussion boards had a higher percentage of mentions of human rights (in 37% of posts), activists (15%), labor (29%), board members (22%), moral (22%), social investment (25%), boycott (5%), protest (13%), UN (18%), and codes (22%). The CSR posts on the bulletin boards, many of which are activism boards, are less likely than the media articles to mention shareholders.

It is also interesting to note where CSR is not generating discussion or coverage. On the Yahoo Business and Finance Message boards I found 8,278 messages with the word “corporate,” but only 12 of these mentioned corporate social responsibility. On the Motley Fool investment discussion boards, there were only 32 posts referring to CSR in a six-month period. While socially conscious investors exist and have products targeted at them, individual investors discussing firms on the Internet are not very likely to focus on CSR. Another arena where CSR gains little explicit attention is broadcast markets. The Lexis transcript file for broadcast outlets includes coverage of news programs on ABC, CBS, Fox News, CNN, CNN Financial Network, CNBC, and MSNBC. Total broadcast program hits for CSR by year in this file were 1998 4, 1999 1, 2000 9, 2001 15, and 2002 20. Broadcast news is heavily focused on entertaining stories of interest to wide audiences, criteria that CSR stories fail to meet. Even the business programs on cable do not carry stories about CSR. Print outlets can add stories of interest only to a portion of their readers without losing their audiences. Since broadcast programs currently must transmit the same story to all viewers, CSR is not of sufficiently wide interest to warrant broadcast coverage.

Conclusions

Corporate social responsibility first became a popular term used by the media in the early 1970s. Attention to CSR grew substantially in 2000 and surged worldwide in 2001. CSR stories have aspects of producer, consumer, entertainment, and voter/citizen information demands. The business press focus more on topics of interest to producers, with articles detailing investor aspects of CSR and codes of corporate performance. General interest papers are more likely to cover CSR with entertainment frames, mentioning scandals, activists, and ethical issues. Webpages mentioning CSR include more information about issues and details and less attention to entertainment frames This is not surprising since many of the webpages come from NGOs or government sources which are less likely to be driven by commercial pressures. Discussions of CSR on the Internet are more likely to focus on activist issues such as human rights, boycotts, the UN, and corporate codes. CSR is not a universal story. Broadcast outlets do not cover it. Individual investors are not discussing CSR on Internet message boards.

While the results here offer evidence on the quantity of CSR coverage, assessing the quality of CSR reporting would involve answering four complicated questions: Which definitions of CSR are desirable? What are the actual trends in CSR actions? What are the impacts of CSR on society?^{vii} What criteria are useful in judging CSR outcomes? Though I do not specifically analyze the quality of CSR reporting, the economics of CSR

reporting do lead to general suggestions on how coverage could be improved. Lowering the costs of coverage by making company actions more transparent is one way for firms to increase the visibility of their CSR efforts. Another way is to highlight the human interest aspects of a CSR project to attract journalists more likely to use entertainment frames. The development of definitions and standards for corporate reporting (as evident in the Global Reporting Initiative, Triple Bottom Line approach, and annual CSR reports) will also lower the costs of coverage.^{viii} Improved academic research on the implementation and impact of CSR would help orient reporters attempting to assess company actions. Specific conferences and reports for journalists to provide them with access to research on CSR would also generate more coverage. While rational ignorance and a desire for entertainment affect the demand for CSR news, lowering the costs of coverage may offer an effective way to increase the quality and quantity of CSR reporting.

ⁱ Theories of corporate social responsibility vary by discipline. For economic perspectives, see Preston (1975), Baron (2001), and Jensen (2001). Parkinson (1993), Miwa (1999), and Ostas (2001) offer legal assessments, while Broadhurst (2000), Kapstein (2001), and Sternberg (2001) focus on business ethics. A report by Business for Social Responsibility (2002, p.1) notes, “While there is no single, commonly accepted definition of corporate social responsibility, or CSR, it generally refers to business decision-making linked to ethical values, compliance with legal requirements, and respect for people, communities and the environment.”

ⁱⁱ See Pratt and Zeckhauser (1985) for a discussion of the problems agents (e.g., investors) may have in monitoring the actions of principals (e.g., managers) as they exercise delegated decision-making power.

ⁱⁱⁱ Plantinga and Scholtens (2001) analyze socially responsible investment in European stock exchanges. Ruggie (2002) discusses the potential impact of CSR on stock values, a topic also explored in *Ethical Corporation Magazine* (2002).

^{iv} Hamilton (2002) offers an economic analysis of how market forces influence the reporting of public policy issues. Patterson (2000) examines the crowding out of news about policy issues by the increased focus on soft news topics. See Arnold (1990) for a description of how the causal chain that links policy decisions to real-world outcomes can make it hard for voters to monitor government action.

