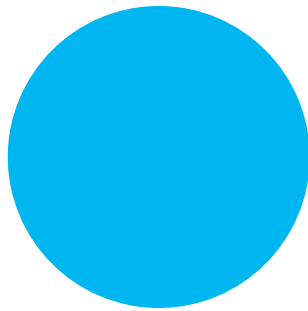


Challenge & Change:  
**REASSESSING JOURNALISM'S  
GLOBAL FUTURE**



Edited By  
Alan Knight

# **CHALLENGE AND CHANGE**

## **Reassessing Journalism's Global Future**

Edited by Alan Knight





First published in 2013 by

UTS ePRESS  
University of Technology, Sydney  
Broadway NSW 2007  
Australia  
<http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/>

© 2013 Copyright rests with the respective authors of each chapter

Challenge and change : reassessing journalism's global future  
Edited by Alan Knight

ISBN: 978-0-9872369-0-6

The chapters in this book are peer reviewed.

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter One</b> Journalism re-defined : <i>Alan Knight</i>	1
<b>Chapter Two</b> The rise and fall of newspapers : <i>Paolo Hooke</i>	30
<b>Chapter Three</b> One World? Globalising the Media : <i>Tony Maniaty</i>	53
<b>Chapter Four</b> Reporting a world in conflict : <i>Tony Maniaty</i>	76
<b>Chapter Five</b> Networked journalism in the Arab Spring : <i>Alan Knight</i>	107
<b>Chapter Six</b> Ethics in the age of newsbytes : <i>Sue Joseph</i>	126
<b>Chapter Seven</b> Data Drive Journalism : <i>Maureen Henninger</i>	157
<b>Chapter Eight</b> Information Sources and data discovery: <i>Maureen Henninger</i>	185

## Chapter One:

# Journalism Re-defined

**Prof. Alan Knight**

---

“The future of journalism can and will be better than it’s past. We have never had a more open ecosystem for the expression of information and ideas”.

Richard Gingras, Director of news and social products at Google August 9, 2012 in Chicago. (Gingras, 2012)<sup>1</sup>

Journalists were once defined by where they worked; in newspapers, or radio and television stations. Now, the internet promises everyone, everywhere can be a publisher. But not everyone has the skills or training to be a journalist; defined by their professional practices and codes of ethics. Such journalists will continue to

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Gingras, Director of news and social products at Google, at the opening keynote of the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) on August 9, 2012 in Chicago. (Gingras, 2012)

authorise information, providing signposts for discerning audiences. Journalism is merely evolving, as it has done many times before to exploit newer media.

Private newspaper's financial base, which underpins journalism shifted ground, as advertising revenue withdrew from traditional newspaper groups. This process is particularly marked in the United States and in Australia where the small size of the media market has made some operators particularly vulnerable to cost increases and the threat of takeovers.

Yet even there, we were seeing new green shoots. While the venerable Washington Post lost more than 200 journalists in a year, al Jazeera America hired 700. In Australia, the Guardian has established a successful online edition, joining Crikey, Online Opinion and the Drum.

### **Rupert Murdoch sees the future**

The US based media magnate, Rupert Murdoch was early to identify the impact of new internet technologies on established communications industries. In a speech to the American Society of Editors as long ago as 2005, Murdoch warned that newspapers must adapt or become "also rans":

"... Newspapers as a medium for centuries enjoyed a virtual information monopoly – roughly from the birth of the printing press to the rise of radio. We never had a reason to second-guess what we were doing. Second, even after the advent of television, a slow but steady decline in readership was masked by population growth that kept circulations reasonably intact. Third, even after absolute circulations started to decline in the 1990s, profitability did not." (Murdoch 2005)

Speaking in 2008 on the ABC's Boyer Lectures, Murdoch said that the internet allowed "a direct attack" on journalists' judgment. "Journalists like to think of themselves as watchdogs, but they haven't always responded well when the public calls them to account," he said. (Murdoch 2008).

The Challenges are Real. There will be probably never be a paperless office, but young people are straying paperless homes. Traditional sources of revenue – such as classifieds – are drying up, putting pressure

on the business model, and journalists face new competition from alternative sources of news and information, (Murdoch 2008).

Yet Murdoch expressed confidence in the future of journalism and newspapers, provided journalists served their audiences with quality material. He said that News Corporation sought to take advantage of digital content by offering three tiers of involvement:

“The first will be the news that we put online for free. The second will be available for those who subscribe to wsj.com. And the third will be a premium service, designed to give its customers the ability to customise high-end financial news and analysis from around the world. (Murdoch 2008)”

Murdoch had diversified his former newspaper chain, News Corporation, to include movie companies, news as entertainment, satellite television, sports teams and more recently internet social networking sites.

News Corporation content, including, music, text, movies and animation was distributed by new media, leapfrogging over traditional distributors including terrestrial broadcasters, print publishers, record shops and cinema chains.

Murdoch identified the internet as the medium of the future.

### **International News**

The old style exclusive, international news order was already long dead, even in mainland China where the government strenuously and unsuccessfully attempts to enforce official accounts of international events. It has been effectively replaced by blended and multi sourced information, which collectively contributes to the new global media environment. The Internet allows the creation of multi-layered reports, which are embedded with images, video, and animation.

Accuracy has become a key issue as diligent consumers compare journalists' analysis with their sources original words. Authenticated websites which aggregate these reports, such as the BBC, New York Times and the ABC (Australia) have experienced rapidly rising page views. Social media and Individual websites, such

as blogs, which may offer previously unrepresented opinion, already attract much larger audiences than some conventional columnists.

Individual conventional news stories, delivered in text with summary leads and one or two quotable sources are fast becoming irrelevant to the individual news consumer. Such stories are often more useful as the raw source material for online databases, such as Factiva, operated by the wire service, Reuters. The information they contain can then be archived, considered and compared.

However, some things remained constant. Journalists were still required to create summaries of ideas, expositions and events. But if their reports were to have veracity they must be buttressed by supporting documents and sites. The International Federation of Journalists Declaration of Principles on the conduct of Journalism stated that respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist:

“Media must respect the professional and ethical principles upon which the freedom of expression and opinion relies. In doing so, journalists advance the public interest by publishing, broadcasting or circulating facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgments.” (IFJ 1986)

Professional journalists were trained to synthesize and present ideas. By publication through recognized channels, they became part of identifiable information brands and could be judged accordingly. Anonymous web postings would, and on reflection, should not be granted similar credibility. Mainstream media framed this certified news in ways, which news consumers should be able to comprehend integrate and apply. This demand for authenticated information should continue to create a need for mediation by journalists. Journalists will still be needed to bear witness to events.

Australia’s Independent Inquiry Into The Media and Media Regulation saw the newsmedia as continuing to play key roles in contemporary democracies. It cited;

“information: the news media can provide fair and full information so citizens can make sound political choices



investigation: the news media can investigate concentrated sources of power, particularly governmental power

analysis: the news media can provide coherent frameworks of interpretation to help citizens comprehend a complex world

social empathy: journalism can tell people about others in their society and their world so that they can come to appreciate the viewpoints and lives of other people, especially those less advantaged than themselves

public forum: journalism can provide a forum for dialogue among citizens and serve as a common carrier of the perspectives of varied groups in society

mobilisation: the news media can serve as advocates for particular political programs and perspectives and mobilise people to act in support of these programs.” (Finkelstein 2012)

## **Tipping towards Asia**

The second major impact on journalism was the shift towards Asia a global cultural and information axis.

In the last two centuries information distribution was constructed to serve European centred colonial empires. These information networks evolved from the telegraph to the telephone to satellite communications networks. Production centred on the old metropolitan centres, London, Paris and Amsterdam, more recently shifting to New York and Los Angeles. International journalism has been driven by these new communications technologies.

William Russell's dispatches from the Crimean war were delivered by steamship. Reuters, the first major international news agency, later in the nineteenth century used the telegraph to collect and systematically distribute global news. Photography illuminated the American Civil and First World wars. The telephone was used for live radio descriptions of the bombing blitz in London in World War

two. Mobile movie cameras were deployed in the Vietnam War while satellite television revolutionised coverage of the first and second Gulf wars.

These high technologies required sophisticated technical skills, complex support systems and significant financial backing, concentrating power in the hands of the specialists, journalists who delivered the news.

However the internet, a decentralised information system initially designed to survive nuclear attacks on metropolitan centres, has atomised communications. The Net with its ability to distribute, research and interact, promises the greatest revolution of all...and the war that is being reported this time is one of the survival of journalism itself.

Western journalism is said to be in crisis, as a result of the internet. Citizen journalists are seen to be challenging reporters' roles as mediators of public information. The internet is eroding the financial basis for the powerhouses of western journalism, the newspapers. Young consumers, raised on a diet of computer games, internet chat and networking sites, appear to be redefining news itself.

### **Internet Usage**

According to Internet World Stats, there were 578 million internet users Asia<sup>2</sup> in 2012, representing a penetration of 15.3% of the population. However internet penetration was widely disparate with South Korea (82.9%), Hong Kong (70.7%), Japan (73.8%) . Indonesia, a large and disparate developing nation was estimated to have internet penetration of 10.5%. (but with usage growth of 1,150% from 2000 to 2008. These rates might be compared with the United States (72.5%) Australia (79.4%) and the United Kingdom (68.6%) . (Internet World Stats 2009)

However, Asia already represented 39.5% of global users in this survey, compared to Europe with 26.3 % and North America with 17%. China boasted of 253 million users, Japan 94 million and Indonesia 25 million. (Internet World Stats 2009)

---

<sup>2</sup> This relates to 35 countries and regions, from mega states like China and India to small entities such as Bhutan and Myanmar.

---

Internet usage could be expected to increase throughout Asia as literacy rates improved, business demand rose, economies modernised, computer costs.

## **Western Pessimism**

Much of the pessimism expressed about journalism's future and the negative impact of the internet, emanated from western countries, where journalism often has been dominated by large, traditional, privately owned, newspaper groups, which often created news agendas followed by less well resourced journalists in television and radio. The profitability of these groups and the viability of the journalism they supported were being directly threatened by the shift of advertising revenue to the web.

A report presented in June 2008 by the British House of Lords communications committee warned that the race to pursue advertising cash on the internet was damaging “news gathering”, Committee Chair, Lord Fowler said media companies were having to make savings which had a particular impact on investment in news gathering and investigative and specialist journalism - including a reduction in foreign correspondents.

“The news media is experiencing a period of unprecedented change. There is considerable uncertainty about the future. The newspaper industry is facing severe problems as readership levels fall; young people turn to other sources of news; and advertising moves to the internet. Even when newspapers run successful internet sites the value of the advertising they sell on these sites does not make up for the value lost.” (House of Lords 2008)

The increase of news platforms and new high tech ways of accessing the news had not been matched by an increase in resources for news gathering, the Lords committee concluded.

Journalism used to be defined by where you worked. Journalists once had privileged access to the tightly held means of mass distribution. In Australia, this meant the few who worked in newspapers could influence the news agendas of radio and television.

Journalism had been redefined internationally by:

- Democratisation of media production with the rise in new digital technologies;
- The atomisation of the distribution of information through the internet and social media;
- The challenge to western paradigms by the rising intellectual and cultural influence of transitional societies;
- The decline of the traditional media economic models;
- Influence on media uptake of rising levels of education and literacy levels;

## **Newspapers**

Newspapers, like the automatic wrist watch or the big gun battleship, were inventions of the mechanical age. Journalists were at the front end of an information assembly line where reporters collected the raw materials, sub-editors refined it, lay out staff boiler-plated the words together and printers manufactured the industrial output. Newspapers were called “the daily miracle”.

But it couldn't last. To make a newspaper you had to cut down half a forest in Tasmania and convert it to wood chips. These were fed through a toxic chemical process to create tonnes of newsprint which was then carted in oil burning ships to ports along the Australian coast. The newsprint was then fed into steam and later electric powered factories which at dawn each day, reproduced images and text on sheets of paper. These were sorted and packed before being trucked to shopfronts which employed child labour (paper-boys) to hawk the final products to people on their way to work.

Compared to a click on a computer link, it was slow, carbon intensive and increasingly expensive. Perhaps it's worth reflecting on what journalism was like before computers. George Richards was a journalist in Sydney for more than half a century. He was a sub-editor, a London correspondent, a Chief of staff, a cadet trainer and editor of Column 8 at Fairfax newspapers. Richards came from a family of newspapermen, with a father, Chas, an uncle Len, and a brother, Dick in the trade before him. But George Richards would help change newspapers forever, introducing computer systems which would revolutionise journalism culture.

When he started as a copy boy in 1950, he said a lot of the subs were “old diggers” and the women journalists who had taken their places during WW2 had gone; sent “back to the kitchen”. “The [news] copy was either typed or hand written with 6B pencil on copy paper,” he said. The sub-editors round desk was all male, with the chief sub-editor at its centre. Copy was re-written and re-typed with amendments stuck on with Clag glue. “It was a dog’s breakfast”, he said.

“The Herald subs room was closed. I would get in there on late shift at eight o’clock at night and there would be this almost visible fug of cigarette smoke coming down from the ceiling as the room filled up. About three or four of us didn’t smoke and everybody else did. The room was pretty daggy. The lino was peeling a bit. It wasn’t air conditioned until 1961. The masters on the fourteenth floor [the Fairfax executive offices] got it first of course, then the compositors and then us.” (Richards 2012)

International news came in on tele-printers, typed in capitals. Sub-editors cut sentences into strips and glued them onto paper backing. Reporters copy was also “pretty daggy”, Richards said. Some journalists were ordered thinkers who could produced “clean copy where you just had to put a few paragraph marks in it and put a heading on it”. Other stories however came in scraps and had to be heavily sub-edited before being put into type.

Reporters often operated out of pubs, where they would carouse for much of the day with their sources. Richards worked with the then famous Industrial reporter, Jack Simpson, who sat on a stool next to the servery at the Trades Hall Hotel. When officials who ran the unions (and the state Labor government) stopped to buy a beer, Simpson would swap tips on the races for inside information. “Newspapers stopped recruiting the rough and ready guys,” Richards said. Fairfax started hiring reporters with university degrees.

When I was a cadet, you would be going out interviewing lottery winners. The next day you would do a car smash. You might do a bushfire and go out there and live with the fire-fighters. Now days that’s left to AAP. The hard news stories, describing what was going on, now goes to television. There’s no point in describing a fire when people can go and watch it on television. The reporters we got were interested in smart writing and sometimes even spelling. (Richards 2012)

Richards was in the London office in 1976 when he was asked to go to Amsterdam to look at a new system, Arsycom. “The instructions were in Dutch and it had a terrible keyboard,” he said. Richards then went to the United States to look at computers in use at the Detroit News, “risking life and limb” in the tough neighbourhood. Fairfax printers went on strike in that year, in an unsuccessful attempt to take control of the new technology. However, first systems were unreliable and clunky. “The Arsycom system was pretty awful and kept on falling over,” he said.

A more effective computer system was needed. In 1984, Richards led the training team to introduce Systems Integrated Incorporated with its Coyote terminals to about 800 Fairfax staff.

“It was a beauty. It was a Rolls Royce of computer systems. It had been devised for newspapers.... It had been used widely in the United States for advertising and editorial. One of the best things about it was that it was something you could customise yourself. It taught you how to customise it to meet your own requirements...it was so good they kept it on in classified until 2011. It lasted for twenty seven years. For a computer system that’s amazing.”(Richards 2012 )

Computerisation allowed reporters to type directly into the system. “When you went to computers, everything was neat and tidy on the screen”, he said.

“It was the silence you noticed. Typewriters, teleprinters and shouted exchanges made a lot of noise. “With computers all you heard was click, click click,” Richards said. The conversation around the news desk was muted.

## **Computerisation**

Computers were introduced into Australian journalism in the early seventies by Australian Associated Press (AAP), a news wholesaler owned by the major newspaper groups. I encountered them at Queensland Regional News, which distributed stories to Queensland’s regional newspapers. Before that, carbon paper was used to create multiple copies of stories banged out on manual typewriters. The Regional News sub-editors, who favoured green eyeshades and wore steel arm bands to keep their sleeves up from the ink, collected these copies twice a night. They would check stories and fling them to the teleprinter operators who punched paper rolls which could then be fed into a mechanical device which converted

them to an electronic signal. As the sub-editors waited on the ebbs and flows of the news copy, they played cards and drank rum.

The early AAP computers were simple monochrome terminals connected to a mainframe in Sydney. They had limited capacity to progressively save copy and lacked even a spell check facility. But they allowed stories to be accumulated in centralised files which could be processed by editors employed on twenty four seven shifts. There was little time for rum and cards.

The new newspaper computer systems were unstable. A red light would flash in the Fairfax newsroom, the system would go down and stories would disappear. One sub-editor was so enraged that he smashed his keyboard with his fist.

But it was the printers who were to become the first casualties. By the late seventies, newspaper groups had acquired word processing networks which allowed journalists a paper based system which did not need words to be cast in hot lead on a Linotype machine and then bolted together by compositors on “the stone”, to make pages. The introduction of this new technology prompted Australian journalists to go on strike in 1980, complaining that reading computer screens might affect their eyesight. However their industrial action was not in support of the printers, who drank at other pubs, belonged to another union and whose jobs would be lost. Journalists successfully sought extra allowances for using computers.

In the eighties, laptops, or more correctly luggables, arrived. This allowed reporters to write and file without having to make a telephone call to a news copy taker to take down the story. Modems which clamped on telephone handsets became plug ins and then wireless. Ethernet networks became more powerful. Much later in the nineties, the internet allowed sub-editors to operate off shore. There was a pioneering South China Morning Post sub-editor who did his work from a beach shack on the Sunshine Coast, while linked to Hong Kong.

## **Pagemasters**

Pagemasters was founded in 1991, initially compiling TV listings and sports results. This company, which became an AAP subsidiary, evolved into an operation which sold page ready news and sport, magazine material and centralised sub-editing.

Printing presses, which once rumbled in the basement of newspaper buildings became remote suburban operations, allowing the old press buildings to be capitalised and journalists installed in leased office accommodation, preferably located away from the pubs. Australian Provincial News meanwhile developed a network where sub-editing of century old mastheads was located far away from the rural communities they served, so that local newspapers became templates filled by teams of young reporters.

However, computers and the internet did more than allow newspapers to economise on their operations. They allowed new players to compete for advertising revenue and claim the papers' future audiences. In a watershed speech in 2005, Rupert Murdoch warned the American Society of editors that younger readers were rejecting newspapers. Murdoch said that unless newspapers recognised changes in the way people used media, "we will as an industry, be relegated to the status of also-rans". Four years later, a survey of more than 200 Queensland journalism students showed that two thirds read newspapers once a week or less. One had to ask, if elite journalism students didn't read the papers, who would?

News Corporation acquired popular websites, cross promoted company cultural products including news, music and movies and erected pay walls around its most valuable information. Fairfax established Fairfax Digital, placed its classifieds on the web and launched an online newspaper, the Brisbane Times. But revenue was still down.

In 2012, Fairfax outsourced much of its sub editing to Pagemasters, ending a 150 year continuity of in-house editing for its broadsheet newspapers. Fairfax Managing Director, Greg Hywood, said that he was seeking to establish "sustainable publishing models", with \$25 million worth of redundancies.

Gaining these efficiencies from our production processes is also facilitating further investment in the creation of quality, independent journalism. Fairfax will be investing in more high calibre reporters and writers, an expanded trainee program and multi-media training and equipment. ( Hywood 2012 )



## Outsourcing News

Networks of outsourced sub-editors, linked by computers, could edit most newspapers, according to Bruce Davidson, the CEO of Australian Associated Press (AAP).

Australian Associated Press was established by a syndicate of Australian newspapers in 1935 to gather, edit and distribute news stories. It generated its own news, written by its own reporters, edited by its own sub-editors and then distributed to newspapers, radio and televisions. Sub-editors employed at the final news outlets would incorporate this syndicated material into their own newspapers and bulletins. AAP news was frequently unattributed in this process. The final outsourcing of news to AAP mostly abolished this final step in the process.

Pagemasters operations in Australia, New Zealand and the UK provided complete design, editing and production services for a range of metropolitan, regional and community newspapers and weekly and monthly magazines. It specialised in administering content online and on digital platforms. Bruce Davidson in 1991 was a founder of Pagemasters since incorporated into AAP Dispersed newsrooms of editors, linked by computers and broadband, could more flexibly respond to the ebbs and flows of newspaper copy, Davidson said. Previously production had been constrained by internal departments within newspapers. There was a lot of down-time. In contrast, newsagency editors worked shifts which stretched 24/7.

“It was very much silo-ed into segments on the paper. There were feature subs, sports subs business subs, general news subs and advertising and commercial content subs. A lot of newspapers started to break that down to create more of a pool scenario..In the UK and the US... there are broader sub-editing teams subbing across multiple sections of newspapers, rather than being segmented.” (Davidson 2012)

It varied from newspaper to newspaper. “But there is still a need for specialist knowledge,” he said.

“We don’t have a one size fits all, generic, assembly line approach to this. We sit down with the newspapers and work out the best ways they want to change their structures. ...AAP is [already] a big part of the landscape for the media industry. We provide a large proportion of the content

that's in our media every day, not just stories but now pictures and video, and audio grabs for the radio. Pagemasters expands this to providing services around that content. We are also re-purposing content so that it can be populated on websites and digital platforms that much more easily." (Davidson 2012 )

Efficiencies came from breaking down the silo culture, changing expectations and changing what journalists did on a daily basis. "If you talk to our sub-editors, they don't see that as onerous," Davidson said, "they just see it as a good solid work flow". "We have at our disposal a large pool of skill which we can deploy as the load dictates," Davidson said. "We can do the work as it arrives".

Group Managing Editor for Pagemasters, Peter Atkinson (2012) described the process.

"The copy really moves around in the models that we use. In both the New Zealand operation in Auckland, where our team is doing sub-editing for the New Zealand Herald and the APN (Australian Provincial News) regional titles, our teams work in a system that networks directly back into the newspaper. Similarly with the work we do for Fairfax, our Brisbane office producing feature sections for the Sydney Morning Herald and the Age, we connect by high speed Firewire directly into the Fairfax mainframe.

We work as if we were in the very next office," Atkinson said.

We provide solutions to some of the challenges facing newspapers and their businesses in a fairly dynamic environment. For a lot of our history we offered work that was a on a page ready basis, that is prepared and ready for press. Particularly regional publishers who had less resources could download out work and send it straight to press. It was completed in house and syndicated via the web. More recently we have got into providing editing services, where we provide sub-editing power..." (Atkinson 2012)

But what of quality?

We have the same aims as our clients. We hire the same qualified staff and give them the same excellent working conditions. We train them to be at the cutting edge of the profession. We have the same commitment to the end product and good journalism as any newspaper. (Atkinson 2012)

Pagemasters was tied by contract to meet key performance indicators of quality. “We meet substantial financial penalties, if the standards of our work are not up to an agreed level, or even if we fail to meet deadlines”.

