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JOURNALISM IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
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Hilary and Trinity Terms 2010

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Introduction

“Social media is a term used to describe the type of media that is based on conversation and interaction between people online. Social media are media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques.” - Wikipedia

For almost two decades, the web has changed the world and revolutionized how information is stored, published, searched and consumed. The ripple effect has spread so wide that it impacts not just businesses and industries but crosses over into politics, medicine, media and breaches geographical locations, cultural boundaries and ultimately, affects people’s day to day lives.

The great wave of web innovation since Google in 1998 has been in social media. Social media is about networking and communicating through text, video, blogs, pictures, status updates on sites such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn or microblogs such as Twitter.

What makes social media of particular interest to journalism is how it has become influential as a communication and news-breaking tool. In June 2009, the U.S. State Department asked Twitter to delay scheduled maintenance on the service because it was being used by protestors angered by the results of Iran's disputed presidential election. In July 2009, a Twitter user in Jakarta beat most major news companies by tweeting about the Bali bombings. More recently, Google and Microsoft began integrating Twitter messages into their respective search engines, a new feature described as real-time search.¹

This paper will attempt to answer the questions:

- How do social media impact the news? (Chapter 2)
- Is Twitter the news media outlet of the future? What is the Twitter Effect? What is Twitter Journalism (Chapters 3 to 3.2)
- How do social media and other web 2.0 technologies such as blogs affect newsroom operations in reporting a news event? (Chapter 4)
- How social media affect the way journalists receive, gather and distribute news? (Chapter 5)
- What does it mean for the future of news? (Chapter 6)

A survey about social media usage in news operations will be conducted among selected chief editors from different parts of the world: the former future media chief of the UK’s biggest news organization, the North American bureau chief of a wire agency, the Singapore bureau of a news wire agency, a Malaysian wire and radio news organization, an Indonesian news agency and one of the biggest digital online groups in India.

Interviews with media experts will be part of the research including a global survey on the journalist’s usage of social media.

In this paper, I will discuss how social media and web 2.0 change the way news is gathered, reported and consumed as well as what it means for the future of news (Chapter 6).

¹ “2009, the year of Twitter and Facebook”, Agence France Presse, 15 December 2009

Lastly, this paper will attempt to answer the questions: Does journalism still matter? Who is the journalist of the future? What does the newsroom of the future look like? And, what is journalism in the age of social media? (Chapter 7)

1. Mediamorphosis: Old versus New media

News consumption today is not the same as pre-satellite news when people waited for their morning papers or sat down at an appointed time for the evening news on television. News consumption today is not the same as pre-internet news when people tune in to events happening around the world through 24-hour television news channels. More recently, a growing number of readers, viewers and listeners are going online for their news. Television, newspapers and radio are still here but there is a growing competition from interactive online media.²

This sub-chapter explores the definition of Web 2.0 and illustrates its main differences with Web 1.0.