^v A growing literature documents media coverage of CSR. Echo Research (2002) found increasing attention paid to CSR in the press worldwide and determined that more than half of the articles on the topic conveyed a favorable view of CSR. Their survey of corporate CSR personnel, however, revealed that company officials viewed media coverage of CSR as too negative. SustainAbility (2002a) found that the media often focused on sensational CSR stories rather than on more complex, long-term projects. In a related report SustainAbility (2002b) examined the quality of stand-alone reports on CSR issued by multinational firms.

^{vi} For a description of the UN’s Global Compact initiative to foster CSR, see www.unglobalcompact.org.

^{vii} Dyck and Zingales (2002) find that, controlling for levels of environmental regulation and economic development, countries that had higher newspaper circulation per capita had firms that were more responsive to environmental concerns. They argue that the scrutiny generated by the media lead company officials to focus more attention on environmental performance.

^{viii} According to a KMPG 2001 survey of the 250 largest global firms, 45% of these companies published reports on CSR that detailed their impact on society or the environment (see Weisul (2002)). Wheeler and Elkington (2001) examine the history of corporate environmental and social reporting, while Salomone and Galluccio (2001) analyze environmental reporting in chemical and oil/gas industries. Kolk, van Tulder, and Welters (1999) explore the use of corporate codes of conduct to further CSR. For more on the Global Reporting Initiative’s efforts to develop a common CSR reporting framework, see www.globalreporting.org.

Figure 1

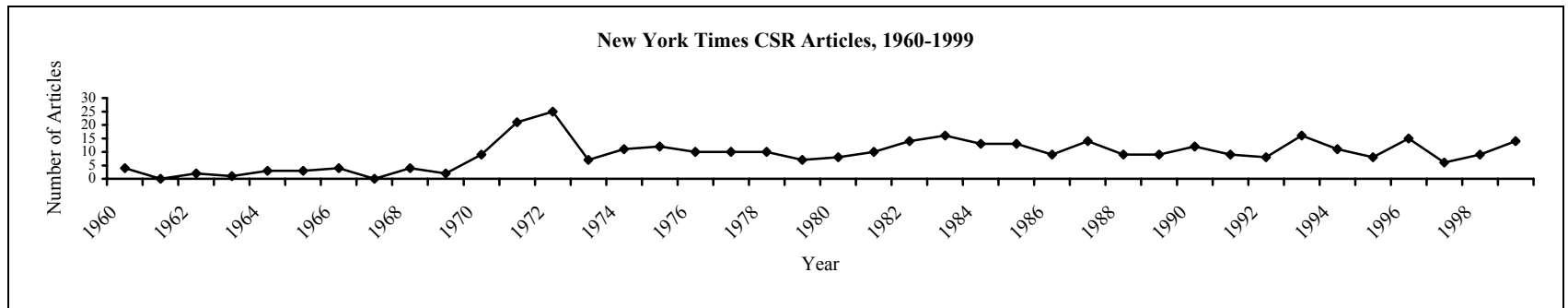
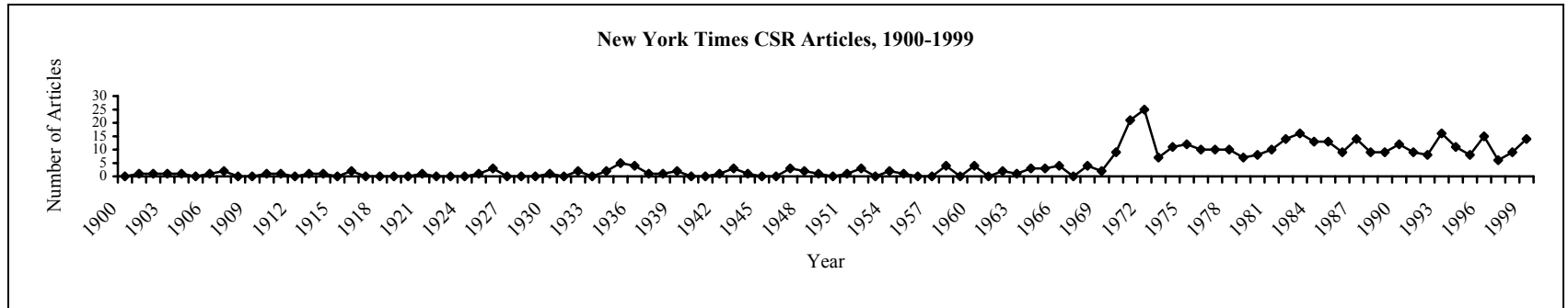