### **Newspaper ownership**

Australia had among the most concentrated newspaper ownership in the developed world with only four major publishers. The US based, Murdoch family led, News limited was by far the largest, followed by Fairfax Media, WA Newspapers and Australian Provincial News (APN).

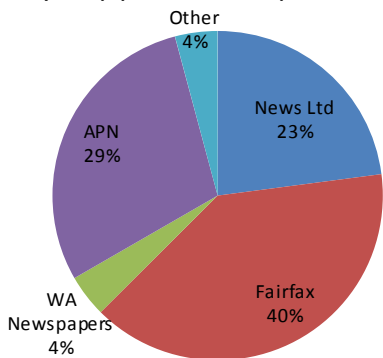
“At the opening of the 20th century, competition in the industry was vibrant with several titles vying for customers in each of the major cities. Shortly after Federation, the six state capital cities between them had 21 daily newspapers with 17 independent owners. The zenith came in 1923 when there were 26 capital city dailies and 21 independent owners<sup>3</sup>. The trend towards increasing concentration began with the impact of the Depression, which led to several closures and weakened other titles. It was then that the Melbourne-based Herald and Weekly Times company led by Sir Keith Murdoch began acquiring titles interstate. In subsequent years, concentration in the industry increased progressively with both the number of titles and number of owners declining significantly. By 1960, the number of capital city dailies had declined by almost half to 14, and the number of independent owners had declined to seven, one-third of the number in 1923”. (Finkelstein 2012)

The numbers dwindled in the 1980s when most afternoon newspapers closed. BY 2012, only Sydney and Melbourne had competing locally based daily newspapers.

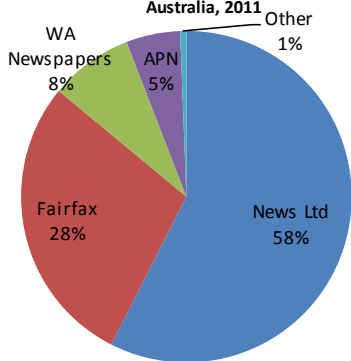
---

<sup>3</sup> Henry Mayer *The Press In Australia* (Lansdowne Press, 1964) 31.

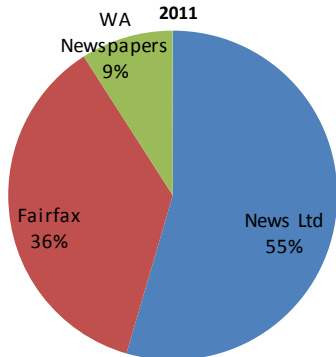
Daily newspaper titles ownership shares, Australia, 2011



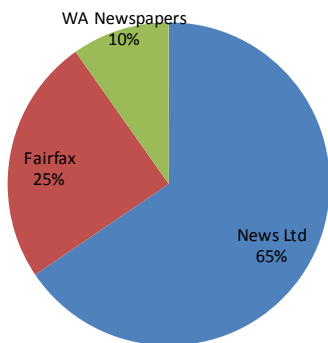
Daily newspaper aggregate circulation, shares by owners, Australia, 2011



**Metropolitan/national dailies, ownership shares, Australia, 2011**



**Metropolitan/national dailies circulation, shares by owners, Australia, 2011**



Finkelstein Report 2012

## News Corporation

In 2012, the largest newspaper group in Australia, News Limited abandoned its traditional newspaper structure to meet the demands of 24/7 multiplatform journalism.

The legacy of a series of takeovers and expansions, News Limited had 19 Divisions, including The Herald and Weekly Times in Melbourne, Queensland Newspapers and Nationwide News in Sydney. Under the new organisation, management was reduced to five divisions with multiplatform responsibilities.

News Limited, owned by the US based News Corporation, published most of Australia's major newspapers, including the Herald Sun, the Courier Mail, the Sunday Mail, the Adelaide Advertiser and the Sydney Telegraph. In 2012, News claimed that "each week the papers the News Ltd prints, were read by more than half the population of Australia".

While Rupert Murdoch was one of the first newspaper publishers to warn against the impact of the internet, News Corporation's attempts to diversify into new media such as My Space, floundered. Newspapers nevertheless became a relatively minor part of international News Corporation operations dominated by cable television, satellite services, movies, and other entertainment. News Limited's Chief executive, Kim Williams said his company was re-balancing its activities and revenues in an integrated way. Multi-platform journalism would become universal.

Digital technology and the ever-increasing array of consumer devices and connectivity points represent an important core to the future of our company. To realise the huge opportunities presented we must ensure we have world-class resources supporting our editorial and sales teams. Those resources – people and technology – must be integrated across our editorial product development and execution to be truly successful. Therefore we will no longer run News Digital Media as a separate operating division, but instead embed the knowledge, energy, resources and talent of our digital experts into every part of News. (Williams 2012)

News transformation had three pillars, according to Williams.

---

- Put consumers and advertisers “front and centre”.
- Invest in journalism which could be “seamlessly delivered” across platforms.
- Effectively monetise operations.

Williams maintained that traditional journalism values would continue to be at the core of News newspapers.

At the heart of our relationship with customers is great journalism. We aim to offer it all. More exclusives than any other media company. Analysis that sets the agenda. Investigative journalism that holds diverse leaders to account – like our coverage of Haneef, the AWB scandal, Wivenhoe Dam and the pink bats. Stories that connect with our communities –that make us proud to live where we live, and about the people we live with. Stories that provide real solutions to complex social problems. And stories that illuminate and inform people about the things they love – fashion, cars, food, bringing up their kids or any of the vast pallet of things that interest us. (Williams PANPA 2012)

“I have an aversion to words that work on a page that don’t work online,” he told staff in a video link up. Journalism would be offered on a series of platforms. News adopted a one city, one newsroom strategy, allowing stories to be rapidly offered across platforms. “This single newsroom concept will transform operations and unlock strengths. Regional editorial managers would be appointed to take responsibility for all products in New South Wales and Queensland. “We need digitally literate thinking in our DNA” he said.

News Limited spent A\$60 million purchasing an information management system, Eidos Methode, to support a “ create once, publish many times” editorial approach. “We must change to ensure a viable and sustainable future,” Williams said.

## **Fairfax Media**

Australia’s leading quality press, Fairfax newspapers, moved towards becoming a virtual news group.

In 2012, Fairfax Media, which published the Age, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Australian Financial Review, announced the closure of its major printing presses and dumping the traditional broadsheet format, while foreshadowing more than 1900 redundancies.

The impact of the announcement reflected the narrow ownership of Australia's news media. Fairfax might be centred in only Sydney and Melbourne, but it represented a liberal alternative to the dominant Murdoch press and the government funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

While Australian newspapers had not suffered internet driven advertising declines comparable to their American counterparts, the Fairfax move followed falls in revenue accompanied by the threat of a takeover bid by right wing mining billionaire, Gina Rinehart. Rinehart had been acquiring Fairfax shares at reduced prices. A Rinehart advisor, Jack Cowin, the founder of Hungry Jacks burger chain, said that newspapers were a business and that "the purpose of the newspaper ... is probably to portray the facts in a manner that is going to attract readership". A critic of liberal newspaper journalism, Rinehart demanded three places on the Fairfax Board.

Fairfax announced four major measures "to match the reduced significance of print readership to an increasingly digital business".

- Metro Mastheads to Move to Compact Format: The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age moved to "compact" formats similar to The Australian Financial Review, with the first copy released on 4 March 2013.
- Digital Subscriptions Introduced to Metro Mastheads: Digital subscriptions implemented across The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age during the first quarter of calendar 2013. A "metered" model would be adopted with a base level of free access to the websites retained.
- Closure of Chullora and Tullamarine printing plants by June 2014. Both sites were commissioned when almost all of Metro Media's content was delivered through the printed newspaper. They had legacy presses with significant surplus capacity which was no longer required. Printing of Metro papers was reallocated to the Fairfax printing network.
- Digital-First Editorial Model: The editorial function was restructured to ensure full integration across digital, print and mobile platforms. There



was intended to be increased flexibility with greater sharing of editorial content across geographies and across platforms.

Fairfax Media Chief Executive and Managing Director Greg Hywood said:

“No one should be in any doubt that we are operating in very challenging times. Readers’ behaviours have changed and will not change back. As a result, we are taking decisive actions to fundamentally change the way we do business.

The package of strategic initiatives is bold, and several are difficult, particularly as they will impact on some of our people. However, we believe that they are in the best interests of Fairfax, our shareholders, and ultimately the majority of our people. They are necessary to ensure Fairfax retains its position as a leading independent media company and a keyvoice in our markets. ” (*Hywood 2012*)

### **The National Broadcaster: The ABC**

Australia's public funded broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) restructured in 2007 to place its online convergence at the centre of its operations. <sup>4</sup>

Digital media, in particular digital journalism moved from the periphery to the centre of ABC operations. Announcing a corporate restructure ABC Managing Director, Mark Scott. said that:

“Digital media is now integral to everything we do.” Scott said the corporate changes reflected “ the shift of digital and new media from the fringe of ... operations ten years ago to the very centre of ... Television, Radio and News and Current Affairs output”. (Scott A 2007)

---

<sup>4</sup> The ABC operated four national radio networks, nine metropolitan radio stations and 51 regional stations. Radio Australia, the international service, broadcasted on shortwave, online, satellite and local rebroadcasts in six languages including English. Digital Television was distributed through 177 transmitters. (Jolly, 2006)

The ABC re-organisation recognised that radio, television and text were no longer separate products, couched in discrete production cultures. Rather these ABC divisions were content producers serving digital delivery systems, which might include radio, television and websites. It was a belated admission that multi media journalism was a core practice rather than an experiment.

“It is not an add-on, it is not a novelty, it is the present reality as well as the future,” Mr. Scott said.

The ABC outlined its future in a 2020 document which said that, “ By reaching all Australians, with a presence on all major delivery platforms, and a comprehensive range of news and quality, trusted programming, the ABC ensures all Australians can participate in the national debate, and is integral to the development of a population with wide-ranging intellectual and creative curiosity.

The ABC in its 2020 proposal said that there would be expanded online services including:

- Internet TV, providing catch-up and specialist genres.
- Internet Radio, accessing digital radio content nationwide.
- Archival access to a wealth of Australian audiovisual content.
- Local broadband sites providing local communities with their own “town square” for information, video, audio and community participation.
- Constantly updated news and information.
- Partnerships with universities, think tanks, research and government agencies to deliver a series of websites providing public access to unprecedented depth of content around key genres including, Rural and regional Australia, Science, Education and Asia and the Pacific. (Scott A 2008)

So what would the overall media scene be like in 2020?

According to the ABC, there would be:

- Increasing availability of content. Multichannel television and high-speed broadband connectivity provide audiences with exponentially greater choices of media content from providers anywhere in the world, bypassing local content regulation.

- Increased range of media forms and delivery platforms. Audiences expect to access content across an increasing range of devices and contexts.
- Personalised media. Audiences expect increasingly personalised media experiences,
- including time- and platform-shifting of content consumption.
- Participatory media. A growing proportion of the public is interested in active
- engagement with media content creation, ranging from voting and forum discussion,
- through to collaboration in content creation.
- Audience fragmentation. Greater content choice and delivery platforms fragments
- audiences, but screen-based content delivered free-to-view will continue to aggregate
- the largest audiences, particularly around major events, sport and high quality
- entertainment.
- Increasing concentration of media ownership. As the media environment becomes
- increasingly global and converged, larger media firms seek greater scale.
- Digital production. Low-cost, professional-quality digital production equipment
- allows cheaper production of content, at the same time as the cost of high-end
- production increases as major media organisations seek to differentiate their output. (Scott A 2008)

It should be noted that the ABC's ambitions would be framed by series of issues largely beyond ABC management's control. These included:

Australian government funding for the ABC declined by 24.36% since 1985-86 (the high point of ABC funding). (Jolly) During the term of the Howard government, there was a move to switch funding from triennial grants to funding which targeted politically favoured projects. During the last election, government ministers actually announced new ABC bureaux in marginal electorates. The need to find funds has resulted in outsourcing of some production, cuts in staff numbers and an emphasis on projects which attract external support.

Clearly to achieve its ambitious aims, the ABC needed substantial government funding. In the 2013 federal budget, the Labor government increased the base ABC funding to \$2.5 billion over three years. ABC base funding increases to \$2.5 billion over three years

In addition \$69.4m was allocated over four years for the continuation of an enhanced news service and to place more journalists outside of metropolitan areas. \$30m was allocated over three years to help meet the increasing demands for digital services like iView and live streaming.

### **ABC Reporting**

ABC journalists were required to operate in multimedia environments. What began as peripheral operations, which were extended to rural and regional areas, became mandatory in core newsgathering in 2013.

Under the News system introduced in 2013, desk editors and producers were working with Chief of Staff desks and day editors in the Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane newsrooms to coordinate national stories, from commissioning through to production – across all platforms. Reporters working on the new system were supported on news angles by a story producer and a day editor, chasing talent or identifying interstate material.

Reporters were asked to consider five key priorities:

- SMS a one sentence news flash on breaking news stories. “If you have a smart phone and can grab a still or moving images we’d like you to email it so it can be used immediately by online and other programs or bulletins going to air.
- File five comprehensive paragraphs of copy to their local subs which can be used across ABC News output. “But remember, the overriding objective is to get the story out as quickly as possible, so if you’re hard up against a broadcast deadline – radio or 24 – then do that first.”
- File radio news voicers.
- Do live crosses to News 24 or radio programs
- Construct television news packages

ABC Editor Craig McMurtrie said that although many ABC journalists were already working across all platforms, others would need training “to get everybody

up to speed”. “We don’t expect that you will be able to do all these things straight away,” he said.

“Each story is different. We may have someone dedicated to live and/or digital content or we might divide the workload up between radio and television. It will depend entirely on the assignment. ...ABC News has been through many changes over the years, this is a big one, but our focus must stay on what always matters most – compelling storytelling. Whether it’s for online, radio or television the mission is the same...delivering relevant, original and accurate reporting.” (Mc Murtrie 2013)

ABC News Priorities confirmed that prospective journalists must be able to practice convergence. Specifically, they needed to be able to;

- Write what News agencies called Snaps; Tight sentences which quickly and accurately summarise the key point of breaking stories.
- Write longer scripts which include key points, sources and context.
- Craft, articulate and record voice reports, using both studios and remote locations.
- Be informed and confident enough to engage live with presenters
- Be able to produce simple television packages and contribute to more complex visual reports

### **Practising Convergence**

Convergence, according to the Convergence Review report of 2012, offered great opportunities to innovative players, as well as threats to practitioners unwilling or unable to change, “creating a need to transform both business and delivery models to keep up with changes in user behaviour”.

Users were “increasingly at the centre of content service delivery”, the report said. “They are creating their own content and uploading it to social media platforms. They are controlling what content they want to view and when they want to view it, for example, through podcasts of popular radio programs and catch-up television services provided by free-to-air networks.” the report said.

Australia's creative industries are well positioned to seize the opportunities offered by this new environment, and to ensure the development of our digital economy. Australian industry can expand our traditional screen businesses and develop excellence in emerging areas like smartphone and tablet apps. These industries can flourish in a converged environment that opens up new trade opportunities and cultural interactions with the rest of the world, where global distribution is virtually free. (Convergence Review 2012)

While the internet enabled freelance journalists to self publish, it also meant that independent journalists no longer had an umbrella of employers' legal protection. Australia has no constitutional guarantees of free speech, allowing the wealthy or well connected to target their online critics with costly legal actions. Journalists have been faced with the choice of going silent or talking a loan to pay for a lawyer. In modern authoritarian states like Singapore, defamation has been routinely deployed to silence and even break opposition.

The Media Alliance's insurance scheme introduced in 2013 recognised the shift away from assembly line news in old style newsrooms, to a de-regulated, atomised journalism, defined not by place of employment but rather by professional and ethical practices. The Alliance's Freelance Pro initiative was said to allow members protection for up to \$1 million professional indemnity and public liability. The Alliance used its strength in numbers to negotiate cut rate insurance levies.

Freelance Pro members will be required to do an online, self guided course on the Media Alliance Code of ethics. You will need to have done a refresher course in Australian media law in the last five years or participate in an at cost course available through the Walkley Foundation.

Media Alliance NSW Secretary, Marcus Strom said that in a fragmented media landscape, it was increasingly important for freelancers to stand out as legitimate practitioners of the craft of journalism.

“Since our foundation in 1910 as the Journalists Association, we have always been both , a professional association and an industrial organisation.”

“With the changing nature of journalism, we want to be sure we are relevant to growing number of freelancers”.

“The old news factories are undergoing a metamorphosis. Society is changing. Priorities are changing. I think they will survive and if they get their business models right, may even thrive again. But what they will rely on is a growing army of freelance journalists. We want to make sure those journalists are professional, well paid and respected.” (Strom 2013)

## **Discussion**

It's old news that the media world is changing fast. The growth of the internet abolished journalist's monopolies on the mass communication of news. The swing to Asia has profound implications what was an Anglo centric, metropolitan focused, mostly one way news flows.

Digitisation and the production of inexpensive, high quality audio and video equipment empowered non mainstream producers wherever they might be located. The multiplication of new platforms, particularly mobile phones, has made distribution of this material pervasive.

Networks of consumers, working with journalists, such as India's SWARA, have already created viable alternatives to mainstream media. (SWARA was a voice-based portal, freely accessible via mobile phone, that allowed anyone to report and listen to stories of local interest. Reported stories are moderated by journalists and become available for playback online as well as over the phone, the Swara site said.)

News organisations will have to reshape and re-organise to meet the new demands. Some won't survive or will only continue with greatly reduced influence and authority.

Australia's primary news content providers, the major newspapers and the ABC have all restructured to address multi platform journalism. In doing so they have begun operating like Australia's newsagency, Australian Associated Press ;

working twenty four/seven schedules, creating multiplatform news and acting as verifiers and authorisers of information.

Future journalists who might hope to work for them will have to be multi skilled; being able to report , write in text, able to produce audio and create short television packages. Their tools will be their lap tops and increasingly mobile phones. They will have access to data banks, global audio text, audio and text links and websites.

But the core requirements, the ability to quickly and concisely summarise complex events and accurately communicate outcomes, can be expected to provide journalists with work for some time to come.



## References

Finkelstein, R. (2012). Report of the independent inquiry into the media and media regulation. Canberra: Department of Broadband.

Gingras, R. (2012). The annual conference of the association for education in journalism and mass communication. Retrieved from <http://www.aejmcchicago.org/>

House of Lords Communications Committee. (2008). Who owns the news London

IFJ, (2004). Journalism Ethics. Retrieved April 16, 2007, from International Federation of Journalists Web site: <http://www.ifj.org/default.asp?Issue=ETHICS&Language=EN>

Jolly, R. (2006). Funding of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved July 10, 2008, from Parliamentary Library Web site: <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/fundingabc.htm>

Murdoch, R. (2005) “ Speech by Rupert Murdoch to the American Society of Newspaper Editors” Press Releases. ([http://www.newscorp.com/news/news\\_247.html](http://www.newscorp.com/news/news_247.html))

Murdoch, R. (2008,11,16). The future of newspapers: moving beyond dead trees. Retrieved January 5, 2009, from Boyer Lectures Web site: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/boyerlectures/stories/2008/2397940.htm>

New York Times, (2008.03.31). Media and Advertising. Retrieved April 6, 2008, from New York Times Web site: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/31/business/media/31paper.html?ref=business>

Richards, G. (2012, May 29). Interview by A. Knight [Web Based Recording].

## Chapter Two:

# Newspapers rise and fall

**Paolo Hooke**

---

Newspapers are widely held to be in serious crisis. In the Western world, the rise of online news and new multiple sources of news and information have changed the economics of newspaper publishing. The impact of the Global Financial Crisis and the associated downturn in newspaper advertising spending has only exacerbated the economic difficulties confronting the industry.

The crisis has been felt most painfully in the United States, where even as online audiences grow, print circulation continues to decline. Even more critically, so does advertising revenue. When circulation and ad revenue are combined, the U.S. newspaper industry has shrunk 43 per cent since 2000, while it's estimated the number of full-time employees has dropped below 40,000 for the first time since 1978. The worry is that fewer reporters mean things don't get covered, with democracy diminished. In the United Kingdom, where newspapers are less

dependent on advertising revenue than their trans-Atlantic counterparts, the effects have been less marked.

The digital revolution is undermining the business models that see consumers pay for print news, with a younger generation accustomed to the idea that news is free. Newspapers are struggling to try and find a way to make money online, hamstrung by the lack of a viable revenue model. To make matters worse, newspapers make only about a tenth from their print readers as what they make from digital readers. According to the Newspaper Association of America, a print reader is worth an average of US\$539 in advertising alone, while an average online reader is worth US\$26.

However the crisis of the newspaper is far from universal. In China and India, newspaper markets are growing strongly, fuelled by robust economic growth and demand from an emerging urban and literate middle class that is enjoying higher incomes and a rising standard of living.

In China, newspapers have evolved from being the ‘tongue and throat’ of the Communist Party to being commercialised. This development means that while newspapers in China will not challenge the Party, they are asking lots of questions, so the country is more open as a result.

In India, the growth of a popular vernacular press is skewed towards entertainment, celebrity and sports with some coverage of public affairs; which while not being a perfect development, supplements what the Indian media system has offered to the country’s citizens in the past.

This is no time for fatalism or simplistic predictions of the supposed ‘death of the newspaper’ with the Internet cast as the chief villain. Newspapers will continue to exist but are at a watershed moment: buffeted by the digital revolution yet with a unique opportunity to reinvent themselves - never more important considering the vital role that journalism plays in society and democracy.

## **Academic Opinions**

That the business of journalism is changing is an often discussed but infrequently written about subject. Nicholas Lemann, Dean and Henry R. Luce Professor of Journalism at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, describes a situation usually discussed on the basis of anecdote and unproved assertion.

Indeed the only global survey of its kind is *The Changing Business of Journalism and its Implications for Democracy*. This groundbreaking book is the first major overview of how the news industry is dealing with several unprecedented challenges, in particular the rise of the internet and the draining of advertising revenue from traditional media platforms. *The Changing Business of Journalism* provides a detailed analysis of structural changes in journalism, outlining the threats and opportunities facing legacy news organisations across the world, including those in the U.S., U.K. and India. Rejecting simplistic predictions of the technologically determined death of the news industry, it argues that the industry's latest downturns are more closely related to its dependence on advertising and the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (2007-2009) than with the spread of the Internet, so that it's "premature to announce the death of the newspaper." (Levy & Nielsen 2010, pp. 1-14)

A second key work is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's [OECD] *News in the Internet Age: New Trends in News Publishing*, which outlines the radical changes to the economics of news production and distribution. The study says that after very profitable years, newspaper publishers in most OECD countries face increased competition and often declining advertising revenue and circulation. The economic crisis has only exacerbated this downturn while in some 20 out of 30 OECD countries newspaper readership is on the decline, especially among younger people. *News in the Internet Age* charts the evolution of the global newspaper publishing market, with an emphasis on the development of online news. It provides some striking statistics: the newspaper publishing market shrunk by an estimated 21 per cent and 30 per cent respectively between the years 2007 and 2009 in the U.K. and U.S. (OECD 2010, pp. 9, 30).