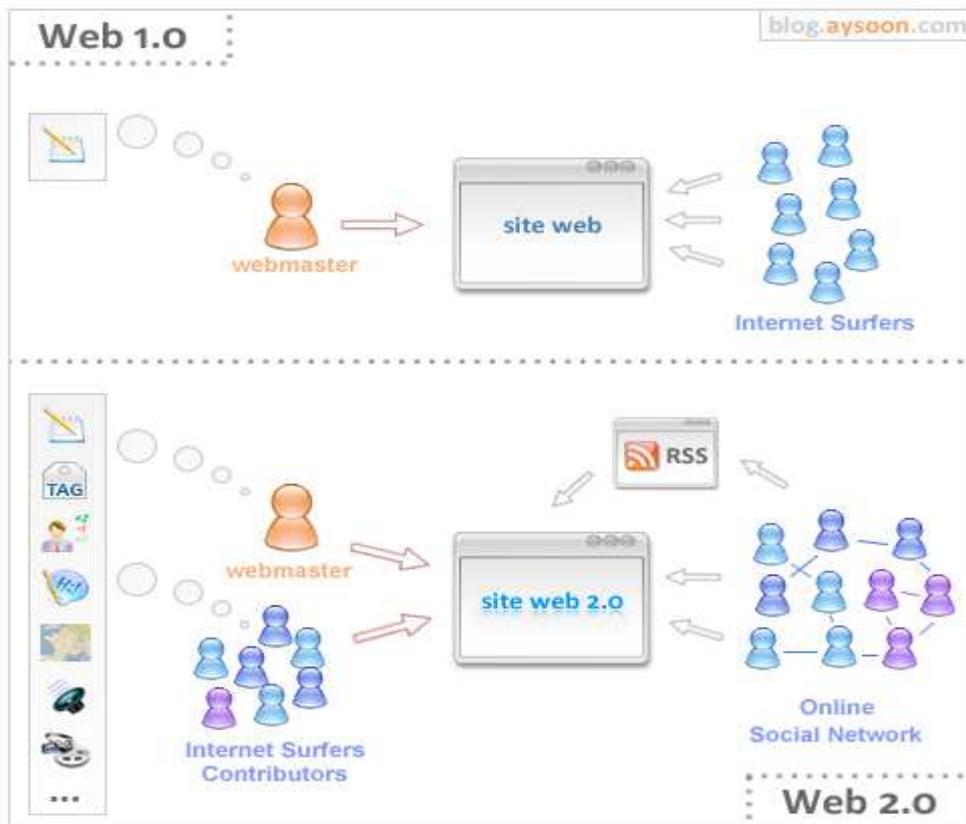
Web 2.0 allows for openness, organization and community. Web publishers are creating platforms instead of content. Users are creating the content. Wikipedia, MySpace, Facebook and Youtube most illustrate the power of Web 2.0 especially for ordinary web users. An approach of creating and distributing Web content that is characterized by open communication, decentralization of authority, freedom to share and re-use, and the idea of “the market as a conversation” (many to many). In comparison with the Web 1.0 model, a Web publisher (whether a news site or a personal site) would upload content to a Web site for many others to read and the communication transaction would end there. The 2.0 model not only allows those “many others” to comment and add to the content posted by the publisher, but the audience can also add original content themselves.³

The following illustration (made by aYsoon blog for its readers) compares Web 2.0 with Web 1.0 and explains how things have changed since the web culture has evolved. Webmaster and user interaction no longer depend on direct means of communication but have been turned into a whole new system of social interaction which includes really simple syndication (RSS feeds) and also the use of social networking sites.⁴

² <http://www.cbc.com>

³ M. Briggs, *“Journalism 2.0: How to survive and thrive: A digital literacy guide for the information age”*, J-Lab: University of Maryland, 2007, p.30

⁴ <http://blog.aysoon.com/Le-Web20-illustre-en-une-seule-image>



The next illustration is a commonly used depiction of the conversation in the web today whereby interaction has gone social.

Brian Solis, author of a book about the new web called “Engage” says the world of socialized media is maturing and along with it, our knowledge, expertise, reach; personal and represented brands are also flourishing. It will continue as long as we realize that these new social tools and networks require an entirely new commitment and embodiment of what we personify and how we can be a genuine resource to the people who define the communities that are important to us. In Technorati’s 2008 State of the Blogosphere report, the company observed that blogging is becoming mainstream, leading the way for an Active Blogosphere – defined as the ecosystem of interconnected communities of bloggers and readers at the convergence of journalism and conversation.⁵

⁵ <http://www.briansolis.com/2008/09/state-of-social-media-2008/>



(Illustration Source: Brian Solis and JESS3)

Old media like publishing used to require a printing press. Circulation was limited to a fraction of a geographical location. Broadcasting via radio and television rely on expensive equipment to transmit signals around a country, regionally or globally. Now, once a user connects to the internet, he has access to a platform that is at once global and free. The new model assumes that the devices themselves are smart. This means that one may propose or explore new models of communication and coordination without needing to get anyone's permission. An individual with a camera or a keyboard is now a non-profit of one and self-publishing is the norm.⁶

New-media technology is not only having a serious effect because of its impact on established journalism. The way that the vast bulk of public and commercial media is changing is more important than the emergence of citizen journalism or the independent blogosphere. Together they offer the opportunity to transform the news media into a more open, trustworthy and useful forum for information and debate. As news becomes non-linear and open-sourced, journalism will change and is changing. This is about more than posting a comment on a blog or sending in a photo to a website.

⁶ C. Shirky, "Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations", The Penguin Press, New York, 2008, p.77

The claims that traditional media are the sole champions of authority, objectivity and quality will be (and is being) challenged.⁷

⁷ C. Beckett, *SuperMedia: Saving Journalism So It Can Save The World*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008

2. Social Media, Web 2.0 and the News

There is a ground shift happening in the media industry, not just in news, because of the widening reach of social media networks. Mass media is passé. Today, it is all about personal media.