Figure 2

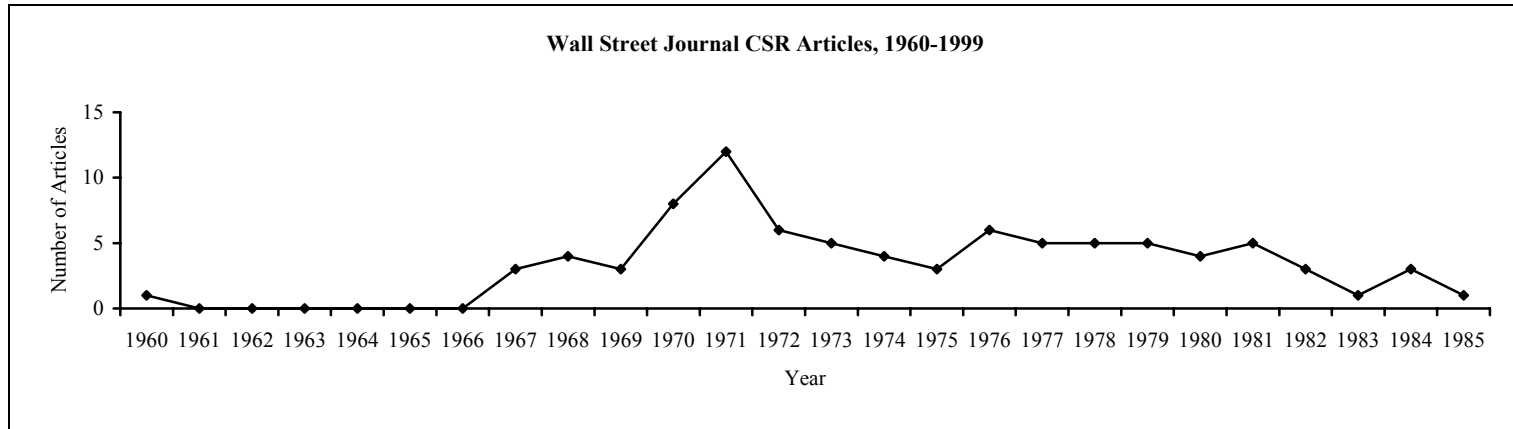


Table 1**Media Coverage of CSR, 1998-2002**

News Category	Number of Articles in Lexis				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
World News					
North/South America News Sources	72	88	168	315	370
European News Sources	69	105	244	674	1092
Asia/Pacific News Sources	99	192	277	427	579
Middle East/Africa News Sources	29	58	75	138	243
Business News					
Business and Finance	176	264	414	800	1211
Industry News	75	138	225	409	615
Mergers and Acquisitions	15	49	81	128	274
Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News	6	18	24	28	32
General News					
Major Papers	114	138	231	366	539
Magazines and Journals	49	65	103	307	441
Newsletters	28	37	64	216	171

Table 2**Percentage of CSR Stories Mentioning Topic, World News Sources, 2002 & 2001**