*News in the Internet Age* concurs with *The Changing Business of Journalism*, that newspapers are far from finished. It points out that the data and large country-by-country differences do not lend themselves to make the case for 'the death of the newspaper', in particular if non-OECD countries and potential positive effects of the economic recovery are taken into account (OECD 2010, pp. 3-4).

Notwithstanding the fine scholarly work in *The Changing Business of Journalism* and the wealth of statistics in *News in the Internet Age*, there is a major research gap on the extraordinary changes affecting the global newspaper industry. This essay will address this gap, by investigating the decline of newspaper markets in

the U.S. and U.K. and their growth in China and India. It offers scholarly and journalistic outcomes through analysing implications for the practice of journalism, which affects journalism students, academics and practitioners worldwide.

## Data

### Newspaper publishing market – print circulation 2008-2012 (US\$ millions)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012p	Growth
<b>United States</b>	10,087	10,067	10,049	9,989	9,890	-2%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	4,873	4,620	5,031	4,607	4,540	-6.8%
<b>China</b>	4,023	4,417	4,436	5,036	5,405	+34.3%
<b>India</b>	965	1,024	1,075	1,141	1,201	+24.4%

### Newspaper publishing market – print advertising 2008-2012 (US\$ millions)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012p	Growth
<b>United States</b>	34,740	24,821	22,795	20,692	19,352	-44.3%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	4,410	3,499	3,500	3,196	3,105	-29.6%
<b>China</b>	5,202	5,598	5,735	7,014	7,196	+38.3%
<b>India</b>	1,711	1,785	1,989	2,228	2,488	+45.4%

p = projected. At average 2012 exchange rates. Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers *Global Entertainment and Media Outlook 2013-17*

## The United States and United Kingdom

“American journalism is at a transformational moment, in which the era of dominant newspapers and influential network news divisions is rapidly giving way to one in which the gathering and distribution of news is more widely dispersed,” says Leonard Downie Jr. and Michael Schudson in *The Reconstruction of American Journalism*, a report commissioned and published by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. “As almost everyone knows, the economic foundation of the nation’s newspapers, long supported by advertising, is collapsing, and newspapers themselves, which have been the country’s chief source of independent reporting, are shrinking - literally. Fewer journalists are reporting less news in fewer pages, and the hegemony that near-monopoly metropolitan newspapers enjoyed during the last third of the twentieth century, even as their primary audience eroded, is ending.” (Downie & Schudson 2009)

*The State of the News Media 2013*, the Pew Research Center's annual report on American journalism, says that estimates for newspaper newsroom cutbacks in 2012 put the industry down 30 per cent since its peak in 2000 and below 40,000 full-time professional employees for the first time since 1978. "Print advertising losses continue to far exceed digital ad gains. For 2012, the ratio was about 15 print dollars lost for every digital dollar gained - even worse than the 10 to 1 ratio in 2011," says the report. It points out that U.S. print advertising fell for a sixth consecutive year in 2012, dropping US\$1.8 billion, or 8.5 per cent, in a slowly improving economy (Pew Research Center 2013). This gloomy picture is confirmed by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers; according to their *2012 World Press Trends update* North America accounts for 72 per cent of the decline in the value of newspaper advertising worldwide (World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers 2012).

Sociologist Paul Starr of Princeton University highlights three points of vulnerability behind the U.S. news media's crumbling economic foundations. "First, American newspapers have derived 80 per cent of their revenue from advertising, and much of that advertising revenue has been irreversibly lost. Metropolitan newspapers used to enjoy a stranglehold on certain categories of advertising. The Internet has now broken that monopoly and provides advertisers with alternatives that are often better and cheaper than what newspapers can offer. Second, chiefly as a result of generational change, American newspapers have experienced comparatively large, long-term losses in circulation that have intensified in recent years. So income from circulation as well as advertising is under pressure. Third, through mergers, acquisitions, and leveraged buyouts, many newspaper companies took on heavy debt burdens just before their advertising revenue began to collapse. Unable to deliver expected profits, the newspaper industry lost nearly all of its market value, and eight major newspaper companies went bankrupt." (Starr 2011, pp. 27-28)

Nicholas Lemann says there is a general feeling in the U.S. that the newspaper industry has stabilised and that the steep declines in economic fortunes from 2005 to 2010 have levelled off. "So there's some feeling in the newspaper business that newspapers may actually survive at a much lower level of staffing and economic prosperity than existed before. But remember that American newspapers in 1995 were about as profitable a business sector as there was, almost unrealistically profitable, so if they went from having 30 per cent profit margins to 10 per cent profit margins that's still a pretty good place to be compared to most other business sectors." (Lemann 2012)

Lemann says that ultimately there has to be some business model and the problem for these newspapers is not that their print editions are losing money but that their digital editions are not making money. They are struggling to try and find a way to make money online, even though almost all of the local newspapers are the dominant news supplier in their online markets and often have theoretically enormous audiences. “All these folks, if you talked to them 15 years ago many of them were saying ‘I’d love not to publish a newspaper and be a news organisation that’s just online’ but what’s kept them from doing that is the lack of a business model. So the newspaper companies would be perfectly happy to be an online purveyor of news and information if they could do it and make money at it, because then they wouldn’t have to buy paper and run printing presses. But if they did that they would all lose money because they are losing money online.” (Lemann 2012)

Nobody is predicting growth, at least circulation growth, for local newspapers in the U.S., says Lemann. “So the kinds of scenarios that you hear around are that the print editions will survive but they won’t be growing in circulation. Many places are considering going to three or four days a week of publication. Many of them are finding they can charge more to their readers, so circulation which used to be negligible as a revenue source is increasing as a revenue source.” He says the sales pitch would be that this is a smaller but very dedicated audience of more affluent people who want a higher value information product than television (Lemann 2012).

For Lemann, the implications of the decline in U.S. newspapers have two dimensions; the supply side and the demand side. The most prominent proponent of the demand side argument is Paul Starr, who argues it’s important for the health of democracy to have large aggregated audiences for the one information product. So that if you have the same amount and quality of information out there but it’s divided into many different particularised news streams instead of a centralised one that hurts the robustness of democracy because it’s meaningful to have everybody come together to one place (Lemann 2012). Starr says the digital revolution, by undermining the economic basis of professional reporting and by fragmenting the public, has weakened the ability of the press to act as an effective agent of public accountability. “If we take seriously the idea that an independent press serves an essential democratic function, its institutional distress may weaken democracy itself.” (Starr 2011, p. 21) Lemann says this line of thinking provokes

huge disagreement between the respective proponents of traditional media and digital media: the latter group just don't buy it (Lemann 2012).

On the supply side, the argument is less contested, says Lemann. "That is that a subset of journalism is original reporting and the amount of employment devoted to original reporting has demonstrably decreased by a lot and bloggers and citizen journalists just simply do not work as a replacement for vanished reporters because they can't go cover city hall and so on. So that is a real problem. There are fewer reporters in the United States than there were 10 years ago or 20 years ago and a lot of things don't get covered." (Lemann 2012)

However, Professor Robert Picard, Director of Research at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, counters that there are still plenty of journalists in the U.S. and U.K. "The question is not how many total there are but what you do with the ones you have," he says. "We are not seeing any cutback in entertainment coverage, in chasing celebrities and so yes they've cut back on investigative [reporting] but it's the editors who are making these decisions by choosing to still emphasise these other issues. So the capacity and the capability to do good journalism is still there but it's a question of whether the editors will allocate the resources to do so and give up some of the things that they have added in the years since." (Picard 2012)

Picard argues it isn't an economic but an editorial decision in which editors decide on how many journalists they are going to place in the features section, how many in the lifestyle section and so on. "Those are internal decisions that are being made and what newspapers are going to have to do now is start saying, 'well, if we're losing all of these readers who wanted those kind of things, why are we still staffing at the high levels if we're not attracting them anyhow.'" He says that maybe newspapers will return to investigative reporting and argues there needs to be a fundamental rethinking of the newspaper and the newspaper product, not just cuts across all sections (Picard 2012).

Nicholas Lemann says that in the West, the general picture is one of decline and the question is have we seen an end to the decline and so will just have a smaller industry or is it an industry that will continue to decline and eventually disappear. "And that's what can't be ascertained right now. The biggest single thing that would help would be if someone figured out to how to make money doing journalism online, which nobody has really figured out yet..." (Lemann 2012)



Clearly, newspapers aren't able to earn as much from online advertisements as they did from traditional classified advertisements and the lack of a viable revenue model for making money from online news is a huge concern. Robert Picard points out that news has never been very commercially valuable and it's always been something around that news which has created the economic value. There is also a lot of unrealistic expectation that newspapers can just move their news product over to the Internet and everything will be fine. "The fact is it's a very different relationship, it is a much smaller audience, it doesn't have the mass appeal and it doesn't serve large scale retail advertisers very well and those were the ones that were the basis of the newspapers' advertising." (Picard 2012)

Picard says that the U.S. newspaper industry got used to the unusually rich period of the 1980s and 1990s but the present day competition for providing news and information is stripping away the profits created during that period." He says that there was no way the U.S. newspaper industry could sustain the growth rates of those two decades. "Between 1950 and 2000 you basically had a tripling of incomes in the newspaper industry in real terms and most of that occurred in the last quarter of the century so it was just far too great growth that could be sustained anywhere." (Picard 2012)

The Internet is just another development on the continuum of new technologies that have eroded newspaper audiences, according to Picard. The development of television and later cable television moved audiences away from newspapers. "The Internet came along and again it moved more audiences. So the effect of the Internet is not an isolated effect but it's a progressive effect and it alone is not the problem of the newspaper industry." (Picard 2012)

Picard says that hard-core news consumers still spend most of their time on newspapers, although they also spend time online. "The ones that have left [print newspapers] were those that were less committed to news and more interested in other kind of information. The really serious news consumers have stayed with newspapers or at least with the online version or tablets." He points out that research on media consumption in Europe and North America shows that people have not given up on print but use online for additional kinds of uses or uses between print use. "So hard core news users are still using the basic news providers. That is starting to shift a bit with tablets because of the convenience of tablets but the use patterns are still pretty strong." (Picard 2012)

Many people within the industry and outside worry about newspapers having smaller print runs or even printing on three or four days a week. But this is not an unusual setting for the newspaper, says Picard. “If you look at the legal definition of daily newspaper that’s used internationally and in many countries; it’s published four days a week. And up until the 1970s or so, most newspapers in Europe and North America were five days a week or less and then they added the Sunday edition and the Saturday edition. But that was not traditional for the newspaper industry for its two hundred year history. It was always the smaller frequency. So we are now seeing different frequencies being tried by different publishers. A lot of them are more comfortable with the five day a week. But there are a few that have gone down to four. But that’s another way of dealing with the issue of cost and news but also primarily because the advertisers that used to fund some of the other editions just aren’t there today.” (Picard 2012)

So for Picard, developed nations like the U.S. and U.K. have mature markets for goods and services and newspapers are no longer as effective for meeting the needs of advertisers because readers have many options due to technology and are changing their media use patterns. The biggest factor in the West behind the decline in newspaper markets has been the increase in providers and platforms on which news and information is carried. “This has created competition for traditional providers of news and stripped profits from them,” says Picard. “The financial crisis led advertisers to reduce spending and this has put additional pressure on publishers and led some to reconsider their traditional patterns of media advertising use and move some expenditure to digital media and personal marketing. The primary result of this has been less revenue for publishers and a reduction in expenditures, including a reduction in journalistic staff.” (Picard 2012)

Dr Rasmus Nielsen, Research Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford and co-editor of *The Changing Business of Journalism*, says that the rise of online news and new multiple sources of news and information have changed the economics of newspaper publishing in the U.S. and U.K. It means that a younger generation have grown up accustomed to the idea that news is free. “And in particular among younger people, there’s been a large substitution of the printed product for newspapers towards the digital part of the newspapers, so it’s not that people don’t read newspapers any more, it’s just that more and more young people read them online and the economics of online publishing are not very good.” (Nielsen 2012)

Nielsen gives the staggering statistic that newspapers make about a tenth from their print readers as what they make from digital readers. “That’s the rule of thumb; that a digital reader is worth about a tenth of what a print reader is worth.” (Nielsen 2012) According to the Newspaper Association of America, a print reader is worth an average of about US\$539 in advertising alone, while an average online reader is worth a paltry US\$26 (Levine 2011, p. 113).

Clearly, the digital revolution is undermining the business model that sees consumers pay for news. As Dr Andrew Currah points out in his investigation into the effect of the digital revolution on the economics of news publishing in the U.K., this threatens to impact the quality of independent journalism and hollow out the craft of journalism. “The digital revolution has this economic impact because, in the age of the search-powered web, the consumer is increasingly unwilling to pay for news, and prefers instead to read selected parts of the news agenda,” he says. “The web therefore leads to the ‘commoditisation’ and ‘atomisation’ of news. Without large audiences, the advertising value of the news is reduced. The Internet is capturing a rapidly growing share of total advertising expenditure, but most of this is going into paid search, controlled by new media companies such as Google, which aggregate the news (and other content) but do not create it.” Currah concludes there is a danger of a sharp decline in spending on original newsgathering such as investigative reporting and a further rise in pre-packaged PR material, a weakening of editorial standards and a news agenda increasingly shaped by the noise of the crowd (Currah 2009, pp. 5-7).

The Global Financial Crisis has also been a very hard hit for the newspaper industry, says Nielsen. “The newspaper industry in the U.K., with some differences from company to company, about half their revenue comes from advertising, and advertising is very sensitive to changes in the economic cycle.” He points out that in the U.S. the situation is even worse in that newspapers historically have made up to 90 per cent of their revenue from advertising. “So when the advertising market is hit by a recession that impacts very sharply and immediately the economics of newspaper publishing. Whether that has impacted circulation is more a question of the consumer side, it’s a question of whether people who lose their jobs or fear they may lose their jobs stop buying newspapers than would have otherwise bought newspapers. I am not sure the impact has been so direct on circulation, I am not sure the crisis itself is so important in explaining the declining circulation though of course in some cases it means the newspapers in the past who could afford to distribute quite widely now can’t generate enough advertising revenue to make that attractive and hence have pulled back from

selling their copies in certain areas where advertisers are not interested in readers.” (Nielsen 2012)

In terms of newspaper closures, very few peak daily newspapers have closed in the U.S., says Nielsen. “There’s been a closure in Denver in Colorado and there’s been a closure in Seattle in Washington but apart from that it’s been fairly stable so it’s more a question of newspapers cutting back staff and cutting cost than it’s a question of closures at this point though that may of course change in the future.” In the U.K also there are some titles that have closed but mostly they have been free-circulation weekly or community newspapers and not national or regional titles. “So what we see is more cost-cutting and retrenchment than actual newspaper death.” (Nielsen 2012)

Nielsen underlines the rise of the Internet and the Global Financial Crisis as key factors behind the economic difficulties of the newspaper industry in the U.S. and UK. However beyond that some companies, in order to balance the books and avoid operating losses, have cut costs so savagely that it impacts the quality of the product which only further undermines readers’ and advertisers’ interest in newspapers, he says. “So there’s a certain vicious circle that appears to have sucked down some titles in both the U.S. and the U.K., whereas there are other newspapers who have tried to take a slightly more medium or long-term view and invest more in editorial quality but also in technical innovation in building better websites, in building mobile and tablet applications and who have not escaped the challenges that all newspapers face but seem to be doing better in retaining readers and advertisers.” (Nielsen 2012)

Newspaper circulation in the U.S. has been declining for more than 50 years and Nielsen does not envisage any changes in the near future that would significantly increase the number of people who are paying newspaper readers. “Newspapers may increase their reach through free online websites, they may also be successful in transitioning from primarily print to a print and digital mix for their paying customers but I would be surprised to see any overall upwards tendency in the number of paying readers for newspapers in the U.S. or for that matter in the U.K. though that doesn’t mean that the industry can’t stabilise at a lower reader base. We have to remember that there was a time before mass circulation and newspapers existed then too, so they would be different and smaller but still be there.” He is confident that much of the industry will be able to reinvent itself but it will be a much smaller industry and it’s hard to envisage that it will grow again to the size it was in the 1980s and 1990s. (Nielsen 2012)

The implication of the decline in newspaper markets in the U.S. and U.K. is less professionally produced news content, according to Nielsen. As the number of people who prefer and can get various other forms of content grows, news increasingly becomes an elite phenomenon. “And that’s particularly worrying in the U.S., because in the U.S. you have a situation in which the media system is overwhelmingly based on the private provision of public goods. So in countries like the U.K. you can at least rest assured that the BBC will continue to provide professionally produced news content and keep an eye on people in positions of power and make it widely available to the population.” (Nielsen 2012)

Whereas in the U.S., Nielsen says, if the regional newspaper stops covering city hall, it’s not clear that anyone else will. “I think that’s a pretty disturbing trend though of course that doesn’t take anything away from the fact that some of the same trends that are undermining the ability of newspapers to cover politics and public affairs are also immensely empowering for many citizens who can now interact, who can share content, who can remix content, who can produce their own content. So it isn’t all doom and gloom. I like to invoke Dickens and say it’s the best of times and the worst of times in a way for journalism and democracy in Western democracies.” (Nielsen 2012)

## **China and India**

While the West is in decline, the East rises. Asia now comprises a third of global newspaper circulation and its circulations have risen by 16 per cent over five years, while those in Western Europe and North America have fallen by 17 per cent in the same period, according to the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers *2012 World Press Trends update* (World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers 2012).

Newspaper markets in China and India are fuelled by strong economic growth and demand from an emerging urban and literate middle class that is enjoying higher incomes and rising standards of living. Robert Picard says that people with disposable income buy newspapers, begin thinking about social issues and seek out more entertainment. “They start looking for products that would be of interest and the newspapers are filling that role right now and so there’s great growth going on in them [China and India].” Picard says that the two countries’ economic,

social and demographic changes are coming together in a way that makes newspapers very attractive. (Picard 2012)

## China

China has overtaken India to become the world's biggest newspaper market, with 114.5 million daily newspapers (The Economist 2013). It has experienced strong growth in newspaper circulation in recent years thanks to 10 per cent average economic growth over the past 30 years, rising living standards, huge urbanisation and higher literacy, which has made newspapers appealing to both consumers and advertisers.

In a general sense the Chinese media, while not challenging the legitimacy of Communist Party rule, has evolved from being the 'tongue and throat' of the Party to being commercialised and operating in diversified markets. Dr Yan Wu of the Department of Political and Cultural Studies at Swansea University says that in 1978, the Chinese government piloted with the Party's organ *People's Daily* by introducing the business model into newspaper management. In the years following, newspapers in China have gradually commercialised. "To a degree," says Yan Wu, "the government endorses the financial independence of the press within the country as long as they don't challenge the Communist Party's governance directly." (Wu 2012)

However Peter Herford, Professor and Executive Director of the International Media Institute at Shantou University and Guest Professor at the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at the University of Hong Kong, doubts the reported increases in China's newspaper circulation. "When you look at Chinese newspaper readership statistics you will see selective areas of growth, what it does not tell you is anything about readership," he says. "North America and Europe have some version of what in the U.S. is called the audit bureau of circulation. This is an independent agency that, like an accounting firm, validates circulation figures from newspapers and magazines". Herford says that there is a certain level of confidence in circulation figures from countries who subscribe to these auditing services and live by their standards. (Herford 2012)

No such organization exists in China. "Circulation figures are all self-reporting figures; they deal only with circulation and not readership. That means a publisher might produce an extra 10, 20 or 30,000 copies of a newspaper and even distribute

the extra copies. But do they sell or are they read? No way of knowing.” Herford says that from his anecdotal and research information in China the younger generations (teens through to 30s) are no longer newspaper readers, certainly not in paper form. “I have students who have never bought a newspaper. What reading of newspapers there may be in the younger generations occurs online and precious little of that.” (Herford 2012) Dr Yan Wu points out that annual reports by the China Internet Network Information Center show more young people relying on the Internet or other web-based media forms for their primary source of news, with advertisers also moving from print media to online-media (Wu 2012).

Even if the reported increases in newspaper circulation in China were true, it still represents an insignificant slice of the population, says Herford. “If you look at newspaper circulation with respect to population in any city, province or nationally, you discover that the percentage of newspaper readers even if you calculated five readers per newspaper circulated, is infinitesimal.” He says that news and information in China does not move in print. “It moves on the Internet. 300 million weibos (Chinese Twitterers) with as many as 2/3 of them active (three times a week or more); that’s where the growth is. Mobile telephony is exploding with smart phones. Those phones are the future of news consumption. Newspapers are the past, even in China.” (Herford 2012) Indeed China has the world’s largest online population with over 500 million Internet users.

It may well eventuate that newspapers are a thing of the past, even in China. An alternative view is that the country’s newspapers have massive growth potential, unlike their faltering Western counterparts. Dr Haiqing Yu, Senior Lecturer of Chinese Media and Culture and Associate of the Journalism and Media Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, says that the Chinese newspaper market will enjoy further growth. Dr Yu says that the concentration of the media market in urban areas and the digital divide between urban and rural regions offer further growth opportunities. However such growth is not indefinite, says Dr Yu, citing the impact of digital media on newspaper advertising revenue and the transfer of professionals from traditional to new media. “When the Chinese market matures, we’ll see the decline of the newspaper market as we are witnessing now in the more developed economies.” (Yu 2012)

Robert Picard says that growth has been a good development. “Even though newspapers in China will not challenge the Party and the Party structure, they are asking lots of questions, they are serving a role against corruption, they are pushing the boundaries in terms of the way China handles things like disasters and

so they are a force for change in that regard.” Picard says that newspapers are giving avenues for people to become vocal and involved in the kinds of community and even state decision making than they could before as people gain knowledge from newspapers. He says that China is more open than it was 30 years ago as a result (Picard 2012).

## **India**

*The Economist*, in a special report on the news industry, says that there is no sign of a news crisis in India, now the world’s fastest-growing newspaper market. It cites some remarkable statistics from the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers: between 2005 and 2009 the number of paid-for daily newspapers in the country jumped by 44 per cent to 2,700 and the total number of newspapers rose by 23 per cent to more than 74,000 (The Economist 2011). Newspaper revenues are driven by advertising, which is buoyant. In the year to March 2010, the amount spent on newspaper advertisements in India surged by 30 per cent, the fastest increase in the Asia-Pacific region, according to market-research firm Nielsen India (The Economist 2010).