In the old days, a reporter was given a lead or went out to find a story. Today, many stories are received third hand (sometimes even fourth or fifth hand) through Facebook posts or Tweets or Digg so that by the time a story is assigned to the reporter, the story in some form or another is already out there in the social media universe. The reporter now has to take that into consideration and find some angle to the story that is not yet being talked about.

As to the notion of scoops and breaking news, a lot of tips or leads these days are from the web or what's "trending" in social networks like Twitter, Facebook or its popularity rating on Digg or based on search volume patterns in search engines like Google or Bing. This is radically changing the industry's concept of what a scoop or breaking news is. Journalists are forced to accelerate the traditional journalistic process because people now want real time information. People want the information as soon as the journalist or the media outlet receives it. So to sit on a story until it is complete is to risk being out-scooped by competitors or even worse to be dubbed slow by the public. It is now a necessity to give the audience bits of information at a time, as soon as the information is available. No media outlet can afford to wait. Why? Traditionally, media outlets compete to out-scoop each other but today if they hold on to a story too long, they run the risk of being out-scooped by amateurs such as bloggers, citizen journalists and twitterers.

While the current technological landscape shows tremendous promise and present numerous opportunities for news and its practitioners, there are also potential pitfalls. While social media networks churn out viable leads, there are also a lot of hearsays going on and even hoaxes. In October 2008, a citizen journalist, a CNN iReport poster reported that Apple CEO Steve Jobs had been rushed to the hospital after a severe heart attack citing an anonymous source. The story turned out to be false. CNN removed the story from the site and referred to it as fraudulent. That false story impacted the financial markets. Apple's stock in US trade took a major hit and dived to its lowest that year before bouncing back. Newspapers report, "the stock recovered around the time the post was removed. Apple's stock, which opened at US\$104 a share, fell by 9 percent to US\$94.65 before rebounding."⁸ More recently, in late April 2010, reports surfaced on the internet that pop star Lady Gaga amputated one of her legs just below the knee in the name of fashion. The story was rapidly tweeted and retweeted that eventually news media outlets took notice of the rumour. Upon verification from Lady Gaga's record label however that the story was untrue, the story was quickly discredited.

⁸ R. Kim, "Apple stock dives on false report", SFgate.com, October 2008

Social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter as well as web 2.0 applications like blogs and Google have changed the news industry and the journalism practice inside out. They present awesome possibilities and at the same time a high risk for errors. The challenges social media and web 2.0 have thrown to news managements and journalists have been like nothing seen before. Barriers to entry have been lowered since anyone with a PC, iPhone or Blackberry can be their own publisher. They can blog, tweet or facebook it --- anytime, anywhere.

What makes social media of particular interest to journalism is how it has become influential as a communication and news-breaking tool. In June 2009, the U.S. State Department asked Twitter to delay scheduled maintenance on the service because it was being used by protestors angered by the results of Iran's disputed presidential election. In July 2009, a Twitter user in Indonesia beat most major news companies by tweeting about the Jakarta bombings.⁹

CHANGING MEDIA CONSUMPTION

As already mentioned, the consumption of news today is not the same as pre-satellite news when people waited for their morning papers or sat down at an appointed time for the evening television news. More and more readers, viewers and listeners are going online for their news. Television, newspapers and radio are still here but there is a growing competition.

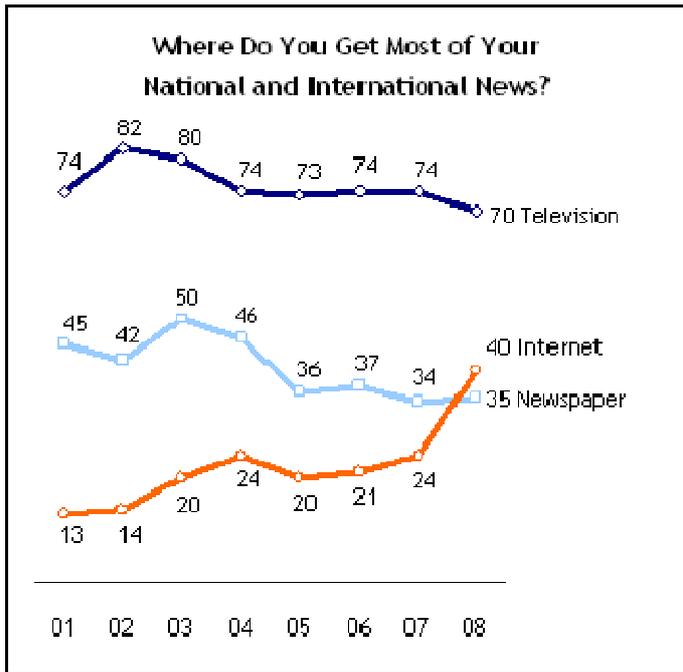
In its annual report for 2008-2009, the BBC reported that its television overall reach among the 16 to 34 years old audience has fallen by over 7 percent between 2003 and 2008, from 82.6 percent to 75.4 percent. The data provided by the BBC also showed the amount of BBC television viewing by teenagers have fallen from 39 minutes a day in 2003 to 24 minutes a day in 2008, a decline of nearly 40 percent in a five year period.¹⁰