	<u>World News Sources 2002</u>				<u>World News Sources 2001</u>			
	North/ South America	Europe	Asia/ Pacific	Middle East/Africa	North/ South America	Europe	Asia/ Pacific	Middle East/Africa
<u>Issues</u>								
Environment	38.3%	45.1%	42.3%	34.4%	29.5%	37.8%	47.3%	37.7%
Health	23.1%	23.5%	22.2%	27.9%	21.6%	22.1%	25.3%	29.0%
Worker/s	11.0%	12.4%	12.4%	14.8%	11.1%	17.4%	11.2%	14.5%
Labor	19.8%	20.8%	17.4%	18.0%	15.9%	23.7%	22.2%	16.7%
AIDs	6.7%	10.5%	8.1%	22.1%	6.0%	12.6%	8.0%	33.3%
Sustainable development	16.4%	15.9%	14.3%	16.0%	12.1%	12.3%	12.4%	13.8%
Philanthropy	5.4%	3.4%	7.4%	1.6%	5.4%	2.8%	2.6%	6.5%
Human rights	20.4%	17.3%	9.5%	11.9%	21.3%	18.2%	9.8%	19.6%
Poverty	5.9%	7.2%	13.9%	12.3%	6.0%	7.6%	15.0%	15.9%
Sweatshop	3.5%	2.2%	1.7%	1.6%	1.9%	3.0%	1.6%	1.4%
Community*	43.4%	42.7%	48.5%	46.7%	36.8%	50.0%	50.1%	52.2%
Safety	12.9%	13.0%	9.6%	9.8%	15.9%	7.7%	13.6%	7.2%
Pollution	4.6%	5.0%	4.5%	4.1%	0.6%	3.7%	4.9%	2.2%
Corporate governance	13.1%	16.9%	17.0%	15.6%	3.8%	10.4%	17.6%	10.1%
Transparency	5.4%	9.7%	8.4%	8.2%	3.8%	7.6%	13.8%	8.0%
Accountability	21.7%	9.1%	10.5%	9.8%	12.1%	7.6%	13.8%	8.0%
CEO Pay	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Human resource/s	5.1%	7.3%	10.5%	5.3%	7.0%	7.7%	7.0%	8.0%
<u>Stakeholders</u>								
Community*	43.4%	42.7%	48.5%	46.7%	36.8%	50.0%	50.1%	52.2%
Supplier/s	7.5%	9.1%	6.9%	4.1%	6.7%	10.4%	8.0%	5.1%
Activist/s	13.4%	5.3%	2.1%	4.1%	9.8%	7.3%	4.0%	8.0%
Shareholder/s	34.9%	24.2%	19.8%	18.4%	29.2%	25.4%	27.4%	19.6%
Stakeholder/s	16.4%	18.5%	14.1%	12.7%	8.6%	19.1%	12.2%	13.3%
Employee/s	32.2%	30.4%	28.1%	25.4%	23.8%	31.0%	27.9%	29.0%
Customer/s	20.1%	24.0%	21.0%	13.5%	12.4%	27.0%	21.3%	15.9%
NGO/s	7.0%	7.0%	7.2%	9.8%	5.1%	9.3%	8.7%	13.0%
Investor/s	31.4%	23.2%	21.0%	24.6%	26.7%	25.7%	24.6%	16.7%
Board member/s	3.2%	2.3%	1.5%	2.0%	1.6%	2.1%	2.1%	1.4%
Manager/s	30.8%	29.9%	21.7%	30.7%	25.7%	27.7%	25.8%	20.3%
<u>Motivations</u>								
Government	53.1%	44.1%	51.8%	43.4%	52.7%	47.2%	54.8%	50.7%
Regulation	18.8%	14.3%	10.7%	11.1%	7.0%	14.7%	13.6%	5.8%
Scandal	8.6%	6.6%	6.4%	4.9%	1.0%	1.3%	1.4%	0.0%
Morale	1.9%	2.7%	4.1%	0.0%	1.3%	4.2%	1.9%	3.6%
Moral	8.3%	6.5%	6.0%	3.7%	3.8%	6.8%	8.9%	6.5%

Ethical	16.4%	26.9%	14.8%	8.6%	18.1%	35.8%	19.9%	13.0%
Ethical investing	5.6%	9.2%	3.6%	2.0%	4.4%	13.5%	4.4%	3.6%
Social investment	1.1%	2.1%	2.9%	6.6%	1.9%	3.4%	1.2%	18.1%
Boycott	1.9%	3.5%	1.0%	2.0%	1.0%	4.0%	1.9%	2.9%
Protest	7.8%	4.6%	2.2%	3.3%	7.9%	8.6%	4.9%	4.3%
Media	26.5%	20.8%	18.2%	37.7%	21.3%	23.7%	16.6%	49.3%
Brand	6.4%	21.4%	10.0%	7.8%	7.9%	17.8%	8.4%	12.3%
Profit	36.2%	27.8%	29.1%	20.5%	29.5%	28.8%	34.7%	29.7%
Publicity	0.3%	3.8%	1.7%	1.2%	4.8%	5.5%	5.2%	3.6%
Reputation	12.1%	17.9%	10.5%	5.7%	6.0%	19.3%	9.6%	9.4%
Globalization	14.5%	7.9%	7.9%	7.4%	12.4%	9.8%	11.2%	8.7%
Lawsuit	1.1%	1.2%	0.5%	1.2%	0.6%	0.9%	0.7%	0.0%
Court	4.6%	6.1%	4.0%	4.5%	4.8%	7.0%	5.9%	3.6%
Business ethics	9.4%	3.6%	4.0%	1.2%	6.7%	4.3%	4.9%	2.2%
Credibility	1.6%	4.4%	2.4%	2.5%	0.6%	2.4%	1.9%	3.6%
Public relations	7.5%	9.7%	4.6%	7.0%	1.6%	9.5%	8.4%	2.9%
<u>Implementation</u>								
Annual report	5.6%	11.0%	3.3%	5.3%	5.1%	8.0%	7.0%	2.9%
Triple bottom line	3.5%	1.9%	7.1%	3.7%	4.8%	2.7%	3.5%	1.4%
Global reporting initiative	0.8%	1.6%	1.4%	1.6%	0.3%	0.4%	1.6%	0.7%
UN	9.7%	8.0%	12.0%	16.8%	7.9%	9.1%	10.3%	11.6%
Ceres	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Monitoring	4.8%	2.9%	4.6%	5.7%	5.7%	5.8%	5.6%	5.8%
Certification	3.2%	1.7%	1.9%	0.4%	0.3%	1.0%	1.9%	0.7%
Code	21.2%	11.3%	6.7%	16.4%	24.4%	8.9%	12.2%	12.3%
Accounting	16.4%	12.7%	9.0%	10.2%	5.7%	7.9%	8.7%	8.0%
<u>Total Number of Articles</u>								
	373	1092	581	244	315	674	427	138