India is one of the world’s largest newspaper markets with more than 107 million copies circulated daily and accounts for more than 20 per cent of all dailies across the world, says the *Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2011* by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, a trade body, and KPMG, a consultancy. The report notes that India’s total literate population is estimated at 579 million with over 30 per cent readership penetration. The Indian print market is doing well compared to the global market, which has seen a decline in print revenues. While newspaper circulation falls in developed regions such as the U.S. and U.K., India defies the trend. Given rising literacy levels and no immediate threat from new media platforms, India’s print circulation uptrend is set to continue the next five years, the report says (FICCI-KPMG 2011).

Rasmus Nielsen says that the newspaper for more than a century has been essentially an urban middle class phenomenon. “So when you have a situation like in India and the one you see also in other emerging economies like Brazil where you have sustained economic growth combined with political decisions that mean that millions of people join the middle class and also millions of people learn to read in countries that are democracies in which to be a full citizen there is a social convention, an expectation that you stay at least somewhat informed about public



affairs, beginning to buy newspapers become a more attractive proposition for the individual citizen.” (Nielsen 2012)

Nielsen says that newspapers become more attractive for advertisers who see a growing customer base for people lifted out of poverty who suddenly have money to spend. “So those are the main drivers in countries like India. So it’s urbanisation, growing literacy, economic growth within the context of a democracy in which it is a meaningful thing for the average citizen to try to stay informed about public affairs.” (Nielsen 2012)

Dr William Crawley at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London, says that the liberalisation and growth of the country’s economy, the boost to advertising from competitive consumer oriented industries, the freeing of restrictions on the availability of newsprint and the still low cost of newspaper production, in contrast to Europe and the U.S., are all factors behind the growth of India’s newspapers. “This was taking effect before the great expansion of satellite television and television advertising and it built on the long standing traditions of newspaper readership, especially in urban and metropolitan India.” Growing literacy rates, particularly in regional languages, have broadened the potential readership of newspapers, adds Crawley. He says that the diversification of electronic media and the explosive growth of entertainment TV have also boosted print publications which feed on the publicity about the entertainment industry (Crawley 2012).

Increased literacy has helped to fuel the growth of India’s newspapers. The 2011 national census showed an adult literacy level of 74 per cent, up nine per cent from the last census a decade ago. “As soon as a person becomes literate, what they get is a newspaper – even before they buy a phone, it’s the first luxury a man affords,” said A.S. Raghunath, in a report by *The Globe and Mail*. Mr Raghunath, a veteran editor who advises new entrants in regional markets, says the newspaper retains an aura of respect in India and the newly literate like to be seen with one. “And with a cover price of one, two or at most four rupees, new-reading households will often subscribe to not just one paper, but two or three,” says the report (Nolen 2011).

*The Economist* points to the country’s booming economy, which it says is driving the “headlong growth” of Indian newspapers. “As India’s middle class swells, firms are splashing out on newspaper advertisements for property, mobile phones, cars and matchmaking services that promise your daughter a computer-savvy hubby.” (The Economist 2010) At less than four rupees a pop, Indian papers are

cheap, so many households buy more than one daily, it says. “English-language papers, which attract richer readers, charge the most for ad space. *The Times of India*, whose circulation of 4 million makes it the world’s biggest English-language newspaper, charges roughly ten times more than regional dailies do. Regional papers rely instead on a steady but less lucrative flow of government ads.” (The Economist 2010)

As wealth and literacy spread, however, regional and local-language papers are likely to gain ground, says *The Economist*. “People like to read in their mother tongue. The circulation of Hindi papers rose from less than 8 million in the early 1990s to more than 25 million last year.” Even more growth may lie ahead. If 200 million Indians read a paper daily, that still leaves a billion who don’t. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and KPMG forecast that over the next four years the newspaper industry’s revenues will grow by 9 per cent a year, to US\$5.9 billion (The Economist 2010).

According to the *Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2011*, contrary to most other markets where print media continues to lose market share, the trend in India is different. “Print media witnessed a growth of 10 per cent in 2010 and is expected to continue to grow at a similar pace over the next five years. Rising literacy levels and low print media penetration offer significant headroom for growth. The growing regional markets are a testimony to the increase in newspaper consumption and hence the potential for advertising revenues.” (FICCI-KPMG 2011)

Dr Usha Rodrigues, co-author of *Indian Media in a Globalised World*, says that as the Indian economy grows, incomes grow and demand for media and entertainment rises as people read more newspapers, magazines and books. The end of communally shared newspapers is another factor behind the rise of the country’s newspaper market; whereas before perhaps five newspapers would be purchased for a village of 5,000 people and read out, Indians now prefer to buy their own paper (*Rodrigues 2010*).

Rodrigues says that the Indian newspaper market will not decline for a while yet despite improved Internet access, because of the continuing increase in literacy and disposable incomes. India’s middle class will continue to grow and the bottom half of the population will benefit from the trickle-down effect of economic growth, giving them greater purchasing power. This should translate into higher newspaper sales and advertising revenue for the newspaper industry, although

competition with new media platforms will intensify. “But, overall, Indian newspapers are in a better position because they have time to learn from their Western counterparts and adapt to a multimedia environment in the news business.” (Rodrigues 2012) Indeed while many newspaper markets have been hit by the growth of online journalism, the outlook for Indian print media remains buoyant, one of the key reasons being low Internet penetration outside urban centres.

The Indian newspaper market has many of the same growth factors as in China, says Robert Picard. He points out that India, a very vibrant market, has gone towards entertainment, sports, light news and celebrity, more so than China, noting that Indian newspapers are not as much of a check on government as elsewhere (Picard 2012). These comments are echoed by Rasmus Nielsen. He says that the elite press in India such as *The Times of India* and *The Indian Express* will face some of the same challenges that confront their Western peers. “But what you also see is the growth of a popular vernacular press that has more in common with the tabloid tradition in some Western European countries, which are partly about entertainment, partly about scandal and gossip and sports but also include coverage of public affairs from the point of view of communities who historically have been underserved by the media in India.” Nielsen says this is not a development that serves all the needs of democracy, but it’s a development that supplements what the Indian media has offered to citizens in the past (Nielsen 2012).

### **The future of the newspaper**

Peter Herford argues that the debate over ‘citizen journalism’ is no longer a debate. He says that the ability of individuals to gather and disseminate information is creating a parallel journalism universe. “Those who need the comfort of gate-keepers will have their newspapers (although at 5-10 dollars a copy eventually), there will be the equivalent online publications organized along traditional lines; but running alongside will be an increasingly sophisticated network of people, millions of people made available to you and me via algorithms that will sift according to our needs and interests.” (Herford 2012)

He is pessimistic about the future of the newspaper. “Most newspapers have already reduced print runs. The newsprint industry is in the dumps. Good for saving trees. Many newspapers have already reduced daily printing. In some cases

Sunday newspapers remain successful, in other cases they have been dropped entirely.” (Herford 2012)

He acknowledges that India’s middle class will continue to read newspapers so that they have things to discuss, an important sociological phenomenon. Similarly, in the U.S. among the national elite, if one does not read *The New York Times* you are “out of it” Herford says. “*New York Times* sets the agenda not only for a lot of [Washington] DC, but also for discussion among the leadership class. Same is true for the *Wall Street Journal* and *Financial Times* in business.” (Herford 2012)

However, young people care less or not at all about such agendas, according to Herford, as they have their individual interests served by their Internet, smart phones and tablets, with smaller circles of smaller interests. “They do not need newspapers as their guide. They define news differently than the traditional newspaper reader. This is all part of [a] large social and intellectual movement that is bigger than we can deal with here.” (Herford 2012)

## **Conclusion**

China and India are on the ascent and the United States and United Kingdom are in decline, as far as newspaper markets are concerned. Yet this is no time for fatalism or simplistic predictions of the supposed ‘death of the newspaper’ with the Internet cast as the chief villain. Newspapers will continue to exist, but may have smaller print runs or print on three or four days, stabilising at a lower circulation base.

In some ways these are the best of times and worst of times for the newspaper: buffeted by the digital revolution and the rise of online news yet with a unique opportunity to reinvent itself - this has never been more important considering the vital role that journalism plays in society and democracy. The challenge is not to replace the business of print journalism but to renew it so that it can survive and even prosper in our digital age.

**Personal communication with the author – interviews with journalism academics**

Interview (phone), 24 March 2012, Professor Nicholas Lemann, Dean and Henry R. Luce Professor of Journalism, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, New York.

Interview (email) 28 February 2012 and (phone) 6 April 2012, Professor Robert Picard, Director of Research, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford.

Interview (phone), 6 April 2012, Dr Rasmus Nielsen, Research Fellow, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford.

Interview (email), 22 April, 4 May and 8 May 2012, Professor Peter Herford, Executive Director, International Media Institute, Shantou University and Guest Professor at Journalism, Media Studies Centre, University of Hong Kong.

Interview (email), 13 April 2012, Dr Yan Wu, Department of Political and Cultural Studies, Swansea University, Wales.

Interview (email), 13 April 2012, Dr Haiqing Yu, Senior Lecturer, Chinese Media and Culture, Associate of Journalism and Media Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Interview (email), 16 April 2012, Dr William Crawley, Senior Fellow, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Studies, University of London.

Interview (email), 29 April 2012, Dr Usha Rodrigues, co-author, *Indian Media in a Globalised World*.

---

## Bibliography

Currah, A. 2009, *What's Happening to Our News: an investigation into the likely impact of the digital revolution on the economics of news publishing in the UK*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, Oxford.

Downie, L. Jr. & Schudson, M. 2009, *The Reconstruction of American Journalism*, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, New York, U.S., viewed 28 April 2012, <[http://www.journalism.columbia.edu/system/documents/1/original/Reconstruction\\_of\\_Journalism.pdf](http://www.journalism.columbia.edu/system/documents/1/original/Reconstruction_of_Journalism.pdf)>

FICCI-KPMG 2011, *Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2011*, viewed 3 May 2012, <<http://www.kpmg.com/in/en/issuesandinsights/thoughtleadership/ficci-kpmg-report-2011.pdf>>

Grueskin, B. & Seave, A. & Graves, L. 2011, *The Story So Far: What We Know About the Business of Digital Journalism*, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, New York, viewed 8 April 2012, <[http://cjrarchive.org/img/posts/report/The\\_Story\\_So\\_Far.pdf](http://cjrarchive.org/img/posts/report/The_Story_So_Far.pdf)>

Levine, R. 2011, *Free Ride: How the Internet is Destroying the Culture Business and How the Culture Business can Fight Back*, The Bodley Head, London.

Levy, D. & Nielsen, R. (eds.) 2010, *The Changing Business of Journalism and its Implications for Democracy*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, Oxford.

Nolen, S. 2011, 'As India's literacy levels rise, newspapers thrive' in *The Globe and Mail*, viewed 8 April 2012, <<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/international-news/as-indias-literacy-levels-rise-newspapers-thrive/article2020336/singlepage/#articlecontent>>

Norris, P. 2000, 'The Decline of Newspapers', in *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies*, Cambridge University Press, New York, U.S.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2010, *The Evolution of News and the Internet*, OECD, Paris, viewed 1 June 2012, <[www.oecd.org/document/48/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_33703\\_45449136\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.htm](http://www.oecd.org/document/48/0,3343,en_2649_33703_45449136_1_1_1_1,00.htm)>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2010, *News in the Internet Age: New Trends in News Publishing*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism 2013, *The State of the News Media 2013: an annual report of American journalism*, viewed 10 June 2013, <<http://stateofthemedias.org>>

PricewaterhouseCoopers 2013, *Global Entertainment and Media Outlook 2013-17*, viewed 6 June 2013, <<http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/global-entertainment-media-outlook/index.jhtml>>

Rodrigues, U. 2010, 'Print Media in the Era of Globalisation' in Ranganathan, M. and Rodrigues, U., 2010, *Indian Media in a Globalised World*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

Santhanam, L. & Rosenstiel, T. 2011, 'Why U.S. Newspapers Suffer More than Others' in Pew Research Center's *The State of News Media 2011*, viewed 8 April 2012, <<http://stateofthemedias.org/2011/mobile-survey/international-newspaper-economics>>

Starr, P. 2011, 'An Unexpected Crisis: The News Media in Post-industrial Democracies' in John Lloyd and Janice Winter (eds.), *Media, Politics and the Public* Stockholm: Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation.

The Economist 2013, *Daily chart: Fold the front page*, viewed 7 June 2013, <[http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2013/06/daily-chart-1?fsrc=scn/tw\\_ec/fold\\_the\\_front\\_page](http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2013/06/daily-chart-1?fsrc=scn/tw_ec/fold_the_front_page)>

The Economist 2011, *Special Report: The News Industry*, viewed 8 April 2012, <<http://www.economist.com/node/18904136>>

The Economist 2011, *Online Newspapers in India: Papering over the cracks*, viewed 7 April 2012, <<http://www.economist.com/node/21531288>>

The Economist 2011, *Newspapers*, viewed 7 April 2012, <<http://www.economist.com/node/21532315>>

The Economist 2010, *Newspapers in India: Where print makes profits*, viewed 30 April 2012, <<http://www.economist.com/node/17106285>>

Vaidyanathan, R. 2011, *Newspapers: Why India's newspaper industry is booming*, BBC News Chennai, viewed 3 May 2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-14362723>>

World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers 2012, *2012 World Press Trends update*, viewed 10 June 2013, <<http://www.wan-ifra.org/press-releases/2012/09/03/world-press-trends-newspaper-audience-rise-digital-revenues-yet-to-follow>>

World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers 2011, *World Press Trends: Newspapers Still Reach More Than Internet*, viewed 7 April 2012, <<http://www.wan-ifra.org/press-releases/2011/10/12/world-press-trends-newspapers-still-reach-more-than-internet>>

World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers 2010, *World Press Trends 2010 edition*, Paris.



**Chapter Three:**

# **One World? Globalising the Media**

**A/Prof. Tony Maniaty**

---

**ABSTRACT**

*The universe has lost its centre overnight, and woken up to find it has countless centres. So that each one can now be seen as the centre, or none at all. Suddenly there is a lot of room.*

Bertolt Brecht, *Life of Galileo*.

*The one who adapts his policy to the times prospers, and likewise the one whose policy clashes with the demands of the times does not.*

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

Globalization has many faces, from marketing to warfare, but underlying all of its diverse realisations has been the dramatic growth of the media, and its permeation into every aspect of society. In the interconnected world, information is digitized to the point where the media has become the touchstone of human intercourse, from personal affairs to global commerce, the means by which the world now operates - whether locally, nationally and transnationally. The spreading use of English as the global language has accelerated the trend, while the dramatically reduced cost of telecommunications has created an unprecedented flow of data, information and knowledge to every corner of the globe. Yet this 'great leap forward' also has its downside: increasingly, the flow of news - and differing perspectives on the news - is being processed and compressed through monolithic media companies, creating an 'homogenization effect' where uniformity is increasingly demanded, and diversity is gradually lost. In a borderless, media-saturated world, traditional notions of 'good journalism' and the values it represents have become increasingly tenuous. The rise of social media in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has further complicated the global media landscape and clouded the future role of professional journalism. What forms of reporting might emerge in a wholly globalized world, and what must be done for a vibrant, useful media to survive in such a rapidly changing environment?

## INTRODUCTION

Over a century ago, in 1900 - fifteen years before Alexander Graham Bell made the world's first telephone call - an American civil engineer John Elfreth Watkins gave an outrageously bold prediction. 'Wireless telephone and telegraph circuits,' he wrote, 'will span the world. A husband in the middle of the Atlantic will be able to converse with his wife sitting in her boudoir in Chicago. We will be able to telephone to China quite as readily as we now talk from New York to Brooklyn.'<sup>1</sup> Watkins also predicted that photographs would somehow be 'telegraphed' across vast distances ('If there be a battle in China a hundred years hence, snapshots of its most striking events will be published in the newspapers an hour later...') and that screens would link viewers around the planet ('Persons and things of all kinds will be brought within focus of cameras connected electrically with screens at opposite ends of circuits, thousands of miles at a span.') With extraordinary perspicacity, he was effectively describing the media realities of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century: the mobile phone, the Web, email and the Internet, Skype and social media. In 1960, when these inventions were still only concepts, the Canadian sociologist Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase 'the global village', similarly envisaging a world linked via 'electronic interdependence', sharing cultures and ideas across the majority of nations. In the Information and Computer Technology (ICT) era of the late 1990s, these visions became a reality.

Globalization has ceased to be the subject of futurology, and now stands as the dominant catalyst of change and exchange in our time. If its beginnings are lost in the depths of history - one could argue, for instance, that the process began when Magellan's expedition ships circumnavigated the globe in 1519-22 - its impacts are now being felt in fundamental ways across all nations and human societies, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Watkins, John Elfreth Jr., 'What May Happen in the Next Hundred Years', *Ladies Home Journal*, December 1900, p. 8., cited in Geoghegan, Tom, 'Ten 100-year predictions that came true', at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16444966>, [accessed 24 June 2013](#).

are seemingly irreversible - nowhere more so than in the media. Globalization is having varied and often profound effects - disruptive, challenging, destructive, in some cases enlightening - on the practice, pace and content of journalism.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY GLOBALIZATION?

Globalization is far from being a singular concept; it means many things to many people, although journalists have often been the first to lump all international flows, movements, trends and developments under its convenient banner. As Nick Bisley has observed, globalization has 'a deeply uneven, contradictory and unpredictable character'<sup>2</sup>, and the word is often used as shorthand for a range of 'quite disparate phenomena'.<sup>3</sup> Many see globalization as a force for evil, mirroring earlier, negative manifestations - imperialism and colonialism - while others champion its power to expand economies, bring people together and generate ideas. Bisley offers as one definition of globalization 'the aggregate social consequences that derive from the dramatic increase in both the rate and speed with which people, goods and services, capital and knowledge are able to move around the globe'.<sup>4</sup> Dutch sociologist Jan Aart Scholte argues that the most familiar four ways of interpreting globalization - as internationalization, as liberalization, as universalization, and as westernization - are already redundant, and suggests a fifth route: globalization as 'a shift in the nature of social space', in which 'a major change of spatial structure affects society as a whole'.<sup>5</sup> This realization focuses more on the transplanetary and supraterritorial links that connect the majority of the world's citizens, and, Scholte notes, harks back to German philosopher Martin Heidegger's notion of 'distanceless',<sup>6</sup> and Manuel Castells' more recent formulation of a 'network society' in which a new 'space of flows that substitutes for the space of places'.<sup>7</sup> The development of this 'network state' raises, Castells warns, an ideological problem: coordinating common policy means a common language and a set of shared values. And because we live in a globalized, interdependent world, he notes, the space of political co-decision is necessarily global. Yet, as Castells notes, 'More often than not, governments do

---

<sup>2</sup> Bisley, Nick, *Rethinking Globalization*, Palgrave, London, 2007, p.8.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Bisley, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Scholte, Jan Aart, *Globalization*, Palgrave, New York, 2005, pp. 54-63.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *q.v.* Scholte, *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> Castells, Manuel, *q.v.* Scholte, p. 63.

not share the same principles or the same interpretation of common principles.’<sup>8</sup> Thus governance in the global public sphere becomes a major issue, with no clear answers in a welter of differing national agendas. Central to all these interpretations are radical changes in the global media.

## **ISSUES AROUND GLOBALIZATION AND THE MEDIA**

Is the globalization of the media a force for good or bad? Does it signal a step forward in human development - or regression? The combination of digitisation and corporatisation has accelerated the homogenisation of traditional media around the world, reducing mainstream media diversity while radically altering the old dynamics of trans-border data and information flows - with significant impacts on global trade, regional and national politics, and culture. Concurrently the spread of social media, particular in youth demographics, has created new distribution outlets and new forms of content, radically altering traditional concepts of journalism.

Earlier arguments that the West was creating a globalized, American-led ‘one-way’ media flow have, in the 21st century, been countered to a substantial degree by the emergence of a multi-dimensional model - in which content distribution has become ‘a river without banks’, flowing in many directions, in which the ‘old’ community of nations is threatened by new flexible, borderless communities of interest, creating a network with no clear centre and potentially threatening the established order. For now, the hegemonic model still dominates; as media groups amalgamate and grow larger under economic pressure, ongoing fears of cultural imperialism remain valid, and are not unfounded. Yet borderless social media is gaining power rapidly, from regional revolutions in the Middle East to issues-based campaigns on environment, human rights and other areas. Are these two competing media forces heading for a collision that could undermine the very shape of societies and the role of nation states? What models could emerge that might combine the best of both?

News has become a product much like any other, shipped around the planet in seconds to markets hungry for content, sold to consumers as manipulatively as any new car or toothpaste. Globalization has also given billions of people a camera and communications unit; each of them is ‘on the spot’ and able to feed content into

---

<sup>8</sup> Castells, Manuel, *ibid*, p. 43.

the global media machine. Given the rise in amateur coverage of events, what role will professional reporters play in future, if any? Is the dream of many aspirants of 'a career in journalism' itself redundant?

The relentless march of globalization in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has produced deep, and seemingly contradictory, effects on journalism - in particular, foreign reporting - and on media ownership itself. On one hand, the convergence of media platforms - print, radio, television, online - and the rise of trans-national corporations (TNCs) such as Australia's News Corporation, America's Time Warner and Disney, France's Vivendi and Germany's Bertelsmann has produced a concentration of media power hitherto unseen, resulting in a funneling effect that produces greater homogeneity and standardization of news content and reduced diversity of analysis and opinion in the international sphere, and fewer correspondents posted to foreign countries. As transnational actors, such TNCs tend to focus less on national, regional and local concerns than on news content that reflects their increasingly global reach, with considerably less interest in specific communities than the smaller media units they have often purchased or otherwise displaced. While regulations and subsidies may protect localized content up to a point, the political clout of TNCs within any given marketplace typically outweighs local interests. (The influence of News Corporation's chairman Rupert Murdoch on national politics is pervasive and well documented.)

On the other hand, globalization of the new social media - the world as seen through a global maze of personal blogs, and countless millions of individual posts on Twitter, Facebook, and other emerging new media platforms - along with the availability of cheaper, broadcast-quality newsgathering technology, has also seen the emergence of a new breed of journalist who holds no allegiance to any single news organisation and whose output is readily available to an increasingly cost-conscious market for breaking news stories, as well as features and images. What then is the ultimate fate of these diverging paths of newsgathering? Are they on a collision course, or can they be reconciled and possibly merged?

## **WHERE DID MEDIA GLOBALIZATION COME FROM?**

Broadly, throughout history, societies have sought communication and interaction rather than isolation. The spread of ideas may have been thwarted until the Middle Ages by those in positions of authority, but the appearance of Gutenberg's printing press in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, with its moveable type and ability to produce endless

copies of transformative texts, gave rise to that democratic bias which has been the hallmark of ‘the media’ ever since. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, rising wealth and literacy in the middle classes of Europe and North America, and the growth of big department stores with substantial advertising budgets, saw rapid expansion of newspapers on a national scale. These factors in turn accelerated international trade and financial exchange, the development of new technologies and manufacturing processes, and the spread of new ideas between nations: the genesis of what we now refer to as globalization.