Meantime in the United States, a 2008 study showed that 40 percent of those surveyed got most of their international and national news from the internet, up from 24 percent in 2007. Internet coverage of the US presidential campaign (boosted by social media networks) was the likely reason for that recent growth.

⁹ "2009, the year of Twitter and Facebook", Agence France Presse, 15 December 2009

¹⁰ BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2008-09

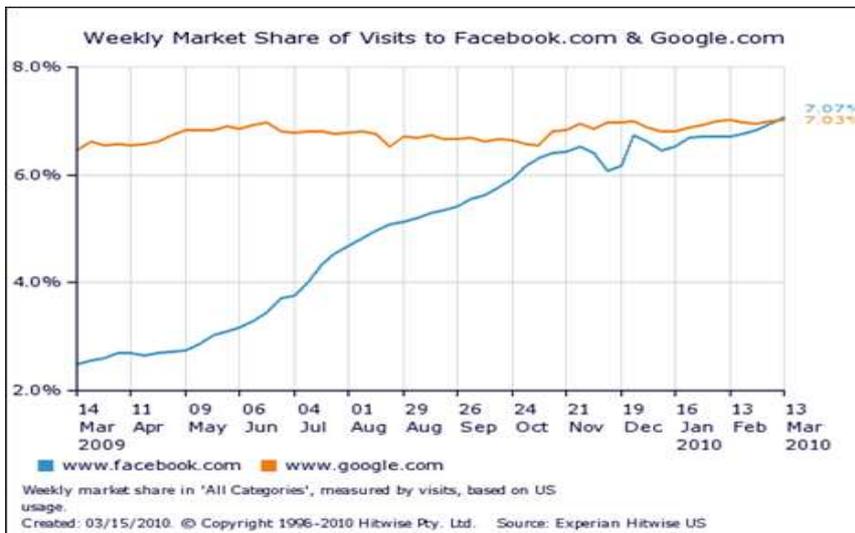
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomeds/515/51504.htm>



(Source: Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press)

Future technologies forecaster Paul Saffo says “blogging, chat groups and adding comments to online articles are obvious examples, but they are just the beginning. In the TV era, it was hard, if not impossible to participate, but now in the new world of personal media, the exact reverse is the case: it is hard to merely be a bystander.”¹¹

Just this March, Facebook became the number one site in the US, overtaking industry leader Google.¹²



(Source: Hitwise US)

¹¹ P. Saffo, “Farewell Information, it’s a Media Age”, saffo.com, December 2005

¹² C.Nuttall and D.Gelles, “Facebook becomes a bigger hit than Google”, Financial Times, March 2010

So what does this tell us? That perhaps, the web is becoming more sociable than searchable or probably both and fulfilling the internet's promise of connecting the world.

One thing is for sure, the power structures are changing. Media organisations do not have the monopoly on journalism anymore. The face of the competition is changing. In less than a decade, the likes of Google, Facebook and Twitter are competing with the New York Times, the Guardian, CNN and BBC as the news outlet of choice. Television still leads the race for now, but for how long?

SOCIAL MEDIA IS WORD OF MOUTH ON STEROIDS

For instance the news about the death of Michael Jackson in 2009, Facebook and Twitter users broke the story ahead of any major news network, the moment the UCLA Medical Center made the death announcement official. Social network sites, search engines and news websites reported heavy traffic volumes in the hour the story broke and some websites even crashed. That single story showed how news is consumed and disseminated in social media, how far it can reach and how fast. In the social media sphere, news is word of mouth on steroids. It knows no boundaries.