Table 3**Percentage of CSR Stories Mentioning Topic, Business News Sources, 2002 & 2001**

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Business News Sources 2002</u>			<u>Business News Sources 2001</u>		
	Business and Finance	Industry News	Mergers and Acquisitions	Business and Finance	Industry News	Mergers and Acquisitions
Environment	41.6%	48.1%	41.3%	38.8%	42.5%	52.3%
Health	26.4%	26.3%	29.9%	26.9%	22.5%	27.3%
Worker/s	10.3%	10.2%	8.1%	12.8%	9.8%	5.5%
Labor	17.2%	19.9%	15.1%	17.8%	16.1%	14.1%
AIDs	8.9%	9.6%	7.0%	8.8%	8.3%	7.8%
Sustainable development	14.2%	16.7%	13.7%	13.4%	16.4%	12.5%
Philanthropy	4.2%	5.2%	2.2%	4.9%	3.2%	6.3%
Human rights	15.0%	16.9%	12.9%	13.9%	14.4%	12.5%
Poverty	6.0%	5.3%	6.6%	5.3%	4.9%	12.5%
Sweatshop	2.7%	2.4%	3.0%	1.4%	1.5%	2.3%
Community*	40.7%	37.8%	42.8%	43.5%	43.5%	47.7%
Safety	15.5%	12.3%	16.2%	16.1%	13.4%	14.8%
Pollution	4.5%	6.8%	4.4%	2.4%	5.4%	0.8%
Corporate governance	21.0%	21.2%	16.6%	13.9%	15.6%	15.6%
Transparency	8.8%	10.2%	6.6%	7.9%	9.3%	10.9%
Accountability	11.3%	11.5%	12.5%	9.5%	9.8%	16.4%
CEO Pay	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Human resource/s	7.9%	11.8%	14.8%	9.8%	8.8%	12.5%
<u>Stakeholders</u>						
Community*	40.7%	37.8%	42.8%	43.5%	43.5%	47.7%
Supplier/s	9.2%	10.2%	7.0%	9.3%	13.0%	11.7%
Activist/s	5.2%	6.6%	3.7%	7.0%	7.6%	3.9%
Shareholder/s	30.7%	23.5%	24.0%	30.4%	27.6%	27.3%
Stakeholder/s	15.0%	17.0%	11.1%	16.6%	19.8%	17.2%
Employee/s	36.5%	26.9%	24.4%	35.0%	32.0%	28.9%
Customer/s	24.6%	22.7%	21.8%	24.9%	27.1%	21.9%
NGO/s	5.7%	9.2%	8.9%	6.1%	8.1%	8.6%
Investor/s	38.9%	26.4%	36.5%	34.9%	26.9%	25.0%
Board member/s	2.8%	2.3%	1.5%	2.4%	1.5%	0.0%
Manager/s	35.2%	31.1%	33.6%	30.5%	28.4%	27.3%
<u>Motivations</u>						
Government	41.9%	45.9%	49.1%	45.1%	46.9%	51.6%
Regulation	13.9%	19.1%	15.9%	13.6%	17.1%	18.8%
Scandal	8.2%	7.5%	4.8%	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%
Morale	1.6%	2.3%	1.1%	7.5%	10.8%	8.6%
Moral	4.9%	7.1%	4.1%	4.0%	5.1%	5.5%
Ethical	21.8%	26.6%	14.4%	23.8%	33.0%	20.3%

Ethical investing	9.6%	11.0%	4.8%	11.9%	14.2%	4.7%
Social investment	4.3%	3.4%	2.2%	5.3%	3.7%	1.6%
Boycott	2.0%	3.7%	1.8%	2.3%	3.9%	1.6%
Protest	3.4%	5.5%	3.3%	5.4%	4.6%	6.3%
Media	27.6%	23.8%	31.4%	26.3%	26.4%	29.7%
Brand	14.9%	16.5%	9.2%	13.0%	19.8%	10.9%
Profit	31.2%	27.6%	25.8%	28.0%	27.6%	29.7%
Publicity	2.1%	3.6%	0.7%	3.8%	5.1%	4.7%
Reputation	14.0%	16.0%	7.4%	11.0%	21.3%	13.3%
Globalization	8.5%	7.1%	7.7%	10.6%	9.3%	13.3%
Lawsuit	1.9%	3.2%	1.1%	0.6%	1.2%	0.0%
Court	4.1%	4.7%	1.8%	5.9%	5.4%	7.0%
Business ethics	6.9%	5.0%	4.4%	7.6%	4.2%	6.3%
Credibility	3.0%	5.2%	2.2%	1.8%	4.9%	3.1%
Public relations	7.7%	11.3%	5.2%	8.1%	12.5%	2.3%
<u>Implementation</u>						
Annual report	10.2%	5.7%	5.9%	9.4%	8.3%	11.7%
Triple bottom line	4.0%	3.2%	2.2%	3.3%	2.7%	2.3%
Global reporting initiative	2.5%	2.1%	0.7%	1.3%	1.7%	1.6%
UN	10.5%	10.7%	8.1%	8.3%	7.6%	9.4%
Ceres	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%	1.6%
Monitoring	3.8%	4.2%	2.2%	5.4%	4.6%	7.8%
Certification	2.9%	2.4%	3.0%	0.8%	1.7%	1.6%
Code	19.7%	10.7%	21.8%	19.0%	11.5%	18.8%
Accounting	17.8%	13.5%	12.9%	11.8%	9.5%	12.5%
<u>Total Number of Articles</u>						
	1223	617	271	800	409	128