This shift towards a unified world grew in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the industrial revolution and resulting trade linked those leading European nations - Great Britain, Germany, France - that had formerly been at war with each other. Suddenly there was far more to be gained through peace than conflict; the idea of progress took centre-stage. At the 1849 World Peace Congress in Paris, the French author Victor Hugo declared: ‘All our advances are revealing and manifesting themselves together, in rapid succession... [...]...everything is moving at once, political economy, science, industry, philosophy, legislation, and is converging upon the same end, the creation of well-being and benevolence...’<sup>9</sup>

Yet globalization as we understand it today was still far off. World War One was a bloody warning that mutual trust would not come easily; the international language Esperanto failed to take hold; the collapse of the League of Nations was a reminder of the difficulties of global co-operation; while the Comintern International, raising hopes for a global Socialist revolution, fizzled into Russian civil war. Words, hopes and dreams alone were not enough to bind diverse peoples together; it would be another 50 years or more before advances in technology and communications, and the freer flow of trade and services, would achieve what peace conferences could not - the bridging of human differences to a point where shared experience, if not world peace, was possible. As such, globalization - as it took shape in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries - was born more of societal, economic and technological forces than of political or ideological ones.

What were the principal causes of this extraordinary shift in human relations? Globalization results from the increasing rate and speed with which people, goods and services, capital and knowledge are able to move around the globe. The forces that shape this process are many and varied. They include (but are not limited to)

---

<sup>9</sup> Hugo, Victor, at <http://www.gavroche.org/vhugo/peacecongress.shtml>, accessed 4 May 2013.

the wide availability and falling cost of mass communications; the export of goods through containerization, and the movement of goods and people via air travel; the freeing up of international trade agreements and transactions; the rise in offshore manufacturing; cross-cultural marriage, migration, and the flow of refugees; military alliances; the rise of multi-national business and transnational corporations; global commodity chains; the continuing flow of populations from country to cities; the impact of worldwide religions; mass tourism; the spread of English as the global *lingua franca*; money transfers, including workers' remittances from abroad; the sharing of technological advances, from agriculture to manufacturing; improving levels of health and education across all continents.

Yet these diverse factors are themselves all dependent on the flow of information, the ultimate force behind globalization, which has been accelerated by the spread of personal and organizational computers and mobile phones, the rapidly falling cost of communications in both national and international markets, and widespread take-up of social media. To this degree, the media has become a central actor – arguably *the* central actor - in the globalization story, with more influence than any single nation.

To understand that immense changes that media globalization has wrought, it is useful to consider the period 1980-2000, prior to the full adoption of newsroom computerization and digitization of content. While communications satellites had enabled the possibility of 'live' or 'near-live' broadcasting of news events, the three main media platforms - television, radio and newspapers - cohabited on roughly equal terms, dividing the advertising spoils of boom economic times (in the case of Australia's Fairfax newspapers, the so-called 'rivers of gold') and assured in their market niches. The Internet was seen largely as a source of information, and a vehicle for email communications; newsroom computers, mostly desk-bound PCs, were generally used by journalists as word processors.

## **THE SHRINKING COMPUTER AND THE SHRINKING PLANET**

With the arrival of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, several factors changed the media landscape with extraordinary speed. The first might be called the Ever-Shrinking Computer: the rapid take-up of portable laptop computers, and subsequently of tablet screens and smart phones. With portability, notions of fixed-time, fixed-place media dissolved; the demand for news immediacy became overwhelming. Comprehensive television networks with nightly news shows surrendered



audiences to cable news channels, particularly those such as CNN International and BBC World specifically geared for online, global coverage and 24/7 'live' delivery of major stories. A new generation of consumers, brought up on a diet of video games, and visual and computer literacy, also helped drive a new agenda for journalism. Underpinning all these factors was the technological possibility of convergence on Internet-based platforms: suddenly the newspaper not only had a branded website, but was streaming live video and audio coverage of breaking stories. The viral spread of smart phones in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century sealed the fate of so-called 'traditional' or 'legacy' media: newspapers would no longer break hard news stories as they had for more than a century, and viewers would not wait for a once-nightly news bulletin to find out what was happening in the wider world.

These shifts in media were not merely technological. New social, economic and political orders quickly emerged from the break with long-standing traditions. Much as the Cold War struggle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century between the great ideological blocks of communism and capitalism kept alternative contenders in line, so too the media in the West had adopted a gatekeeper role under the banner of 'editorial authority', backed by claims of fearlessness, righteousness and all-knowingness. The phrase 'the power of the press' carried with it a warning to those who would dare to confront its role as the champion of free speech; yet it often concealed, as well, a cozy and lazy relationship with the ruling status quo. Now consumers themselves had the power to communicate and share news, information, ideas and opinions, and to challenge the gatekeeper model of news management, helped by dramatically lower costs for all forms of communication. As Jeffrey Frieden notes, by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, satellites and fiberoptic cables had seen the cost of telephone calls tumble: 'In the 1920s, the average American worker would have had to work three weeks to pay for a five-minute telephone call from New York to London; in 1970 the same call would have cost eight hours' wages; by 2000, about fifteen minutes.'<sup>10</sup> By 2005, the number of mobile phones worldwide exceeded the number of fixed line telephones.<sup>11</sup>

Text messaging was even cheaper than talking on the phone; for just a few cents, families spread around the globe could connect, and buyers and sellers in remote corners of the globe could negotiate deals directly, in minutes, a development with

---

<sup>10</sup> Frieden, Jeffrey, *Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2006, p. 392.

<sup>11</sup> See Thussu, Daya Kishan, ed., *International Communication: A Reader*, p. xxii.

powerful economic and social implications in developing parts of Africa and Asia. The Internet too grew astronomically, as Frieden observes; by 2001 more information could be transmitted in a second over a single cable than in 1997 had been sent over the entire Internet in a month.<sup>12</sup> For a dollar a day, consumers can gain access to the content of hundreds of television channels, many if not most broadcasting from outside the viewers' countries.

In the face of this global revolution, the response of 'big' media was, if anything, to grow 'bigger': synonymous with globalization in all spheres has been the rise of trans-national corporations (TNCs), and the media is no exception. Indeed, globalization is more ideally suited to media amalgamation and consolidation - given that digitised product can be shifted around the globe in nano-seconds - than to almost any other economic activity. (By 1999, 13 of the top 25 American corporations were in the high technology and telecommunications sectors.<sup>13</sup>) One impact of this trend - in which the profit motive results in the overt commodification of news content - has been a loss of media diversity, as smaller players are consumed by TNCs searching to grow their market share and eliminate competitors.

## THE IMPACT OF TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

In purely economic terms, TNCs sit at the very heart of globalization. Companies as diverse as Microsoft, BHP-Billiton, Toyota, Citicorp and Nestle straddled the globe in search of new resources, new sources of labour, and new markets. Traditionally, the media world was confined to national borders, limited by the bulk of printing presses and the reach of broadcasting technologies, by distribution networks, and by factors such as language, social and cultural values, and the size of the consumer class able to support viable advertising incomes. By the 1980s, much had changed: the spread of communications satellites, computerisation and digitisation; the rise in education levels worldwide; more efficient infrastructures and distribution networks. National players such as Australia's News Corporation spread their wings, buying up existing media properties from New York to Fiji and developing new ones (Sky TV in Italy, Star TV in China) in rising markets, especially Asia. New players such as Yahoo! and Google with decidedly global business models quickly evolved through aggressive takeover strategies as fully-

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

fledged TNCs. As Internet usage expanded worldwide, so too did TNC audiences - and advertising incomes. CNN International, for example, pitched to global advertisers the offer of 'unrivalled access to reach high-income consumers'.<sup>14</sup> What matters is not the size of any TNC's individual media divisions, but the ability to amalgamate operations, integrate content, and collectivize the audience. On this last point, as media industry veteran Terry Semel noted, 'Many small audiences are as good for advertisers as few large audiences, and indeed may be better. This has huge implications for content, turning it into one long continuum - from professional to amateur, from blockbuster to subculture niche.'<sup>15</sup>

This has been good news for TNCs, but less so for journalism. Inevitably, the issue boils down to two seemingly irreconcilable points: that the very nature of the news media is changing, and journalism must adapt or die; and that the number of well-cashed players available to employ journalists on a professional basis is shrinking, along with the need for high volumes of content from diverse sources. This conflict beguiles the industry in virtually all developed markets. Increasingly, the business is less about generating unique stories than about the *exchange* of news product. The resulting 'long tail' of media content across the global landscape conceals a harsh reality: that much of it stems from a very narrow base, and increasingly much of it is sourced from either low-paid journalism entrants or from amateurs, and not from experienced, professional journalists. On this basis, the new economics of global media may prove the undoing of the profession of journalism as it has been widely practiced for more than a century, with unforeseen effects on the nature of social interaction and of democratic society.

The fact that the majority of media TNCs are run by technologists and financial executives rather than journalists (as national newspapers and broadcasters once were) suggests that the influence and values of journalism will count for less in their newsgathering operations and content, as 'lifestyle' media aimed at middle-class consumers and advertisers gains dominance. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this trend was already apparent. In a 2006 report, the global accountancy firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers predicted that successful media companies would become 'marketplaces that let consumers search, research, share and configure

---

<sup>14</sup> CNN International advertisement, *Advertising Age International*, 29 June 1998, p. 6., q.v. McChesney, Robert, 'The Media System Goes Global', in Thussu, Daya, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>15</sup> Semel, Terry, q.v. 'The gazillion-dollar question', *The Economist*, April 22, 2006.

their media experiences.’<sup>16</sup> The new lifestyle media would, it accurately forecast, would ‘bridge the world of unlimited professional and user-created video content with the world of limited consumer time and attention.’

An important sub-current in the development of transnational media has been the expansion of government-owned (and, in some cases, government controlled) global television networks, established in many cases to promote so-called soft diplomacy and soft power. Networks such as France 24, Russia Today, Press TV (Iran) and CCTV (China) have joined established players such as CNN International and BBC World in the global battle for ‘hearts and minds’, featuring entertainment and informational content which showcases national life and values in positive ways: a powerful tool when coupled with trade, aid and other foreign policy initiatives. When such global (and mainly Anglophone) content is added to the pool of available channels in any country, it competes with local channels and to some degree must further narrow the general employment opportunities for journalists.

These and other transitions have resulted in a radically changed world order. From a postwar world in which the media was regarded primarily as a central component of national affairs, reflective of national opinions and values, the focus has shifted. The rise of giant communication TNCs on one hand, and of globalized social media on the other, allied with ever-increasing economic interdependence between states, has reframed the traditional division between domestic and international affairs and turned the media itself into a ‘non-state’ actor in transnational affairs.

## **ADJUSTING TO THE DIGITAL TIDE**

Digitisation on the global scale has become the epicentre of a giant ‘push-pull’ contradiction, between curiosity and anxiety. We turn on the news to ‘see what’s happening’ - and as quickly we click off because it’s ‘too much to take in’. We want to know, and we don’t want to know. We want to engage, and we want to escape. Technology has created the media accountant’s dream - plentiful content at

---

<sup>16</sup> PriceWaterHouseCoopers, ‘The Rise of Lifestyle Media: Achieving Success in the Digital Convergence Era’, 2006, at <http://www.pwc.com/us/en/technology-innovation-center/assets/lifestylemedia-gx.pdf>, accessed 7 February 2013.

low cost – but it confronts media consumers with an increasing dilemma of choice, a digital swamp which appears both endless (and endlessly time-engaging) and fragmented, frequently offering an illusory choice - a ‘bit sampling’ stream of electronic output lacking either depth or relevance to national consumers. Aligned with ‘the need for speed’ implied in 24/7 breaking news, and the resulting homogenisation of content aimed at such a profusion of global markets, what future is there for more complex forms of journalism? Will there be any viable platforms for reportage of the calibre and scope of ‘Hiroshima’, John Hersey’s 31,000-word account of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan, which filled an edition of *The New Yorker* in 1946, and which, in 1999, was voted by a distinguished panel as the best single piece of journalism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?<sup>17</sup> With the constant demands of urgency and brevity, where every second counts, the current mainstream media landscape actively conspires against context - and discourages its natural offspring, serious debate. While the quest for truth remains universally the ethical bedrock of great reporting, miniaturization of consumer platforms such as smart phones and hyperventilated deadlines suggest little room for context. Yet without it, single events in the chain will always appear random, chaotic, messy, and difficult to place in a meaningful, broader canvas. (This, rather than the old journalistic conundrum of ‘objectivity/subjectivity’, would seem to constitute a truer guideline for, and measure of, balance in story coverage.) On this basis, then, what hope also for the future of serious foreign reporting?

## IMPACTS ON FOREIGN COVERAGE

‘No one will open a bureau in Utopia,’ observed Associated Press correspondent Mort Rosenblum in 1993.<sup>18</sup> Conflict sits at the heart of most major news stories, especially in the realm of foreign reporting, and the hallmark of great journalism organisations such as the BBC or *The New York Times* has traditionally been the high importance they placed on comprehensive, well-informed coverage generated by their own correspondents posted overseas on a long-term basis. Recent years have seen substantial cuts by major news organisations in their foreign reporting staff, and the shutting down of many bureaus; the closure of the Australian ABC’s Moscow office in 2013 after 20 years was indicative of the trend, as news organisations trim costs and turn to agency-generated reporting for foreign content. Managers argue that vastly improved communications and transport networks

---

<sup>17</sup> See Kunkel, Thomas, ‘In Harm’s Way’, *American Journalism Review*, April 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Rosenblum, Mort, *Who Stole the News?*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1993, p. 280.

provide flexibility, allowing correspondents to be flown into breaking stories as needed. Yet few would argue that the long-term presence of a correspondent in any country results in more informed, contextualized coverage, supported by a cultivated network of high-level, trusted contacts and sources providing background to the reportage. Fluency in local languages and a working knowledge of social and cultural mores also adds value to foreign reporting.

Such nuances generally escape the ‘fly-in, fly-out’ correspondent, who in turn is increasingly reporting not for a specialized national audience but for an international news marketplace, generating content that must be ‘user friendly’ to a wide array of audiences, from Vancouver to London to Shanghai to Sydney. Cultural subtleties give way to mass global appeal; the specific relevance of stories to individual nations and their foreign and economic policies is, in this scenario, replaced by observations that speak to the world in general (and mostly in English) but to nobody in particular. The counter argument is that such generalized reporting brings the peoples of the world closer together, by shedding national prejudices and sharing common experiences, yet the continuation over decades of many conflicts, especially in Africa and the Middle East, suggests that this rather idealized view is degraded by realities.

Certainly in one field, the reporting of the global climate change, the transnational media model has overcome national differences to bring a common awareness of a global issue to audiences of millions. (Likewise the coverage of the AIDS/HIV crisis has transcended national and continental boundaries as people worldwide search for solutions.) What began in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as local and national environmental concerns regarding pollution and soil degradation has grown through global media coverage into a largely common belief that climate change is real and having a fundamental, negative impact on the planet. ‘Climate’ has now become a featured section of many international and national news websites. Broadening and focusing coverage has generated debate and led to global agendas to find answers. In this process, the diminishing quality of the environment has progressed through sustained media coverage from being a community (local) issue to a lifestyle and economic (national) concern to being an anthropological (global) last stand.

Clearly subjects which transcend national borders, such as climate change and deadly viruses, are matters of vital common interest; whether transnational media (under pressure to generate profits, or, in the case of government-funded networks, to cut costs) will continue to cover them with sufficient journalistic resources will

in turn influence how governments (facing both economic strain and growing public pressure) will continue to coordinate global efforts to improve the situation. For now, and for many in the world, such problems are still localized - ice caps may melt and sea levels may be rising, but not everywhere. Hence climate change reporting calls above all for what Simon Cottle refers to as ‘cosmopolitan vision’, one that takes full advantage of the wider flows and impacts of global communication.<sup>19</sup> Yet most societies respond primarily to parochial concerns, to what Cottle calls ‘the pull of the national’. Local media focuses mostly on local impacts; whether global media continues to place sufficient emphasis on the global impacts of climate change and its threat to the planet will depend heavily on its financial support for sustained and in-depth foreign reporting. (As Cottle observes, visualisations of climate change abound in the global media, while explanations of resulting impacts around the planet are considerably rarer.) Media TNCs will also need, ultimately for their own business survival, to develop a clearer understanding of the troubled relationship between environmentalism and consumerism, in what Jan Aart Scholte refers to as the ‘transplanetary’ space<sup>20</sup>. For their part, as the potential for eco-media-fatigue grows, journalists worldwide will need to produce more relevant, imaginative and thought-provoking coverage of the global ecology in order to generate even wider debate and stronger government action. In a forecast scenario that sees the quality of human life facing grave threats, journalists are as much at risk as anyone else.

In a similar vein, the widening gap between the world’s rich and poor poses considerable challenges for global journalism. The conflict and physical violence which this social and economic divide generates receives extensive coverage; the underlying causes of such conflicts are rarely explored in any depth in the global media, while repetition of images of suffering without meaningful background or context can quickly lead to audience apathy. Swedish media researcher Birgitta Höjjer found from interviews with 500 people that while pictures in the media of suffering people might invite the audience to experience moral compassion at a distance, and might mobilize compassion, they could also lead to the syndrome of compassion fatigue.<sup>21</sup> ‘Crimes against humanity such as encroachment and

---

<sup>19</sup> See Cottle, Simon, ‘Global Crisis Reporting’, *Journalism in the Global Age*, McGraw Hill, 2009, pp. 71-91; see also Holm, Hans-Henrik, ‘The Effect of Globalization on Media Structures and Norms,’ in Hjarvard, Stig (ed.), *News in a Globalized Society*, Nordicom, 2001, pp. 113-128.

<sup>20</sup> (2005, 58; 69),

<sup>21</sup> Höjjer, Birgitta, ‘The Discourse of Global Compassion: The Audience and Media Reporting of Human Suffering’, *Media Culture Society* 2004, 26: 513.

violence against people and populations have a strong appeal for the audience, especially the female audience,' she found, but 'the large number of reports on suffering and the repetitive and stereotyped character of the depictions may tire the audience out.'

In 2010, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford published a comprehensive paper on the future of international news coverage.<sup>22</sup> Its author, former BBC News executive Richard Sambrook, argued that in the globalised media world - where professional news organisations were competing increasingly with both social media and information provided directly to audiences via government, NGO and company communications officers - foreign bureaux and correspondents 'may no longer be central to how we learn about the world'. Sambrook's interviews with news executives and correspondents were illuminating. ABC News' Chuck Lustig noted how 'the Foreign Correspondent has become a simple fireman who goes from fire to fire just like the neighbourhood fire brigade. Once the fire is out they move on...'<sup>23</sup>. The days of the multi-million dollar foreign bureau, Sambrook concluded, were gone, along with 'a shrieking of professional foreign newsgathering' which was replaced by 'an explosion of other sources of information'. These shifts were being accompanied in the era of globalization by 'a new set of cultural perspectives, which have challenged and undermined old assumptions about reporting.'<sup>24</sup> On this point, media commentator William Powers noted:

Foreign news is out there in great profusion these days, particularly online, but it is a different kind of foreign news. While the old foreign news had an air of urgency that was a product of the cold war and technological constraints, the new foreign news is diffuse, many-layered, sprawling, chaotic and terribly complicated... like the world itself.<sup>25</sup>

Tom Kent of the Associated Press summed up this shift from the binary Cold War view to the new, uncertain world order: 'Now it is not as simple as 'us and

---

<sup>22</sup> Sambrook, Richard, 'Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant? The Changing Face of International News', Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> q.v. *ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Sambrook, *ibid*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>25</sup> Power, William, q.v. *ibid*, p. 53.

---



them'.<sup>26</sup> As Sambrook notes, global differences in cultural values and agendas are being revealed more than ever, posing challenges to transnational news services:

The issues at stake are partly professional - how best to serve news consumers, how best to run newsgathering organisations - but also moral. How should we try to understand and represent other countries and peoples who are physically distant from us?<sup>27</sup>

One answer, as news content becomes less territory specific, is the possibility of global journalism, or what Peter Berglez describes as 'foreign journalism's younger cousin' - a form which 'transgresses and transcends the traditional domestic-foreign dichotomy.'<sup>28</sup> As globalization creates evermore complex relations between peoples, places and practices, Berglez asserts, global journalism is the news style which could integrate and cover these relations in everyday news production:

In contrast to journalism with a national outlook, global journalism pays attention to and covers political identities which do not primarily rest on a particular national culture or ethnic belonging, but which emanate from universal ideologies or transnational issues, such as climate change or the fight against social inequalities in the world... As a general principle, the greater the emphasis on the universal dimension of a political identity or struggle, its existence in different countries and continents, the more global the journalism.<sup>29</sup>

Such journalism may be, as Berglez asserts, 'the natural consequence of increasing connectedness, boundarylessness and mobility in the world... the form of journalism needed in times of globalization', but whether news consumers will want (or pay) for such a product is questionable. For as Berglez notes, even in the age of globalization, the consumer's domestic view of the world is powerful, and dominant.

---

<sup>26</sup> Kent, Tom, q.v. *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> Sambrook, Richard, *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Berglez, Peter, 'What is global journalism? Theoretical and empirical conceptualisations', *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 9, No 6, 2008, pp. 845-858.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

## ESTABLISHMENT NARRATIVES VERSUS THE INFORMAL MASSES

If the amalgamation of mainstream media is a hallmark of globalization, its counterweight is the rise of social media. This also has profound implications for the future of journalism, beyond the obvious ability for friends, families, colleagues and communities of interest to communicate news, ideas and opinions in the briefest of timeframes to all corners of the globe. When allied with rising education levels, and the acquisition of basic media technical skills such as recording, editing and posting content, people from all walks of life, in virtually all countries, now have the means to create their own ‘channels’ of audio-visual and textual information flow. As the cost of smart phones tumbles and their technical sophistication increases, and the interactivity of networks builds, this trend is set to amplify, creating a competitive, alternative global media structure. In this scenario, Facebook and Twitter are not merely ‘personal sharing sites’ but also represent radical shifts in a tumultuous media landscape, with still unknowable consequences.

Certainly the spread of social media platforms and their high take-up levels has changed the dynamics of the relationship between the media and audiences: what was formerly ‘from them to us’ (one-way, top down and impersonal, authoritative in tone, a closed system) has rapidly become ‘between us’ (two-way, bottom up and personalized, open to challenge and debate, an open-ended network). Occurring with remarkable speed in historical terms, this shift, as David Sifry noted in 2006, transformed the old media’s ‘lectures’ into new media ‘conversations’ with ‘the people formerly known as the audience’.<sup>30</sup> In the period since, this has led to a fundamental questioning of the *modus operandi* of mainstream media, particularly television news, with its power to control the timing and substance of content, and its attitude of all-knowingness and claims on accuracy and truth carried by studio-based presenters in creaseless suits and perfect makeup. Skepticism has overtaken acceptance, and the tone of public debate has changed irrevocably. In the eyes of many, the age of participation and peer production is already upon us, and the media and journalism will never be the same again.