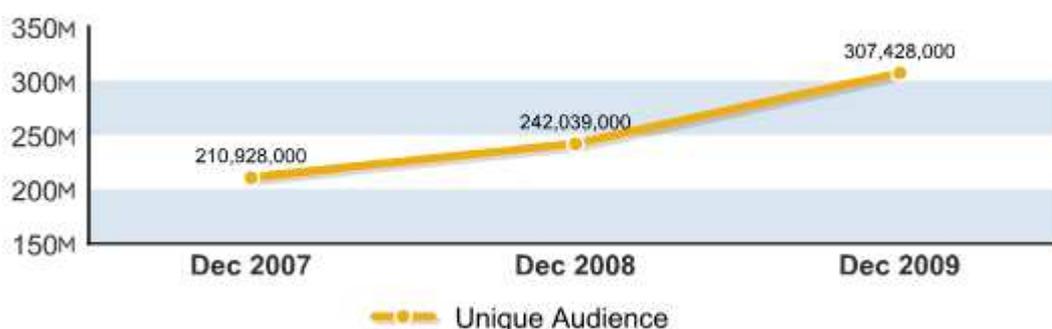
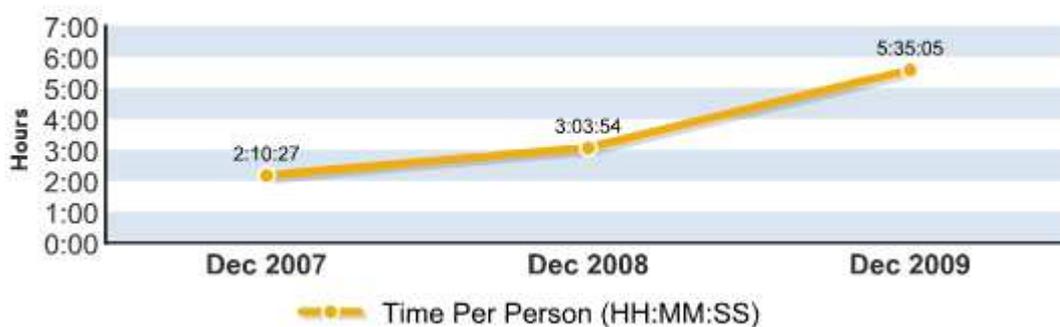
The death of Michael Jackson story is now used by media gurus as a textbook example of how social media has breached the gap between traditional media and the consumers (audience). It proved that the gatekeeper role is no longer exclusive to journalists as the participatory culture of social media about engaging the audience has broken down the wall of journalism which separates the reader from the journalist. There are now known instances where news is people-driven versus the old way of just being media outlet-driven. News (information/knowledge) which was previously disseminated Top-down can now be disseminated Bottom-up. The audience now has a say as to what news is important to them and as to what level of engagement they wish to pursue it whether watch or listen to it on TV or radio or go online or reply via mobile text or tweet about it or post it on Facebook or upload it on Youtube or if they Digg it on whatever device when they want it and where they want it.

According to The Nielsen Company, global consumers spent more than five and a half hours on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter in December 2009, an 82 percent increase from the same time the previous year when users were spending just over three hours on social networking sites. In addition, the overall traffic to social networking sites has grown over the last three years.

Globally, according to the Nielsen survey, social networks and blogs are the most popular online category when ranked by average time spent in December, followed by online games and instant messaging. With 206.9 million unique visitors, Facebook was the number one global social networking destination in December 2009 and 67 percent of global social media users visited the site during the month. Time on site for Facebook has also been on the rise, with global users spending nearly six hours per month on the site.¹³

¹³ Nielsen Wire 22 January 2010 <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/global/led-by-facebook-twitter-global-time-spent-on-social-media-sites-up-82-year-over-year/>

Global Web Traffic to Social Networking Sites



Source: The Nielsen Company

THE FIFTH ESTATE

If the press is the Fourth Estate, William Dutton of the Oxford Internet Institute termed social media as the emergence of the Fifth Estate. In a 2009 interview with Nic Newman, former BBC Future Media Controller, Dutton said “we are witnessing the emergence of powerful new voices and networks which can act independently of the traditional media. Highly networked individuals (helped by new platforms like social networking and messaging) can move across, undermine and go beyond the boundaries of existing institutions.”¹⁴