Table 4

Percentage of CSR Stories Mentioning Topic, General News Sources, 2002 & 2001

<i><u>Issues</u></i>	<u>General News Sources 2002</u>			<u>General News Sources 2001</u>		
	Major Papers	Magazines	Newsletters	Major Papers	Magazines	Newsletters
Environment	46.4%	21.3%	41.8%	44.3%	45.9%	53.2%
Health	21.5%	26.5%	25.3%	22.3%	24.8%	29.2%
Worker/s	16.7%	12.8%	9.4%	22.6%	14.0%	20.8%
Labor	23.0%	22.7%	20.0%	31.0%	19.2%	26.9%
AIDs	11.5%	12.1%	15.3%	8.6%	10.4%	21.3%
Sustainable development	12.6%	17.8%	18.2%	11.0%	16.9%	20.4%
Philanthropy	7.8%	5.4%	4.1%	6.3%	4.9%	8.8%
Human rights	20.0%	17.1%	10.0%	24.1%	13.4%	19.0%
Poverty	7.8%	7.6%	11.8%	9.8%	3.6%	16.7%
Sweatshop	3.3%	2.9%	1.2%	5.4%	1.0%	1.4%
Community*	44.7%	44.3%	52.4%	61.0%	48.5%	52.3%
Safety	10.4%	15.3%	11.8%	9.2%	12.7%	13.4%
Pollution	6.1%	5.6%	4.7%	5.1%	6.8%	5.6%
Corporate governance	22.4%	13.7%	13.5%	18.2%	16.6%	14.8%
Transparency	8.3%	11.9%	10.0%	12.2%	13.4%	16.2%
Accountability	11.9%	12.4%	9.4%	15.5%	10.7%	15.3%
CEO Pay	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Human resource/s	7.8%	10.1%	4.7%	8.0%	8.8%	7.9%
<i><u>Stakeholders</u></i>						
Community*	44.7%	44.3%	52.4%	61.0%	48.5%	52.3%
Supplier/s	10.2%	11.9%	5.3%	10.7%	14.3%	12.5%
Activist/s	8.3%	8.1%	3.5%	14.0%	9.1%	6.0%
Shareholder/s	30.2%	26.1%	14.1%	34.8%	33.6%	28.7%
Stakeholder/s	18.0%	25.2%	18.8%	17.6%	30.0%	29.2%
Employee/s	37.3%	36.6%	28.2%	36.3%	39.4%	35.6%
Customer/s	24.5%	27.9%	19.4%	29.2%	31.6%	25.0%
NGO/s	5.4%	10.8%	9.4%	9.2%	10.4%	16.2%
Investor/s	25.8%	23.8%	19.4%	28.0%	31.9%	22.7%
Board member/s	2.4%	2.7%	1.2%	2.1%	2.9%	0.5%
Manager/s	28.4%	31.9%	26.5%	31.0%	37.5%	25.5%
<i><u>Motivations</u></i>						
Government	46.8%	45.2%	32.9%	56.3%	44.3%	56.9%
Regulation	11.5%	20.2%	11.8%	14.9%	16.6%	15.7%
Scandal	10.6%	6.7%	7.1%	2.4%	2.6%	0.5%
Morale	3.5%	5.4%	1.2%	4.5%	2.9%	2.8%
Moral	7.8%	13.0%	2.9%	11.6%	6.8%	10.2%
Ethical	26.0%	33.3%	14.1%	36.0%	41.7%	27.8%
Ethical investing	7.1%	10.8%	2.9%	13.4%	15.6%	6.9%