---

<sup>30</sup> Sifry, David, q.v. ‘Among the Audience,’ *The Economist*, 22 April 2006.

## **MEDIA REGULATION, CENSORSHIP AND ETHICS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD**

The vast global scale and speed of social media makes it difficult to compare its impact on any one story against the output of traditional journalistic media. Yet in the case of one offspring of the new media, Wikileaks, the result is more tangible. Set up by Australian computer hacker Julian Assange, Wikileaks in November 2010 produced the biggest leak of official records ever: more than a quarter-of-a-million cables from American diplomatic stations around the world, dwarfing the previous biggest leak, the Pentagon Papers - confidential documents on the Vietnam War - in 1971. This spectacular event was quickly merged into the media landscape, touted on the one hand as evidence of American wrongdoing and a powerful new form of journalistic exposure, and on the other as blatant and dangerous grandstanding by Assange and his Wikileaks collaborators. (The then-U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton voiced the concerns of many nations, declaring that 'Disclosures like these tear at the fabric of the proper function of responsible government.'<sup>31</sup>) Assange claimed to be practicing what he called 'scientific journalism' although, as Rodney Tiffin observed, the release of primary documents 'is not a substitute for processing them into a digestible, meaningful narrative'.<sup>32</sup> ABC News Australia reporter Andrew Fowler noted that while Assange had created a system where the sources of any document remained anonymous, 'the major question about whether the document is a fake remains unanswered.'<sup>33</sup> Others believed that Assange had produced a major shift in journalism, creating what Jay Rosen called a 'stateless news organization'.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Clinton, Hilary, q.v. Neuman, Scott, 'Clinton: WikiLeaks 'Tear At Fabric' Of Government', at <http://www.npr.org/2010/11/29/131668950/white-house-aims-to-limit-wikileaks-damage>, accessed 15 May 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Tiffin, Rodney, 'Wikileaks and mega-plumbing issues – unresolved dilemmas revisited', *Global Media Journal*, Australian edition, 5:1, 2011, at XXXX

<sup>33</sup> Fowler, Andrew, *The Most Dangerous Man in the World: The Inside Story on Julian Assange and the Wikileaks secrets*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2011, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> Rosen, Jay, 'The Afghanistan War Logs Released by Wikileaks, the World's First Stateless News Organization', at <http://pressthink.org/2010/07/the-afghanistan-war-logs-released-by-wikileaks-the-worlds-first-stateless-news-organization/>, accessed 7 May 2013.

The Wikileaks case highlighted both the power and vulnerability of 21<sup>st</sup> century information systems in a globalized world. Intelligence which is digitized and stored on computers can also be stolen and downloaded onto other computers, and spread transnationally within nanoseconds. The technology is relatively straightforward; the ethics involved are considerably less so. The initial recipients of the Wikileaks secret documents - organisations such as *The Guardian*, *Le Monde* and *The New York Times* - eventually criticised the subsequent wholesale release of the files by Wikileaks as potentially endangering the lives of agents and whistleblowers named in the files. In the process, Wikileaks itself increasingly became the story; as Tiffen noted, the actual leaked files had ‘almost no audience appeal’.<sup>35</sup>

The ability to circumvent state censorship features heavily in the Wikileaks story, as does the morality and ethics of doing so with highly classified information. What it also highlights is the increasingly complex issue of how to regulate national media in a digitized, globalized world, where barriers to the flow of information are seen to be both fragile and porous. From a journalistic perspective, this can be good news; for national governments, it challenges the status quo of media policy, regulation and law. It can also impact on journalism practice. In its ethics guidelines, the Canadian Association of Journalists, for example, states, ‘We clearly identify news and opinion so that the audience knows which is which.’<sup>36</sup> While its Australian counterpart, the Media Alliance, does not make specific reference to such a separation in its Code of Ethics, the principle is widely accepted across Western democracies, if not always adhered to. Yet in many countries, the notion that news and opinion can or should be separated is openly rejected; in societies across southern Europe and the Middle East, for instance, the majority of media outlets report domestic, and even foreign news, on strongly delineated political lines, with news and opinion woven inside a single report. (This flies in the face of another of the CAJ’s ethical standards: ‘We do not allow our own biases to impede fair and accurate reporting.’) Standards around the world traditionally reflected what was acceptable to national audiences. In the world of transnational broadcasting and the world wide web, news and information content spills in every direction, and potentially to every corner of the globe. In this environment, who is to monitor, regulate and judge media standards?

---

<sup>35</sup> Tiffen, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.caj.ca/?p=1776>

---

One issue with obvious ethical implications is the ability to manipulate images on a global scale. The notion of selective shooting and editing of photographs and film for the purposes of misinformation is not new; the practice dates back to the American Civil War and both sides in World War One were quick to see the potential of film as propaganda. Germany's Erich von Ludendorff, the army Chief of Staff, noted that it was 'absolutely imperative, if this war is to have a happy outcome, that cinema be able to act with the efficiency of a weapon of war in every field in which Germany wishes to exercise her influence.' Months earlier, the official screening of *With Our Heroes in the Somme* featured recreated images of battle, leading the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung* newspaper to note: 'Das objektiv est objektiv.'<sup>37</sup> By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ability of Photoshop and other software to alter both the content and meaning of photos and moving images had rendered all media and all audiences vulnerable to being deliberately misled. Nor was the issue confined to mischievous amateurs. In 2006, the news agency Reuters was forced to issue a 'PICTURE KILL' notice when it discovered that images of the Israel-Lebanon conflict taken by one of its Middle East freelancers, Adnan Hajj, had been digitally manipulated by the photographer. Other, similar cases have emerged, highlighting the ease with which images can be altered in laptop computers before transmission, and the speed with which such images can be distributed globally for publication, broadcasting and posting. While software has been developed to detect manipulation, there exists no transnational regulatory framework around which to police these ethical dilemmas.

## JOURNALISM: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The first media revolution launched by Gutenberg in 1448 gave rise to printing, publishing, newspapers, journalists, and, ultimately, to the profession of journalism, which arguably reached its apotheosis in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when investigative print journalism, photojournalism, and television and radio reportage combined to give strong carriage to the spread of democracy and opened windows for millions onto the wider world. In the opening decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, much changed: a radically reshaped world order, heralded by the attacks of 21 September 2001 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, replaced a degree of predictability in global affairs with uncertainty on many fronts - strategic, economic, environmental, social and technological. This volatility was also

---

<sup>37</sup> Trans. 'The camera doesn't lie.'

reflected in the turmoil which confronted global media and the integrated business models which had evolved over decades of rising profitability. Newspapers which had shaped the very societies they operated in were suddenly hit with declining readerships and falling advertising revenues; those which turned to online models in the hope of survival, pouring scarce resources into new technologies and offering free access as audience bait, often found themselves staring at a wall of rising debt, and staff which could not be funded from profits. The practice of professional journalism as a central plank in democratic societies could no longer be taken for granted. Confusion about next moves went hand-in-hand with nostalgia about the media past and professional anxiety about the future.

We began this chapter with some predictions made in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. One hundred years later, futurology remains an inexact science. Many, for example, have touted tablet devices such as the iPad as the medium of the future, including News Corp chairman Rupert Murdoch, who believed that tablets ‘may well be saving the newspaper industry’. In February 2011 News Corp introduced its tablet platform *The Daily*, which lasted only 21 months before closing down due to lack of subscribers.<sup>38</sup> That a media operator as experienced as Rupert Murdoch can misjudge the market indicates the complexity of the issues confronting the media and journalism. As new technologies merge in the media world, creating both uncertainty and opportunity, media markets themselves are shifting at speeds which defy long-term investment strategies. Competing with existing media TNCs and even threatening their existence may be a plethora of ‘micro-multinationals’, using the Internet and micro-financing to structure small yet global media companies on a previously impossible scale, with both employees and audiences scattered around the globe. Such a development, as proposed by economist Hal Varian, would level the playing field considerably and offer fresh employment opportunities for journalists, while at the same time creating a slew of complex legislative and regulatory problems.<sup>39</sup>

Globalization has produced its discontents, not least the thousands of journalists worldwide whose careers have been curtailed by the rise of new media and the

---

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.themediabriefing.com/article/a-lack-of-foresight-media-predictions-that-missed-the-spot#sthash.BxvuNyN4.dpuf>, accessed 3 January 2013.

<sup>39</sup> See Varian, Hal, ‘Micromultinationals Will Run the World’, *Foreign Policy*, Sept/October 2011, at

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/08/15/micromultinationals\\_will\\_run\\_the\\_world](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/08/15/micromultinationals_will_run_the_world), accessed 14 March 2013.

cost savings of digitization. Yet the history of the media, in all its forms, has been one of risk and innovation, and constant change, reflecting the world around it; journalism is, after all, nothing more or less than the society at large, with louder headlines. At its best, the profession of journalism has aimed to explain the world in all its facets, to fearlessly uncover the truth, to spread knowledge and new ideas, and to forge links between diverse and often competing interests. Globalization of the media has offered new and exciting platforms for journalists to achieve these ambitions. It has also seen the demise of what were once considered central elements in the business of news and information. For better or worse, globalization is here to stay. The task in this century will be ensure that, as globalization continues to reshape the media market, journalism as a valued profession - and as a core element of democracy and free speech - survives, and that the resulting flow of information remains accessible to all. However globalization may help or hinder these aims, nothing can replace the power of the independent journalistic witness. In the words of BBC correspondent Allan Little:

Eye witness journalism is in one sense the purest and most decent work we do. It has the power to settle part of the argument, to close down propaganda, to challenge myth making. It is the first draft in the writing of history and, in itself, a primary source for future historians.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Little, Allan, q.v. Sambrook, Richard, op. cit., p. 102.

**Chapter Four:**

# **Reporting a world in conflict**

**A/Prof. Tony Maniaty**

---



War is everywhere, and ongoing. You do not have to look far to find armed conflict in the modern world. Not all the twenty or so wars raging at any one time are major wars; many, as BBC correspondent Kate Adie once noted, are “small-scale wars of large-scale awfulness”. Whatever the scale, wherever there is armed conflict, there is also invariably a hardened band of experienced war correspondents observing the fight, gathering information and evidence, placing themselves in danger - often at risk of death - to set the story in a wider context and tell the world what is going on. This is the industry-cherished ideal of the frontline reporter at the acme of his or her profession. Yet there is much in this image that no longer accords with current realities, that is challenged by new technologies and changing media platforms, new channels of distribution, by financial constraints and other forces reshaping the wider media landscape.

In late 2012, Stuart Allan described journalism as being in ‘a state of legitimization crisis’ and observed that institutionalized war reporting was Ground Zero in this crisis:

We are seeing traditional definitions of journalism increasingly open to challenge. We are seeing its preferred norms, its values and the beliefs underpinning its prescriptive framings of reality threatening to unravel. And this is nowhere more so than where journalism relies on official sources, and their shared investment in the language of objectivity and impartiality, to sustain their respective truth claims.<sup>1</sup>

While an experienced cadre of war correspondents still attends major conflicts around the globe, often bringing decades of experience to the complex task of untangling conflicting versions of unspeakable brutality, today’s frontline reporter is as likely to be a 22-year-old graduate with a consumer-level video camera, a laptop computer and a desire for high-risk coming-of-age adventures. Technology sits at the core of this fundamental shift in coverage: no longer are hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment required, along with years of hard-won expertise, to obtain broadcast or magazine quality images of war; just as videotape replaced chemical film, hard drives have replaced videotapes, and digitization has made transmission of images and text almost instantaneous. Air fares to war zones

---

<sup>1</sup> Allan, Stuart, Professor of Journalism, Media School, Bournemouth University, ‘The Politics of War Reporting: A Critical Symposium’, Birkbeck College, London University, UK, 2 November 2012, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-MIYLaOJuQ>, accessed 1 December 2012.

are relatively cheap. Stories are no longer shipped in canvas bags or via expensive satellite links but edited on location and filed in nanoseconds to London, New York, Oslo or Sydney - or many locations concurrently. Media organisations are eager to shave costs. Journalists are no longer out of touch or reach, unable to connect with editors; today the mobile phone and Internet link the war correspondent with head office, and the freelance war reporter with potential clients worldwide. Immediacy of coverage has become the mantra; depth of coverage can either wait, or is unwanted. There is neither the space on mobile devices nor the time in busy lives for thoughtful and reflective journalism. Speed is the driver.

Yet, for all its apparent benefits to both journalist and audience, as in many fields, technology has not reached down into the fundamentals, to the causes of the deep-rooted problems that lead to conflicts between people. Wars are essentially failures of the human imagination, of the inability to conquer darker instincts - or, at very least, to devise more civilized means of resolving differences. Technology has not eradicated or limited war; indeed, it can be argued that it has encouraged war. The world is awash with age-old conflicts - and modern, high-tech weapons. Stepping into this chaotic world is no less difficult now in human terms than it was when William Russell of *The Times* of London launched the modern career of war reporting in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, with stirring coverage of the Crimean War.

In a sense, war correspondents are no different from soldiers: war reporting cannot be mastered from a textbook or classroom, but is an acquired skill gained over time and in rapidly changing environments. Yet many variables have come into play since the Russell outlined the essential dilemma: "How was I to describe what I had not seen? Where to learn the facts for which they were waiting at home?"<sup>2</sup> What was once a straightforward proposition - observation, investigation, explanation - has become a minefield of ethical and professional dilemmas, raising many critical questions.

## THE JOURNALISTIC FIELD AND WAR REPORTING

Journalism is, in Bourdieusian terms, a specialised field of cultural production, interacting with a range of social, political, cultural and economic fields, and generating configurations of power fueled by - and equally, producing - what

---

<sup>2</sup> See Knightly, *op. cit.*, for an excellent summary of Russell's work and influence.

Bourdieu<sup>3</sup> calls ‘symbolic capital’. Within the field of journalism exist ‘subfields’, each with their unique parameters, hierarchies, and sets of rules: their *habitus*, to use Bourdieu’s term, which is structured by shifting power relations within the field, and becomes, over time, a self-sustaining and adaptable entity.

Traditional modes of journalism, at once regulated by formats, deadlines and audience expectations yet inhabited largely by irregular personalities with high ambitions, fitted the Bourdieusian model well - the media and its entourage, forever shifting and reforming, and growing stronger over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had always been powered by such symbolic capital. Until the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this applied, to an even greater degree, to the journalistic subfield of war reporting, a field described by Markham as ‘highly individualized, irreverent towards power and guileful.’<sup>4</sup> Those who consistently toiled (and risked their lives) in this specialized field regarded it as exclusively their own, and tightly held.

Traditionally its members came from daily news reporting, bringing with them the fundamental building blocks of the *habitus* of that tribalised world, including its gatekeeping mechanisms and hierarchies of power, and further shoring up rigid codes of inclusion and exclusion. As wars came and went, war reporters followed, more often than not oblivious to national and cultural boundaries. Increasingly the same names, same bylines appeared, with the same Hemingwayesque swagger: the field at its inception was exclusively male, remained largely a male domain in World War Two, and continued to be male-dominated into the Balkan and Middle East conflicts of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This pervasive sense of ‘maleness’, in perception and in practice, meant that entry to the field for women was limited; even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when women outnumbered men in many newsrooms, the gender imbalance in war reporting remained pronounced.

---

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) was a French sociologist and philosopher. In *The Field of Cultural Production* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1993) and other works, he explored his notion of cultural capital, in which cultural production takes place in ‘fields’ of social, political and economic forces undergoing constant change and influence on each other.

<sup>4</sup> Markham, Tim, ‘War Reporting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Political Phenomenological Perspective on Pooling, Embedding, ICTs and Citizen Journalism’, paper to the International Communication Association Annual Conference, Singapore, 24 June 2010, at [http://www.academia.edu/1668913/War\\_Reporting\\_in\\_the\\_21st\\_Century\\_A\\_Political\\_Phenomenological\\_Perspective\\_on\\_Pooling\\_Embedding\\_ICTs\\_and\\_Citizen\\_Journalism](http://www.academia.edu/1668913/War_Reporting_in_the_21st_Century_A_Political_Phenomenological_Perspective_on_Pooling_Embedding_ICTs_and_Citizen_Journalism), accessed 13 May 2012.

Anthropologist Mark Pedelty, who interviewed war reporters in El Salvador, discovered ‘a mythological narrative with initiating properties that mark the entrance of the young correspondents into the veteran group.’<sup>5</sup> Those who, filled with idealism, made it through the club gates and survived their first encounters under fire, were quickly absorbed into the *habitus*. Bourdieu himself noted how new entrants to the field internalised the rules of the journalistic game and mimicked the regulating norms of the field in professional practice.<sup>6</sup> For the older war reporting hands, as Markham observes, cynicism and irony were the weapons of choice, and were never ‘simple negations’, but were rather ‘implicit alternate constructions... invariably marked by a distinct knowingness which, crucially, does not lead to further explication’:

This simultaneous refraining from forming a value-judgment, the suggestion of requisite knowledge to make such a judgment, and the instantaneous preclusion of further articulation, had the effect of establishing a legitimacy which can only remain implicit - and thus, mystified.<sup>7</sup>

While a degree of courage is required at the frontline, it is this mystification (rather than ‘mystery’) and knowingness which generates much of the perceived aura around war reporting, and which was most prevalent in the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This deepening identification with the chosen field, a drug-like (and not infrequently, alcohol and drug-supported) attachment to danger, and, for many, an ever-deepening nostalgia for wars gone by, meant that attachment to the *habitus* tended to become, in some cases, absolute, and irreversible. As Coole observes, the professional clan of ‘war correspondents’ became part of a reflexive, self-referential game in which actual wars were the canvas on which their lives were played out, a ‘blue screen’<sup>8</sup> onto which any war backdrop could be inserted.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Pedelty, Mark, *q.v.* Thussu, Daya Kishan, and Freedman, Des, eds., *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, Sage Publications, London, 2003, p. 224.

<sup>6</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre; see Markham, Tim, ‘The Political Phenomenology of War Correspondence’, *Op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> ‘Blue screen’, or alternatively ‘green screen’, refers to the chroma-key process in television studio production which allows a presenter to stand before changing images projected onto a blue or green screen and seemingly become part of the integrated image; it is commonly used in weather forecast presentations.

<sup>9</sup> Coole, Diana, Professor of Politics and Social Theory, Birkbeck College, University of London, speaking at ‘The Politics of War Reporting: A Critical Symposium’, Birkbeck

## ANTECEDENTS IN BATTLE

Following standards set by Russell of *The Times*, the profession of war reporting quickly became a delicate balance between independence of spirit and conformity imposed by military censors, particularly in World War One, when the ubiquitous 'blue pencil' ensured only positive reports reached home audiences. The Spanish Civil War (1936-39), as the precursor to World War two, saw propaganda flourish. Radio had appeared, newspaper circulations in Britain and Europe were rising, and reportage from the frontline was in vogue, exemplified by the presence of George Orwell. Unlike many covering the civil war, Orwell retained a degree of balance, criticizing Republican forces while supporting their cause in principle. His plain but precise and descriptive prose gave Orwell's account *Homage to Catalonia* a special place in the eyes not only of those who would soon report World War Two (when military censorship was absolute) but for those who, in the postwar era, sought more expressive models of conflict reporting, in which the story might include (or even be centred on) the journalist's presence and his or her views.

Spain also saw the growth of photography as a central medium of journalism, with the introduction of the compact German Leica 35mm camera, used by Hungarian photographer Robert Capa to give graphic authenticity to distant audiences. Capa's most famous image, 'The Falling Soldier', published in *Life* magazine on 12 July 1937, purported to show a Republican soldier at the moment of his death by shooting, but has since become, as Alex Kershaw notes, 'the most debated picture in the history of journalism'.<sup>10</sup> Whether authentic or not, what has never been in doubt, Kershaw notes, is that its publication marked a point of no return, from which journalism and warfare would forever be powerfully entwined, helped by the spreading useage of newsreel cameras and growing demand for magazine essays. In Spain the meshing of the media and the military began; they would merge into a single propaganda entity in World War Two, only to be heavily conflicted in the terrible conflict in Vietnam.

---

College, London University, UK, 2 November 2012, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-MIYLaOJuQ>, accessed 1 December 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Kershaw, Alex, *Ibid*.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF VIETNAM

The Vietnam War (1962-1975) exposed not only the limits of American power, but also the growing power of the news media in the conduct of warfare.

Television cameras moved from offstage to centre-stage: never again would the media, especially television, not be ‘factored into’ the battle equation, as potent a weapon as any mortar or missile. Voluntary guidelines were introduced for coverage of the U.S. military in South Vietnam. In addition to supervising overall contact with the growing (and restless) press corps in Saigon, the United States embassy provided reporters with prepared news stories, radio tapes and film clips; established a press centre; organised media trips into the field; tipped reporters to favourable stories they might have ‘overlooked’; cultivated more influential correspondents; set up interviews with the U.S. ambassador and other important American and South Vietnamese officials; and flew in editors, businessmen and other American opinion leaders to show them what the Pentagon was accomplishing.<sup>11</sup> Washington approved: the State Department’s public affairs policy stipulated “maximum candor and disclosure consistent with the requirements of security”.<sup>12</sup>

The results were striking, although not as intended. Working for the NBC network, cameraman Vo Suu filmed the arbitrary shooting of a Viet Cong suspect by South Vietnam’s chief of police, General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, during the 1968 Tet offensive. (The moment was also caught by Associated Press stills photographer Eddie Adams, scoring him a Pulitzer Prize.) Four years later, the indelible image of a Vietnamese girl, Kim Phuc, running naked towards the cameras, would haunt all efforts to find a solution in Vietnam. Arguably the war’s most arresting image, it was taken as a still photograph by Nick Ut, a locally-employed UPI photographer, after a napalm attack, and filmed by NBC cameraman Le Phuc Dinh. This Goyaesque moment became a metaphor of the war’s insanity, as George Esper noted:

In her expression was fear and honour, which was how people felt about the war. This picture showed the effects of war, and how wrong and

---

<sup>11</sup> Hammond, William M., *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 1998, pp. 23-24.

<sup>12</sup> Message, State 59 to Saigon, 7 July 1964; cited *ibid*, p. 24.

destructive it was. People looked at it and said, “This war has got to end”.<sup>13</sup>

Undoubtedly, the military in Vietnam lost control of the media. Whether or not America lost the war because of the media would be debated at length, as would be Vietnam’s legacy of mistrust between the military and the media, a result, Porch argued, of America’s defeat:

The difference between World War II and Vietnam was not the presence of censorship but the absence of victory. In other conflicts, victory has erased memories of a troubled relationship; after Vietnam, the media was caught up in the quest for a scapegoat.<sup>14</sup>

The impact of television, aided by the absence of censorship, was so strong and loaded with so many unanswerable questions, that the media freedoms it unleashed were lost the moment that the United States lost the war. “It is now clear that in the wars of our time, Vietnam was an aberration,” Knightley wrote in *The First Casualty*. “The freedom given to correspondents there to go anywhere, see everything, and write what they liked is not going to be given again...”<sup>15</sup> For the Pentagon, control was the issue: in future, journalists would work with the military, or not work at all.

## POST-VIETNAM: THE SATELLITE AGE

Post-Vietnam, television became the dominant news medium globally. An international industry emerged based on rapid deployment of news journalists to trouble spots, backed by television camera crews and ready diffusion of stories through fixed-position satellites and other digital technologies. Newsgathering technology advanced exponentially; the rapidly take-up of desktop and laptop

---

<sup>13</sup> Esper, George, quoted in Chong, Denise, *The Girl in the Picture: The Remarkable Story of Vietnam’s Most Famous Casualty*, Simon & Schuster, London, 2000, p. vii. (Esper was the last bureau chief of Associated Press in Saigon.)

<sup>14</sup> Porch, Douglas, ‘No Bad Stories’, *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1, Winter 2002, p. 85; in Paul, Christopher, and Kim, James J., *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2004, pp. 36-37.

<sup>15</sup> Knightley, *ibid*, p. 481-482.

computers, and the spread of the Internet, email, and mobile telephony, would reshape totally the reporting of war. 'Digitisation', the underlying concept in this revolution, reduced all raw content - verbal, visual, textual - to a massive set of 0's and 1's, able to be compressed, transmitted and turned into nightly news, stored and archived, and retrieved in a second. In addition, massive capital investments, 24/7 formats and syndication of news material to worldwide audiences demanded that news 'product' be increasingly regularized, homogenized in content and standardized in format. The chaotic, freewheeling journalism practiced by news journalists in Vietnam had no place in the corporatized world of media organisations like CNN, BBC World, and major American networks such as CBS, NBC and ABC as they headed towards the new century.

In his seminal 1975 history of war reporting, *The First Casualty*, Phillip Knightley questioned whether journalists in future would even want to cover wars, arguing they would serve either as 'propagandists or myth-makers'.<sup>16</sup> By the time of the first Gulf War, in 1990-1991 (also known as Operation Desert Storm), Knightly's fears were largely realized. Compared to Vietnam - where the press corps had access to the frontline with relative freedom from censorship - the Gulf War saw journalists contained like battery hens in hotels in neighboring Middle East nations, formed into 'pools' and fed with official communiqués and edited military footage - as planned by the Pentagon, a recipe for conformity and uncontroversial, sanitized coverage. Transmission of news reports was delayed until it had been subjected to 'security review', a control "unprecedented in the history of U.S. warfare".<sup>17</sup> Correspondents had virtually no scope to experience the war at first-hand or without close military supervision; further, the demands of live and global, rolling-format television news kept them tethered to the satellite dish - providing constant updates yet unable to witness the actual conflict they were supposedly covering, a consumer-led corporate demand for immediacy over substance described by BBC correspondent Michael Buerk as 'the tyranny of now'.<sup>18</sup>

The Gulf War saw the birth of the military-media complex. Increasingly since the Vietnam era, the major U.S. networks had come under the control of conglomerate cultures with far greater commercial interests than news reporting; their allegiance had increasingly shifted away from the values of journalism towards

---

<sup>16</sup> Knightley, Phillip, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*, Andre Deutsch, London, 2003, p. 411.

<sup>17</sup> Kellner, Douglas, *The Persian Gulf TV War*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992, pp. 80-81.

<sup>18</sup> Buerk, Michael, *The Road Taken*, Arrow Books, London, 2004, p. 419.



entertainment, and the dividing line between the two forms - once a granite wall shored up by professionalism - had been replaced by the ethical equivalent of a silk screen. More vulnerable (and amenable) to business and government influence, network chiefs accepted greater control over correspondents to gain closer ties with power.

By 1991, this drift to collusion with power was palpable and disturbing. Sections of the media and the military were in alignment, sharing technologies and objectives; the one complex was feeding off the other, the lines of separation were becoming increasingly blurred. At the same time, innovative battlefield technologies were deployed and tested in real-war environments, providing a glittering showcase of America's new post-Soviet-era global strength. This provided television news in particular with extraordinary live images of war, and stellar audience ratings; and diverted public attention from the less savoury, more traditional aspects of killing. As a result, coverage of the Gulf War was antiseptic, impersonal and seemingly remote.

During the 'Balkan Wars' of the 1990s, fought on ethnic lines in the former Yugoslavia, not only the nature of war coverage began to alter dramatically but also the nature of the media itself: firstly, with the dynamic growth of 24-hour, rolling format cable news services; and secondly, with the emergence of the Internet as a potential platform for news delivery. These developments would break the 50-year hold of the television networks' nightly 'set-piece' bulletins as the gatekeepers of breaking news - and of the limitations of time and place they had long imposed on audiences. Yet again, correspondents in the field were hindered by interventions, controls and censorship imposed by the military.

## **9/11 AND THE EMBEDDING SOLUTION**

By 2001, the media, military and governments had all acquired considerable experience in the coverage of war, yet no element in this 'intelligence' triumvirate foresaw where the next global battle would begin: in the heart of Manhattan. On 11 September 2001, three hijacked airliners slammed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in what would be the deadliest assault ever on United States territory. President George Bush proclaimed a millennial battle, turning a hunt for mass murderers into a crusade against world terror.

The resulting conflict in Afghanistan proved more deadly for journalists than for commandos stalking al-Qaeda terrorists, or for pilots making hundreds of bombing runs. In a single 17-day period, eight journalists were killed. Further, the kidnapping in early 2002 of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl and his ritualistic murder, with his severed head held before a video camera, affirmed that the media, which had long regarded itself as a bystander in warfare (if not always neutral observer), was now a prime target. This was potentially the fate awaiting any reporter who probed too deeply into Muslim extremism.

Controlling a free-world media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century also posed difficulties for the Pentagon and other military establishments. The freedoms of Vietnam were quickly ruled out, but the corralling of journalists into pools, heavily criticized after the Gulf War, was equally untenable. The solution settled on was 'embedding', a reversion to the press-controls World War Two, in which journalists would be offered access to the battlefield (if not the actual frontline) by embedding themselves inside military units. With the focus heavily on televised coverage, strict censorship would not be necessary: TV cameras and crews would be reliant on military transport, and be guided wherever the military wanted them to go. In the coming war, the Pentagon's spokesman Bryan Whitman promised, embedding would enable the "reporting of the good, the bad, and the ugly", and would change the old hostilities: with reporters wed to a military unit, the relationship would be symbiotic.<sup>19</sup>

Globally, television networks embraced the proposition; to reject it suggested foolhardiness, since unprotected, independent operators would be easy targets for Iraqi snipers - and, as it happened, for 'friendly fire'. Network managers were also quick to realise the economic value of access to guaranteed images of battle (however 'staged') rather than the hit-and-miss possibilities of having TV crews seeking their own images of war. The insurance bills for embedded crews would be lower. As well, embedding might bring that most unpredictable breed of reporters - war correspondents - under some control, albeit military control, resulting hopefully in fewer ethical dilemmas and arguments with the White House about images of dead bodies. The military would do its utmost to ensure none were filmed.

---

<sup>19</sup> See Ridge, George, 'Embedded: the media at war in Iraq', *Military Review*, Jan-Feb, 2004, p. 74.

The BBC's chief correspondent John Simpson, while noting that embedding often provided first-class coverage, felt there was "a price to be paid for this kind of closeness. That, after all, is why it was offered to us."<sup>20</sup> Simpson's crew chose to remain independent of the military – adopting the status of 'unilaterals' – and was attacked by a U.S. fighter plane. Fifteen people were killed, including the BBC's translator. Simpson, injured and bloodied, delivered a harrowing report:

This is just a scene from hell here. All the vehicles on fire. There are bodies burning around me, there are bodies lying around, there are bits of bodies on the ground. [...] I am bleeding through the ear and everything, but that is absolutely the case. I saw this American convoy, and they bombed it. [...] I am just looking at the bodies now and it is not a very pretty sight.<sup>21</sup>

## AWASH WITH TECHNOLOGY

The potential international viewership for war coverage had grown immensely. Along with the expanding CNN and Sky News services, BBC World News, a 24-hour news channel launched in 1995, became available in over 270 million homes in more than 200 countries. The Arab world, too, had seen a major media development with the formation of the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera network in 1996, which quickly gained a reputation for professionalism. Unfettered by the state-controlled censorship that had long dominated the Arab media, it had become "an equal opportunity offender", observed Quinn and Walters, irritating almost every government in the region.

Technology had also produced a contraction of foreign news coverage by established news organisations, which relied increasingly on material from news agencies, particularly video news services: AP had created APTN, competing across the globe with the established Reuters news operation. For their coverage of the Iraq War, most major news networks were equipped with lightweight gear that could operate independently of (potentially damaged) urban infrastructures. Typical field equipment included a satellite phone, DV (digital video) cameras,

---

<sup>20</sup> Simpson, *The Wars Against Saddam*, op. cit., p. 357

<sup>21</sup> Simpson, John, 'This is just a scene from hell', BBC News, 6 April 2003; at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/2921807.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2921807.stm), accessed 14 November 2005.

‘store and forward’ units on which stories could be edited and compressed, and an SNG (satellite news gathering) ‘flyaway’ dish for transmission.

The Iraq war officially lasted 800 hours, noted writer-filmmaker Mark Daniels, but generated 20,000 hours of video: “That’s three-and-a-half years of images to record one month of war.”<sup>22</sup> War and media overkill had merged in a perfect zenith, but the level of comprehension had, if anything, been reduced by sheer volume of material. The technologies available to cover warfare had changed dramatically, yet the role of the war correspondent remained: to cover the stand-alone events, but equally to lock them into a context ‘chain’, assessing both their immediate impact *and* deeper meaning. In failing so often to meet this objective during the Iraq War, and aiming instead for moments of spectacle drawn from ‘embeds’, television news in particular often conspired against a more focused context; discouraged its natural offspring, serious debate; and in contradiction of the media’s stated aims, made democracy that much poorer. Typically, ABC Australia’s Eric Campbell found himself having to “fudge it by writing something to accompany pictures you haven’t seen of events you didn’t witness”. The overall news output of the Iraq conflict was, many believed, indicative of the ongoing corruption of the independent and investigative role of the war correspondent. The conduct of war and the reporting of it was becoming an indivisible process, leaving audiences that much less informed.

## POST-IRAQ COVERAGE

As we head deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, much is changing both in the field of journalism and in the way wars are being reported. Across the media, fragmentation has become the norm, fuelled by a potent and often chaotic blend of globalization, digitization and ever-cheaper news production and information technologies. In this landscape, the relatively stable and organized professional fields of the Bourdieuan world are permeated at all levels not by other, definable identifiable fields but by amorphous and fluid forms, defined less by codes of membership or modes of behavior than by an absence of structures and shared rules.

---

22 Script, *Enemy Image*, documentary film by Daniels, Mark, coproduction of Multimedia France Productions/France 2, in association with CBS, SBS TV Australia, YLE, 2005.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in conflict reporting, where the stance of rugged individualism, already heavily diluted in an era of media pooling, military embedding, shared resources and economic cutbacks, is further under threat, and the field's traditional claims to journalistic authority based on professional values and hard-won experience become ever harder to sustain. The exposure of audiences to the conflict environment through non-traditional media such as blogs and video diaries and Facebook and Twitter entries posted by freelancers, military personnel, citizen journalists and others, raises, Markham suggests, 'the very real possibility that the experience of war (and war reporting) is no longer systematically mystified, mystification traditionally underpinning the valorized symbolic form of 'war reporter' in contemporary media culture.'<sup>23</sup>

Even the physical remoteness of war reporting, part of its 'capital', becomes irrelevant with the spread of technologies that place the correspondent in near-constant contact with head office, while the question of how to enter the 'club' is largely redundant, since anyone with a few thousand dollars - neophyte, freelancer, tourist, student journalist, clerk, plumber - can purchase a laptop computer, a high-definition camera, an air ticket to Baghdad or Kabul, and in two days be shooting frontline war stories and dispatching them electronically (and cheaply) to global networks. Women are no longer barred, while social status, nationality and race play no significant part. The door is wide open. This does not mean, of itself, termination of the Bordieusian field of war reporting; while one version - the world synonymous with safari jackets, hard drinking and a charade of all-knowingness - rapidly loses its symbolic capital, another version driven by new portable technologies and the shared values of social media and a younger dynamic reshapes the *habitus*.

This rapid change, along with the rising involvement of relatively inexperienced players, confronts those who have devoted their working lives to war reporting as a professional career. Photojournalist Tim Hetherington, a veteran of wars in Africa and the Middle East, referred negatively in 2011 to 'the unbelievable number of young kids running around Libya with cameras', shortly before his own death there under fire.<sup>24</sup> Michael Kamber, a war photographer with *The New York*

---

<sup>23</sup> Markham, Tim, 'War Reporting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Political Phenomenological Perspective on Pooling, Embedding, ICTs and Citizen Journalism', *Op cit*.

<sup>24</sup> Hetherington, Tim, *q.v.* Kamber, Michael, 'Photographing Conflict for the First Time', LENS: Photography, Video and Visual Journalism Blog, *New York Times*, 25 October 2011, at <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/young-in-libya/>, accessed 4 May 2012.

*Times*, was equally disturbed: ‘To me and some of the older crowd, there was a nagging suspicion that these packs of “green” photographers were not taking war seriously - that they were joyriding, with all the casual privilege the term implies. [...] The idea of a 20-year-old running around Libya with a cellphone and no flak jacket is, frankly, quite disturbing. It conveys a disrespect for the profession and for the civilians involved and it incorporates a certain callousness, at least in my opinion, toward the gods of war.’<sup>25</sup> There is considerable irony here: experienced photographers such as Hetherington and Kamber also had to start somewhere. Indeed, the golden age of war photojournalism, in the maelstrom of Vietnam, included many beginners who, armed with little more than enthusiasm and blind courage, became journalistic legends, and models for those who followed. The common thread between the generations remains a determination and passion to get the story; the typical persona remains largely unchanged.

## WHO ARE THESE MAD PEOPLE?

For a professional group engaged in exploring the lives of others, journalists are notoriously reticent about revealing their deep emotions, an act regarded by many as unprofessional and unworthy of those who witness on a daily basis the emotional and physical trauma suffered by victims of conflict. Motivations are often couched in broad, non-personal terms. The American journalist and essayist David Rieff, who covered the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, declared ‘I am interested in war because it is war. War is the norm in human history.’<sup>26</sup> German reporter Carolin Emcke asks herself, ‘Why do you do this job? Why do you go to these places where you get shot at, arrested, deported, threatened, or beaten up on a relatively regular basis?’ Her response - ‘to give a voice to the people who have become silent’<sup>27</sup> - taps into only part of the broader motivations of war reporters. Harold Evans, celebrated for his editorship of *The Sunday Times*, asserts two types inhabit the field, ‘the undeniable “cowboys” and those who could be categorized as “believers”’: the latter, he says, tend to be less reckless than the adventurers; they are not in it for the exhilarating scent of danger or the adrenaline rush. They

---

<sup>25</sup> Kamber, Michael, ‘Photographing Conflict for the First Time’, *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Rieff, David, *q.v.* Leith, Denise, *Bearing Witness: The Lives of War Correspondents and Photojournalists*, Random House, Sydney, 2004, p. 293.

<sup>27</sup> Emcke, Carolin, ‘Confronting the Worst: Writing a Catastrophe’, *World Voices 2005*, PEN American Center, at <http://www.pen.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/679/prmID/217>, accessed 5 July 2012.

calibrate the risks, trying to recognize the moment when the story becomes secondary to survival.<sup>28</sup>

The lethality of the job is undeniable. The International News Safety Institute - a London-based coalition of news organisations, journalist support groups and individuals working to improve news safety in dangerous zones - produces, in collaboration with Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, an annual report, *Killing the Messenger*, detailing the extent of media deaths, including those in war zones. Its first report, in 2007, noted that '1,000 journalists and support staff have died trying to report the news around the world in the past 10 years: an average of two a week.'<sup>29</sup> The news industry, confronted with these dark figures, talks of courage, and the desire of Evans' 'believers' to report 'the truth' at any price, include the loss of their own lives. In his introduction to INSI's 2007 report, Evans observed of those who died:

They believed in the purpose of journalism. [...] Nothing in the record diminishes the conviction that they believed theirs was an honorable craft - profession if you like - rooted in reason, dedicated to truth, sustained by a sense of common good, given inspiration by the achievements of others around the world in a universal brotherhood.<sup>30</sup>

Aside from these lofty beliefs, many journalists arguably seek in war adventure, career advancement, and the visceral excitement of smelling and reporting a good story. Some lose their lives in the single-minded pursuit of truth, but others die chasing personal glory, and, others still, simply while seeking a good time. The singular element that links them is risking their lives to get the story.

Chris Hedges, who covered fighting in former Yugoslavia and Central America for *The New York Times*, wrote of these complex motivations in his seminal 2003 text, *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*<sup>31</sup>, noting how the struggle between long-cherished myths and illusions of a better world often underline the humanity of conflicts as well as their terrifying lethality. The frontline reporter is trapped in the

---

<sup>28</sup> Evans, Harold, 'Reporting in a Time of Conflict', at <http://www.newseum.org/warstories/essay/firstdraft.htm>, accessed 30 March 2012.

<sup>29</sup> International News Safety Institute, *Killing the Messenger* report, 2007, p. 7, at <http://www.newssafety.org/page.php?page=20461&cat=about-insi>, accessed 23 June 2012.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Hedges, Chris, *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, Anchor Books, New York, 2003.

middle of this irrational, dangerous equation. In Nicaragua, Hedges joined a convoy of reporters in cars marked with “TV” in masking tape on their windshields, moving with rebel forces who came under heavy fire. Trapped, he could not move but began to pray. He felt ‘powerless, humiliated, weak’. One rebel died ‘yelling out in a sad cadence for his mother’. The firefight seemed to go on for eternity:

I cannot say how long I lay there. It could have been a few minutes. It could have been an hour. Here was war, real war, sensory war, not the war of the movies and books I had consumed in my youth. It was disconcerting, frightening, and disorganized, and nothing like the myth I had been peddled. There was nothing gallant or heroic, nothing redeeming. It controlled me. I would never control it.<sup>32</sup>

Hedges’ confession masks a harsh reality: that for all the coverage that war generates in the media, the worst always occurs well beyond the audience view, seen only by combatants and professional observers. Neither of these groups finds it easy to admit publicly or with total honesty the absolute depths to which war takes them, for to do so may be to admit weakness or defeat, or - arguably worse - to risk withdrawal by their editorial masters from a drug and a myth they cannot not live without. This too forms the *habitus* of their chosen field.

## OF DEMONS AND BAD DREAMS

While a cowboy mentality continues to exist in some quarters, the industry has in recent years witnessed a growing awareness of, and openness about, mental health issues that accompany war reporting. The study of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), previously confined to its impact on military and emergency workers, had by the early 21st century entered the field of war journalism. PTSD is a condition in which sufferers involuntarily recall a traumatic event in the form of vivid memories, nightmares, and flashbacks. Fixation on the event becomes so intense that it starts to dominate the lives of sufferers, who not only experience the anxiety of being on guard against the trauma’s effect, but often also emotional numbness to other events. The work of Professor Anthony Feinstein of the Department of

---

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.



Psychiatry at the University of Toronto<sup>33</sup> and others showed that PTSD gave war reporters bouts of restlessness and depression, and often made them feel that 'normal' life was uninspiring. As psychotherapist and former BBC correspondent Mark Brayne has observed, war correspondents in this regard are like anyone else:

Just because they have the professional mask, or the professional function of being a journalist, it doesn't mean to say that we as journalists are armoured against the emotional experience of observing and then witnessing and reporting on trauma.<sup>34</sup>

The upsurge of interest in the nature of PTSD has had an important side-effect, by allowing war correspondents 'permission' to discuss their dark experiences rather than to avoid them or externalize them. The case of news cameraman Jon Steele is telling. Steele, who worked for Britain's ITN network, was addicted to capturing on film the worst that humanity could produce, in whatever war zone he could find. By 2001, as he recalled, he had been 'working the Intifada' for eight months straight: 'I'd already seen hundreds of people shot dead or blown apart. I'd already been hit once and nearly killed twice. I'd been targeted by both Israeli and Palestinian snipers. One shot nearly tore off my leg; another shot almost took off my head. A centimetre either way, I'd be dead.' The horrors piled up.<sup>35</sup> Filming

---

<sup>33</sup> Feinstein's work in the 1990s and beyond opened up what had been a closed world; the focus had always been on those correspondents killed, not on the survivors. But as Feinstein noted, battlefield mortality rates told only part of the story. Many war reporters had been wounded and maltreated, with beatings, intimidation, mock executions and robbery. Feinstein and a colleague sent questionnaires to 170 war reporters, photographers, producers and cameramen, and also conducted face-to-face interviews with many. The results showed this 'war' group had far more symptoms of PTSD, major depression and psychological distress than a similar 'non-war' control group. Average weekly alcohol intake was high; their lifetime prevalence of PTSD approached that of combat veterans, while rates for major depression were two to three times higher than in the general population. The figures were well above those reported in police exposed to violence. (See Feinstein, Anthony, 'War, Journalists and Psychological Health,' *South African Psychiatry Review*, August 2004.)

<sup>34</sup> Brayne, Mark, 'Stressing Out: How Do Journalists Deal With Trauma?', *The Media Report*, ABC Radio National, 24 October 2002, at <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/mediareport-1999/stressing-out-how-do-journalists-deal-with-trauma/3526396#transcript>, accessed 15 January 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Steele, Jon, at <http://www.powells.com/blog/guests/hello-i-must-be-going-by-jon-steele/>, accessed 23 August 2011.

such traumatic episodes had a profound effect on Steele's life:

It screwed up my life incredibly. I've gone through a few marriages, bouts of drinking, drug abuse, madness. I mean it just screwed up my life. And what happened to me is not unusual in the business. There are journalists out there who are on their third and fourth marriages, there are journalists out there who are alcoholics, drug addicts, there are journalists out there who have taken their own lives, because they just couldn't take it any more.<sup>36</sup>

Steele's path, through wars across the 1980s and 1990s, matched his decline, as he notes vividly in his memoir *War Junkie*. Recalling the time he filmed the aftermath of machete massacres in Rwanda, he observes with shocking frankness: 'Maybe I didn't give a shit about these people. Maybe they were just pictures and nothing more.'<sup>37</sup> The careless yet highly confessional tone suggests a man at the end of his tether. A more steady perspective, though no less traumatic, is offered by Janine di Giovanni, a correspondent for *The Times* of London. In her memoir *Madness Visible* she accounts the places and events that troubled her:

Chechnya, where packs of wild dogs were eating the flesh of the dead and where a houseful of blind old people sat waiting during a bombardment for someone to rescue them; Sierra Leone, where nine-year-olds high on drugs carried AK-47s that were nearly bigger than they were and learned how to amputate hands and feet; East Timor, where the dead were stuffed down wells...<sup>38</sup>

Guilt is a prevalent emotional by-product of war reporting, the result of mental strains in a career built on the blood of others. The BBC's Michael Buerk, who had reported from inside a camp with 40,000 refugees - showing the world how Haile Selassie's Ethiopian regime, for all its riches, was incapable of feeding its own people - described the serious moral qualms he felt about his reporting role. 'It is difficult for a decent person to be a journalist in the middle of a human disaster,' he stated. 'You are not there to help. Often you hinder.' While acknowledging a

---

<sup>36</sup> Steele, Jon, *On the Frontline*, documentary, *Op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 371.