Social investment	3.0%	4.3%	4.1%	3.9%	4.2%	5.6%
Boycott	1.9%	5.6%	2.4%	6.0%	2.3%	3.7%
Protest	6.7%	6.5%	4.7%	14.0%	5.2%	4.6%
Media	19.9%	28.1%	22.4%	19.6%	35.5%	21.8%
Brand	19.9%	31.5%	11.8%	15.5%	25.4%	13.9%
Profit	36.9%	30.3%	22.4%	46.1%	30.9%	32.9%
Publicity	4.1%	6.5%	1.8%	8.0%	4.9%	5.6%
Reputation	18.4%	26.5%	10.0%	20.8%	27.7%	18.5%
Globalization	10.9%	9.2%	7.6%	13.7%	9.1%	13.0%
Lawsuit	2.4%	2.7%	1.8%	0.9%	1.3%	0.9%
Court	8.0%	5.6%	5.3%	6.3%	5.5%	8.8%
Business ethics	7.2%	6.7%	2.4%	7.7%	7.5%	6.9%
Credibility	4.5%	6.5%	3.5%	1.8%	8.5%	6.9%
Public relations	9.3%	16.4%	10.6%	9.8%	15.6%	6.0%
<u>Implementation</u>						
Annual report	10.0%	8.5%	2.9%	9.5%	8.8%	9.7%
Triple bottom line	5.0%	4.3%	6.5%	5.4%	5.5%	7.4%
Global reporting initiative	2.8%	2.9%	2.4%	1.5%	2.0%	2.3%
UN	11.9%	9.0%	11.2%	10.4%	7.2%	14.4%
Ceres	0.6%	0.9%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%	2.8%
Monitoring	3.0%	5.2%	5.9%	4.5%	8.8%	8.3%
Certification	0.6%	2.7%	1.2%	1.5%	2.6%	1.4%
Code	8.7%	9.7%	8.8%	11.3%	10.7%	14.8%
Accounting	13.7%	12.6%	10.0%	7.7%	11.4%	13.4%
<u>Total Number of Articles</u>						
	539	445	170	539	445	170

Table 5

*CSR on the Internet
(November, 2002)*

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Number of Google Web Hits</u>	<u>Number of Google Group Postings</u>
Environment	592,000	12,800
Health	596,000	14,000
Worker/s	168,000/396,000	5,350/11,900
Labor	279,000	9,870
AIDs	144,000	3,300
Sustainable development	237,000	2,280
Philanthropy	19,400	475
Human rights	416,000	12,700
Poverty	200,000	6,190
Sweatshop	7,170	547
Community*	702,000	16,300
Safety	370,000	8,290
Pollution	136,000	2,630
Corporate governance	215,000	2,300
Transparency	114,000	897
Accountability	217,000	3,420
CEO Pay	70,800	2,470
Human resource/s	506,000	9,530
<u>Stakeholders</u>		
Community*	702,000	16,300
Supplier/s	96,800/151,000	875/1,280
Activist/s	46,800/79,300	3,520/5,250
Shareholder/s	85,000/136,000	1,120/2,350
Stakeholder/s	64,900/168,000	194/572
Employee/s	340,000/408,000	5,220/9,300
Customer/s	252,000/297,000	3,820/4,730
NGO/s	51,300/74,200	956/955
Investor/s	142,000/190,000	1,590/4,320
Board member/s	455,000/435,000	6,410/7,690
Manager/s	370,000/342,000	5,880/4,520
<u>Motivations</u>		
Government	675,000	24,000
Regulation	279,000	4,920
Scandal	23,300	2,010
Morale	31,900	801
Moral	184,000	7,620
Ethical	189,000	3,910
Ethical investing	21,300	476
Social investment	442,000	8,480
Boycott	13,900	1,610
Protest	70,800	4,620
Media	466,000	12,400
Brand	119,000	2,190
Profit	369,000	11,200
Publicity	84,300	2,050
Reputation	148,000	2,640
Globalization	91,200	2,280

Lawsuit	34,900	1,830
Court	348,000	10,600
Business ethics	200,000	3,190
Credibility	97,900	2,410
Public relations	407,000	7,270
<u>Implementation</u>		
Annual report	394,00	5,600
Triple bottom line	12,500	228
Global reporting initiative	80,000	854
UN	208,000	6,330
Ceres	4,480	64
Monitoring	293,000	3,390
Certification	148,000	1,710
Code	391,000	7,480
Accounting	323,000	4,260
<u>Corporate Social Responsibility</u>	980,000	34,300

Table 6

“Corp” SEC Documents Mentioning CSR, Filing-Dates 1990-2002

Document	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Annual Reports	11	26	43	41	52	20	9	16	17	14	14	10	2
10-K Reports	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	3	4	9	12	9	12	12	11
Prospectuses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	1	N/A	1	2	20	4

Appendix Data and Methodology

Data for Figures 1 and 2 come from a search of the ProQuest databases containing the full text of the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. For the *Times* the search term corporate social responsibility was used, so any article with these three words in the text was counted for the years 1900-1999. For the *Journal* the same search was performed for 1960-1985 (since data for later years were not available).

To develop Tables 1-4 I searched Lexis world, business, and general news databases on November 12-14, 2002. Note that article counts for the year 2002 only represent coverage through mid-November. In each file I first established how many CSR articles appeared in a given year by looking for articles that contained the word corporate within twenty-five words of the phrase social responsibility. To analyze the issues, stakeholders, motivations, and implementation questions surrounding CSR I then added another search term to the request (e.g., I searched for articles which had the word corporate within twenty-five words of social responsibility and contained the word environment). Note that there is overlap among the different news files, so the same publication can be found in more than one category. For example, the world regions analysis divides coverage by whether the source of the news was North/South America, Europe, Asia/Pacific, or Middle East/Africa. Newspapers that focus reporting on multiple areas of the world may appear in more than one of these files. To analyze broadcast coverage of CSR I searched the Lexis news transcripts file for broadcast program transcripts or abstracts where corporate appeared within twenty-five words of social responsibility.

Table 5 is based on Google searches conducted on November 14, 2002. The initial search term used was corporate social responsibility, and phrases were then added to this list. Note that Google treats singular and plural terms as distinct items, so for some search terms I report web hits for both singular and plural terms (e.g., shareholder and shareholders).

In this article I analyze coverage that uses the phrase corporate social responsibility. This approach does not capture all articles that deal with the issues encompassed by CSR. For example, articles that focus on a company's pollution practices but do not mention CSR are not included here. One could argue for a need to expand the search terms beyond CSR to terms such as corporate citizenship. I found, however, that many analyses of firm attempts to incorporate their social and environmental impacts did use the phrase CSR; the addition of the phrase corporate citizenship would not contribute many more articles to the counts reported in Table 1.

One might worry that the increasing number of stories about CSR in Lexis apparent in Table 1 could be an artifact of the expansion of outlets covered in Lexis. If Lexis covers more outlets each year, one would expect more article counts in recent years. To examine this, I did a Lexis search on a timeless topic – corporate profits. For each file for each year I counted the number of articles with the term corporate profits in the headline or lead paragraph. I use the more restrictive search criteria of having the

article mention profits in the headline or lead paragraph since a count of articles that simply mentioned profit would number in the thousands and make aggregation of counts by file time-consuming. I divided the number of CSR stories reported in the year by the number of corporate profit stories. If more outlets were being added to a given Lexis file, this should not affect the relative coverage of CSR and corporate profits. Table A1 reports the ratio of CSR to corporate profit stories by year for each file. The data demonstrate the same pattern evident in Table 1. Coverage of CSR across regions and outlets jumped in 2000 and surged even higher between 2000 and 2002. In major papers, for example, there were approximately 1.6 articles mentioning CSR in 1998 for every ten articles focused on profits. By 2002 there 9.8 articles mentioning CSR for every ten articles with corporate profits in the headline or lead paragraph. This shows that the relative attention to CSR has risen dramatically in the last five years.

Table A1

Ratio of CSR Year Count to Profits Year Count, 1998-2002

	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998
<u>General News</u>					
Major Papers	0.98	0.51	0.53	0.38	0.16
Magazines	4.50	2.58	2.24	1.35	0.62
Newsletters	2.90	2.96	2.21	1.03	0.60
<u>World News</u>					
North/South America	0.73	0.63	0.51	0.44	0.22
Europe	1.45	0.95	0.89	0.40	0.23
Asia/Pacific	0.16	0.10	0.07	0.06	0.05
Middle East/Africa	4.05	2.56	2.27	2.07	0.63
<u>Business News</u>					
Business and Finance	0.97	0.57	0.54	0.42	0.20
Industry	1.90	1.02	0.96	0.63	0.37
Mergers and Acquisitions	5.27	2.91	1.11	0.52	0.25

Table A2

Index of CSR Coverage Relative to Corporate Profits Coverage, 1998-2000

	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998
<u>General News</u>					
Major Papers	6.040946	3.152316	3.302144	2.354173	1
Magazines	7.255102	4.159321	3.610027	2.183248	1
Newsletters	4.865012	4.966732	3.704433	1.725198	1
<u>World</u>					
North America	3.303571	2.818091	2.290909	1.98	1
Europe	6.422789	4.192207	3.963688	1.770541	1
Asia	3.027974	1.771293	1.223077	1.151241	1
Middle East	6.424138	4.05364	3.605016	3.285714	1
<u>Business</u>					
Business Finance	4.943241	2.907658	2.760288	2.136364	1
Industry	5.188272	2.787864	2.628205	1.714545	1
Mergers and Acquisitions	21.42821	11.8303	4.512329	2.119858	1

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