<sup>38</sup> di Giovanni, Janine, *Madness Visible: A Memoir of War*, Bloomsbury, London, 2004, p. 257.

reporter could bring the world's attention to the plight of victims, that offered little comfort. '...you feel hopelessly soiled at the time; the man who can exploit ultimate distress.'<sup>39</sup> The BBC's Jeremy Bowen, another experienced war correspondent, noted a fundamental truth about reporting wars: 'For us to have a good day, someone else has to have their worst day or their last day.'<sup>40</sup>

## LESS BRAVADO, MORE EMPATHY

The 'macho' image of war correspondents, reinforced in popular culture by Hollywood role models, has also been tempered by a rising number of women journalists on the frontline. As they began to penetrate this male stronghold in World War Two, women faced restrictions not placed on their male colleagues. Life photographer Margaret Bourke-White was denied access to the Allied invasion of North Africa, on the basis that the flight there was considered too dangerous - for a woman. (She took a boat instead, which was torpedoed, and managed to board a lifeboat with her cameras; she subsequently became the first woman to fly on an American combat mission.) Martha Gellhorn gained a reputation for bravery, as did Dickey Chapelle, who later became the first American female war correspondent killed in action, in Vietnam.<sup>41</sup> French photographer Catherine Leroy, who became the first accredited journalist to make a combat parachute jump, was captured by North Vietnamese forces but managed to talk her way out; she admitted being scared, but also to being addicted to combat:

You are alive like you've never felt alive before. [...] It's pleasurable in the sense of sheer animal survival. It's your primary brain, your reptilian brain; you are alive as an animal is alive. It's very low and very primal.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Buerk, Michael, *The Road Taken*, *Op. cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Jenkins, Mark, 'Gal Reporters: Breaking Barriers in World War Two', *National Geographic News*, 10 December 2003, at [http://news.nationalgeographic.com.au/news/2003/12/1210\\_031210\\_warwomen.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com.au/news/2003/12/1210_031210_warwomen.html), accessed 17 August 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Leroy, Catherine, *q.v.* Howe, Peter, 'The Death of a Fighter', *Digital Journalist*, August 2006, at <http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0608/the-death-of-a-fighter.html>, accessed 4 November 2012.

In the conflicts of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ratio of female to male war reporters began to rise, but not dramatically. The most prominent of female practitioners was Kate Adie, who as the BBC's Chief News Correspondent covered the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere from 1989 to 2003. Adie gained a reputation for her abrupt, 'no-nonsense' style of reporting, in which her emotional responses were rarely displayed. CNN correspondent Siobhan Darrow, who covered conflicts in post-Soviet Georgia and Chechnya, wrote in her memoir of the difficulty of giving global audiences a sense of the horrors she was witnessing: 'I hoped, mostly in vain, that reporting on this desperate situation would somehow help improve it.'<sup>43</sup>

The notion of being not only a observer of war, a witness to truth, but equally a sympathetic and engaged participant in the total experience of war places Darrow at a considerable distance from the stance of detached non-involvement that has, until recently, been widely regarded as the professional norm for war reporters, as typified by Australian ABC war correspondent Peter George, reflecting on his experience in the Middle East:

...we sit there at the bar at the end of a hot, harassing day and share a joke and a precious cold beer while outside, in 40 C degree heat, women struggling with cracked plastic buckets draw putrid water from shell craters to quench the thirst of their loved ones. We do not allow ourselves to suffer constantly with the victims of such horrors. We want to remain sane witnesses.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast, to understand her involvement in the conflicts she covered for the German magazine *Der Spiegel* from 1999 onwards, Carolin Emcke sent long emails to her friends around the world, as a testament not only to what she had seen but also about the impact of disturbing events on her psyche:

---

<sup>43</sup> Darrow, Siobhan, *Flirting with Danger: Confessions of a Reluctant War Reporter*, Knopf Doubleday, New York, 2002, pp. 101-102.

<sup>44</sup> George, Peter, *Behind the Lines: The Personal Story of an ABC Foreign Correspondent*, ABC Books, Sydney, 1996, p. 133.

That is the burden of the witness: to remain with a feeling of failure, of emptiness because even the most accurate account does not grasp the bleakness of war.<sup>45</sup>

Such confessional views will become increasingly common and acceptable, as war correspondents, male and female, choose to speak more openly and frankly about the darker side of their work. The growing range of counseling services available to journalists, particularly in major news organisations such as the BBC and CNN, and those offered through the work of the Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma and similar support groups, is also creating a more mature approach to what was, for decades, a tightly closed compartment of the war correspondent's psyche.

## A YOUNGER DEMOGRAPHIC

In the new century, the delusionary macho-celebrity image of war reporting has been punctured not only by the rise of women in war reporting, but also by the growth of a youth demographic centred on mobile technologies and social media. Kevin Sites' work reflects the values of a younger war reporter with skills as a video journalist. After spending a decade covering conflict for major American networks, Sites set out in 2005 with backing from Yahoo! News to visit every major war zone in the world, and to post his reports and reflections on a website, *Kevin Sites in the Hot Zone*.<sup>46</sup> Sites reported from 22 war zones in 368 days, posting 1,320 still photos and 153 text stories, and 131 video stories. This frenetic schedule and output resulted in a depressing finding: 'War poses as combat but is really collateral damage.'<sup>47</sup> Equally aimed at a younger audience was Chris Ayres' reporting of the Iraq conflict.<sup>48</sup> Ayres was, in 2003, the Los Angeles-based correspondent for London *Times* - reporting on, among other topics, Hollywood - when he embedded with U.S. Marines on the road to Baghdad. Rather than portray himself as the bearer of a British stiff upper lip or of bravado beyond his years, Ayres questioned both his courage and his ability to cover war surrounded by

---

<sup>45</sup> Emcke, Carolin, *Echoes of Violence: Letters from a War Reporter*, Op. cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>46</sup> The site no longer exists *per se*, although Sites' reports can be seen at <http://www.kevinsitesreports.com/>

<sup>47</sup> Sites, Kevin, *In the Hot Zone: One Man, One Year, Twenty Wars*, Harper Perennial, New York, 2007, p. 293.

<sup>48</sup> Ayers, Chris, *War Reporting for Cowards: Between Iraq and a Hard Place*, John Murray, London, 2005.

experts. ('What kind of a nutjob would do *this* for a living?' he asked.<sup>49</sup>) Yet beyond the humour of his writing, Ayres displayed a canny perception about how modern wars are covered, and the fraudulence of so much alleged 'war' reporting. He also identified some fundamental truths about the job:

War makes you feel special. It makes you feel better than your office-bound colleagues, gossiping over the water cooler, or wiping Pret-a-Manger mayonnaise from their mouths as they lunch in their veal-fattening pens. War gives your life narrative structure. The banal becomes the dramatic. [...] Here's another thing about war: as much as you hate the fear and the MREs and the mutilated corpses and the incoming mortars and the freezing nights in Humvees, you know you'll be a more popular and interesting person when, or if, you return. Because war is all about death, and everyone wants to know what death is like.<sup>50</sup>

Ayres suggests that contemporary war coverage is, in large part, an exercise controlled to an exceptionally large degree by military forces, in which concepts of independent journalism, freedom of movement, and empathy with the war's victims are mostly hollow claims. While irreverent on the page, Ayres' principal objective is not to risk his life for the story, but simply - and wisely - to stay alive.

## OBJECTIVITY VERSUS ATTACHMENT

Attitudes within journalism and the news industry continue to shift: as Tim Markham asserts, 'Creativity in journalism has moved from being a matter of guile and ingenuity to being about expressiveness,' a move that reflects 'a broader cultural shift from professional expertise to the authenticity of personal expression as dominant modes of valorization.'<sup>51</sup> In particular, a shift from the concept of 'objectivity' as the basis of factual reporting to a more personalized dimension of reportage that emphasizes the journalist - as Merrill's case for the 'existential journalist' argues - as 'an autonomous moral agent who can choose to promote the

---

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>51</sup> Markham, Tim, 'The Politics of Journalistic Creativity', *Journalism Practice*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2012, p. 187, at <http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/doi/full/10.1080/17512786.2011.616651>, accessed 2 December 2012.

overall welfare and freedom of others'<sup>52</sup>, has produced a wider creative space in which not only varying fields of opinion can be expressed, but also where new journalistic forms can be shaped.

Increasingly, the debate over 'objectivity' in reporting has swung not towards its necessity but towards its near-impossibility. The psychotherapist Mark Brayne notes that all reporting is coloured by the emotions and experiences that we have as humans. Objectivity, he believes, is 'one of the rather endearing and no longer quite appropriate fantasies that many journalists and many journalistic institutions have... that somehow as journalists all we do is observe events, take them into ourselves and pass them on objectively, that we simply tell the truth'. Life, according to Brayne, is much more complex than that, and reporting war carries its own paradox:

I need to be both open to the emotional experience of the story that I'm telling and also distanced from the story so that I can tell it with an appropriate distance and context and understanding, because if I'm simply swept up in the emotion of the moment, it's very difficult then to tell the story and to put in all of the aspects. [...] We're not neutral, we're not purely dispassionate observers of external facts, we really get engaged and then we have to struggle with this issue of how do we then distance ourselves from the stories that we cover so that we don't contaminate our reporting with our own unprocessed emotion.<sup>53</sup>

This does not necessarily suggest a greater move towards the 'journalism of attachment'. The degree to which war reporters seek to be engaged at the personal and political level with the stories they cover remains independent of their greater freedom to do so; a commitment to 'the story' remains as valid as any commitment to 'the fight', though in a number of rare cases - such as George Orwell's reportage from the Spanish civil war - a combination of the two, 'the story' and 'the fight', can result in journalism that generates a sense of striking immediacy and authenticity. In this regard, what *has* changed - and fundamentally - since the

---

<sup>52</sup> Merrill, John, *The Dialectic in Journalism: Towards a Responsible Use of Press Freedom*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1989, q.v. Stoker, Kevin, 'Existential Objectivity: Freeing Journalists to be Ethical', *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1995, p.12.

<sup>53</sup> Brayne, Mark, 'Analysing Journalists', *The Media Report*, ABC Radio National, *Op. cit.*

Vietnam era is, as Simon Cottle notes, ‘that journalists today working both inside and outside mainstream news outlets increasingly demonstrate journalistic self-reflexivity and this often assumes humanistic and emotional forms.’ As Cottle observes:

This may yet prove to be a source of support for those journalists in mainstream news outlets who both recognize and want to move beyond journalism’s long-established ‘calculus of death’ and develop new forms of reporting including those inscribed with an ‘injunction to care’.<sup>54</sup>

## TRAINING TO STAY ALIVE

Increasingly, war reporting is a high-risk occupation, with high death and injury rates. Moral dilemmas and grim choices haunt the coverage of warfare. The industry mantra says no story is worth dying for, yet correspondents continue to suppress rational considerations about survival in exchange for capturing graphic moments of war. Partly the rise in mortality rates results from modern weaponry - high-velocity ballistics and ubiquitous land-mines - but also from the increasingly urbanized and random nature of modern conflict: fought not in the countryside but in crowded urban environments, where shrapnel from high-impact explosives results in more casualties, and kidnapping and execution are constant possibilities.

Formerly cavalier attitudes to news safety by media organisations have been replaced in most major TV networks, news agencies and newspapers by a more responsible, ‘duty-of-care’ approach which includes compulsory safety training for current and potential war correspondents, usually conducted by former military personnel with skills in anti-terrorist warfare. These courses are highly expensive, and it is difficult to ascertain whether such training has in fact reduced the death toll among war reporters; nor does such specialized and expensive training address the needs of what Chris Cramer, currently Head of Global Media for Reuters, has called the new ‘urban war correspondent’ - in effect every reporter working wherever a terrorist attack might occur, a situation illustrated by the Manhattan

---

<sup>54</sup> Cottle, Simon, ‘Journalists Witnessing Disaster’, *Journalism Studies*, (unpublished to date), received 30 April 2012, accepted 31 July 2012, at <http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/doi/full/10.1080/1461670X.2012.718556>, accessed 12 December 2012.



9/11 attacks, where the ‘first responders’ were financial journalists on Wall Street. Traditionally, war has involved the clash of great armies on battlefields, with clear winners and losers, and beginnings and ends. Today warfare can erupt anywhere; as likely in the London underground as in a remote ditch in rural Iraq. For the media, this has major implications. No longer is the coverage of warfare the sole province of the dedicated war correspondent; a sports reporter at the Olympics might find herself covering a full-scale terrorist attack, a court reporter in Seattle could be caught up in an urban bombing. In a sense we no longer *go* to war; increasingly, wars come to us. These scenarios raise a critical question: if terrorist attacks can occur anywhere, do news organisations have a duty of care to train their *entire* editorial staff in war reporting and its dangers? How can such training be provided within existing reasonable frameworks of time and money?

One solution could be the inclusion of mandatory news safety teaching in all journalism and media tertiary courses. Such modules would, at the beginning of journalism careers, have two key benefits: they would offer all journalism students an introduction to the risks they face, and what preparations and precautions they should take before heading into war zones; and they would begin to demystify and ‘normalise’ the subject of trauma, which many professionals in the news industry are still reluctant to see as an occupational problem. Rigorous classroom debate on topics such as ‘courage versus cowardice’ under fire or stress and ‘fight versus flight’ could temper the growing death toll amongst war reporters. At present, negative attitudes to such issues reduce the complexities of war reporting to the level of a John Wayne movie: those who can take it and those who can’t.

A further innovation may be the use of battlefield video games as training tools, a technique widely used in military, policing and medical training. A prototype of an Australian game, *Warco*, allows players to adopt the persona of a video journalist arriving in a war-torn African nation under fire; the game allows the journalist to film action, and rewards innovative thinking and courage, but also penalizes those who take risks unnecessarily. In this virtual environment, players learn of the multiple dangers that exist in war zones, and of the tactical awareness required in rapidly-changing situations, balancing the need to ‘get the story’ with the need to ‘stay alive’. Ironically, the U.S. Army is using virtual reality technology to help

soldiers overcome post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), using “Virtual Iraq” simulations of experiences they are having difficulties coming to terms with.<sup>55</sup>

Likewise, journalism students need to be made more aware of the importance of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the globally recognized set of laws governing armed conflict and its effects. Drawn up as part of the postwar Geneva Conventions, IHL is based on several key premises: that although war can be horrifically violent, it should never become a game of open slather; that not everything is permitted even within the dark parameters of that thing called war; that journalists in war zones should be subject to rules of behaviour, and that likewise combatants need to follow rules and practices to ensure journalists’ safety and survival. IHL does not grant any rights to enter a war zone *per se*; the journalist must negotiate on the ground with whoever the consenting authorities might be. But it does support the journalist’s right to get close enough to the frontline to report the action fairly and accurately without being labelled a combatant or supporter of the military, or indeed a spy. By insisting that war reporters have the status of civilians, IHL encourages warring parties to treat correspondents less harshly if captured, and can sometimes help to secure their release. In essence, IHL is about ‘the rules of the game’ of war; behaviour beyond which could result in prosecution for war crimes.

## THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CITIZEN JOURNALISM

New technologies have seen a dramatic rise in the use of social media within journalism, a trend which has quickly invaded the traditional field of war reporting. The ability to capture both still and moving images on mobile phones, and distribute them globally via emerging media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media, has created a vibrant new source of content, and a raft of ethical and professional dilemmas. Chief and most pressing

---

<sup>55</sup> ‘Virtual Iraq: Soldiers treated with video games’, Nic Fleming, *Daily Telegraph*, 21 Feb 2007. The Virtual Iraq therapy involves patients wearing a headset showing scenes that have been created and adapted using graphics from the Xbox computer game Full Spectrum Warrior. The simulation includes city streets, desert roads small villages, building interiors, convoys and checkpoints.

among these has been the issue of sourcing and verification; the ability of specific interest groups engaged in conflict to manipulate images and information on social media evokes caution among many journalism professionals, even as such content floods the media marketplace. Even when propaganda and manipulation are not engaged, the ability of ‘citizen journalists’ to carefully source, analyse and edit story material into a meaningful context chain is called into question.

Undoubtedly, in dynamic and fast-moving stories such as the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011-12, citizen journalism has provided a wealth of material that would otherwise have not been obtained; the political and social outcomes which resulted might not have occurred without the use of such media. Yet increasingly, the global news industry is faced with a double-standard: promoting the values of professionalism, experience and authenticity while accepting content that is sourced from amateurs and largely unchecked. In the sphere of war reporting, where fact and counter-fact are heavily contested on a regular basis, this contradiction is even more pronounced.

## **OUTSOURCING DANGER**

As battlefields become more lethal, and the costs of covering war escalate, the temptation for media networks to outsource the production of content grows. The appearance of citizen journalism, welcomed by many as a further democratization of media and a blow to the gatekeeper mentality of traditional journalism, has offered the news industry a fresh means to access frontline material cheaply (indeed, often at no cost) while reducing exposure of staff journalists to death and injury. Armed with a relatively cheap video camera and the promise of a few hundred dollars for spectacular footage, there are plenty of volunteers desperate to break into global news. If they happen to be killed or seriously injured, questions of responsibility or duty of care disappear - no insurance, no family payments, no boards of inquiry. Those who take such frontline risks are both local citizens and foreign freelancers willing to risk their lives for a career break or the chance to earn a few dollars.

The legal implications of this are debatable, but the morality of it is painfully obvious. It illustrates how blurred the lines have become around the traditional concept of war reporting as a skilled craft, the domain of professionals who, by dint of hard-won experience under fire, gained levels of trust and authority among their employers and their readers and viewers. Increasingly, too, it suggests a further erosion of the reporter’s role as the eyewitness to war, and less reliable

evidence on which the public can make intelligent decisions about whether or not to even go to war. Looking to the future, certain trends indicate an even further erosion of this traditional role.

## **LOOK, UP IN THE SKY**

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or ‘drones’ in popular terminology, have in a short time become central to the conduct of modern warfare. Controversially, they have become a principal weapon in America’s so-called ‘war on terror’, drifting over skies from Afghanistan to Somalia, searching for targets to ‘take out’. Rapid advances in drone technology have resulted in cheaper prices and smaller machines, able to serve civilian roles based on video camera surveillance and image-capture from the air. ‘Drone journalism’ has appeared, providing aerial access to sporting events and large-scale public demonstrations, and raising many issues of privacy, public safety, ethics and legal considerations. The appeal of ‘drone journalism’ to news producers covering warfare is obvious, yet the likelihood of global networks being permitted to independently fly camera-equipped drones over zones where military drones are also operating seems highly remote. Far more likely will be the rapid emergence of ‘citizen drones’, consumer-level drones with cameras attached that will replicate in the air the combined role of citizen journalism and social media on the ground.

In this scenario, news networks will again be faced with the dilemma of graphic content obtained at low cost versus questions of authenticity and verification. At the other end of this core debate will be a certain rise in officially-provided ‘favourable’ footage from military drones, a process that harks back to the spectacular Pentagon-provided video footage taken from the nose cones of missiles in the Gulf War as they honed in on targets. As with the process of ‘embedding’, the provision of such imagery to networks will reduce the risk to reporters’ lives from extremely high to zero, and see financial advantages through elimination of insurance, travel costs, protective equipment, hotel bills and other expenses. The temptation for media managers to plug in to military ‘coverage’ will be strong, for many irresistible: choosing which drone-camera to cross to, which shots are the most graphic (or conversely, the least offensive to viewers), which represent editorially (for or against the war) where the network wants to be; where audience ratings will rise or fall, second by second.

## THE LOOKING-GLASS WAR

In such a televisual warzone, where technology triumphs and ground troops are involved less and less, what place for the traditional battlefield war correspondent? The profession of war reporting continues to evolve, reflecting shifts within society and in the journalism profession. Coverage of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq sits apart both chronologically and in substance. Vietnam was ‘the first television war’; half a century on, coverage of global conflicts is now more homogenized, and less unique, network by network. Sanitization has replaced censorship; we hear more of military failures, but see less of the result of military actions. If war is hell, and modern war more so, why do battlefield deaths in Vietnam still appear more violent than battlefield deaths in current times?

The answer is simple. In a single generation, the unvarnished truth had been extracted from war coverage. Despite a glut of global electronic sources, war reportage now shows far less of the real substance of war - soldiers engaged in battle. For the embeds in Iraq, the battle was usually elsewhere. Reporters who report from hotel balconies will never see war as it is - bloody and unendingly brutal - and can never describe it thus, with a witness’s sense of raw authenticity. Instead, war as blatant horror is replaced by war as an abstraction; war as incontrovertible truth is becoming an endless war of opinions; war as a grimy, smelly, noisy, shocking and lugubrious totality is converted to a coolly edited experience, a shuffling of images and sounds as vapid and detached as a video clip, often beyond any measure of trust. Against that, as lethal and ill-disciplined urban warfare becomes hellishly dangerous, the temptation of major news organisations to withdraw from any involvement grows stronger, and the field is left increasingly to inexperienced amateurs and those with personal and political agendas.

If diverse and unflinching coverage of warfare is under threat, from new technologies and from military, government and organizational pressure, is the war correspondent also under threat? Will rising costs and a growing risk of death force networks and reporters alike to ‘pull back’ from the enterprise begun so valiantly by Russell of *The Times*, who launched the genre in the 19th century? Russell modestly saw himself as “the miserable parent of a luckless tribe”,<sup>56</sup> yet he managed in a lifetime to change not only the view of field reportage but also of warfare. As his colleague Edwin Godkin of the *Daily News* observed, having a special correspondent in the Crimea “...brought home to the War Office the fact

---

<sup>56</sup> Knightley, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

that the public had something to say about the conduct of wars and that they are not the concern exclusively of sovereigns and statesmen.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the need to obtain up-close, accurate, timely and well-informed news of military involvements in foreign wars remains as vital to the democratic process as ever. For without well-trained and committed professional journalists, the battlefield will be an even uglier place, without restraint, without mercy, without even the basics of human dignity.

---

<sup>57</sup> Odgen, R., ed., *The Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin*, Macmillan, New York, 1907, pp. 102-103; cited in Knightley, *ibid.* Godkin himself was a remarkable observer not only of warfare but of the media: he chided his lazier American colleagues in the Civil War for their “wild ravings about the roaring of guns and the whizzing of the shells and the superhuman valour of the men...”: see Odgen, *ibid.*, p. 205.