A good example of this is the case for “citizen journalists”. According to Dr. Alex Burns, a senior lecturer in the Creative Industries faculty of Queensland University of Technology in Australia, citizen journalists act primarily as watchdog and corrective for the mainstream. “Participants act as gate-watchers, observing and analyzing what passes through the publication gates of the journalism industry and other official sources, and highlighting interesting and relevant news for their industry.”¹⁵

¹⁴ N. Newman, “The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism”, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Working Paper September 2009

¹⁵ http://www.amic.org.sg/pdf/Citizen_journalism.pdf

CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

On July 7, 2005 within six hours of the London bombings, the BBC received more than 1,000 photographs, 20 pieces of amateur video, 4,000 text messages and 20,000 emails. Former head of global news for the BBC Richard Sambrook wrote that year, “people were participating in our coverage in a way we had never seen before. By the next day, our main evening TV newscast began with a package edited entirely from video sent in by viewers.”¹⁶

Today, the BBC has 23 journalists working in a UGC (user generated content) centre to process information, photos and text coming in from the general public. CNN also has a user-generated content site but the branding is separate. iReport is the section of CNN.com where the stories, photos, texts and videos are uploaded by the audience.

Another event that broke first through a social network was the 7.9 magnitude Sichuan earthquake in China in May 2009 which devastated the city. The BBC got wind of the China quake via Twitter. Tweets came out minutes before the US Geological Survey put up its notice.

Aside from citizen journalism, there is also another developing trend called networked journalism. It is a process of mining public knowledge to add value to the community. Charlie Beckett, author of *Super Media* describes it as “the journalist still reports, edits, packages the news. But the process is continually shared. The networked journalist changes from being a gatekeeper who delivers to a facilitator who connects.”

Take for example the case of how the Guardian newspaper asked the British public to help trawl through thousands of documents and assisted in further exposing the MPs’ (Members of Parliament) expenses scandal in 2009.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the Huffington Post’s “Off the Bus” project was a collaboration with a network of citizen journalists to cover the 2008 U.S. Presidential elections on the campaign trail. The pioneering endeavour showed a new way of gathering election news combining input from both professional and amateur journalists and giving way to editorial diversity.

While some independent citizen journalism websites that experimented on the Pro-Am (Professional-Amateur) model like Assignment Zero, a collaboration between Wired.com and NewAssignment.net have failed, there are a few citizen journalism networks that are still surviving such as online community newspaper Broowaha.com in the United States. But there is none more successful in harnessing the potential of the open-source model or the Cit-J network than South Korea’s OhmyNews. OhmyNews was influential in determining the outcome of the South Korean presidential elections in December 2002 with the election of Roh Moo Hyun. Today, OhmyNews has an international version with contributors from all over the world.¹⁸

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE PRACTICE OF JOURNALISM

The news industry is continuously changing and trying to keep up with web 2.0 technologies that just came out in the past five years and the new ones that are still being rolled out. While social media

¹⁶ R.Sambrook, “*Citizen Journalism and the BBC*”, Nieman Reports, Winter 2005

¹⁷ <http://mps-expenses.guardian.co.uk/>

¹⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OhmyNews>

networks and web 2.0 applications open new opportunities for the news industry, they also raise the possibility of a professional crisis for journalists and media organisations.

For the journalist, the new equation is about doing a lot more with a lot less. Reporters are now required to submit stories for multiple platforms – television, radio, print and online. For a journalist in today’s media landscape, it is essential to be multi-skilled.



(Source: Royston Robertson Cartoons)

As for editors, there is a lot of curation going on. New posts like “social media editors” or “community editors” have been and are still being created in newsrooms since 2009.

In May 2009, the New York Times hired its first social media editor to expand the use of social media networks and publishing platforms to improve New York Times journalism and deliver it to readers. Also early in 2009, Sky News in the UK appointed a Twitter correspondent whose main responsibility is to cover breaking news. BBC also appointed its first social media editor in late 2009. His job is to help the BBC team of reporters and producers engage more proactively with social networks, Twitter being one of them, as newsgathering and distribution channels for journalism.¹⁹ This birth of social media editors in the newsroom raises questions about the future role of editors: will they soon be doing less journalism and more fact-checking? Will they just be relegated to copy tasting and spotting trends from social networks like Twitter, Facebook and the like?

For media organisations, convergence is the common strategy. There is a growing realisation that you can’t do everything on your own. One media outlet cannot service all the rivers of information in the social media sphere. Thus, partnerships abound. For example, Facebook and CNN teamed up for “Live Tweeting” during US President Barack Obama’s inauguration or BBC partnered with Adobe for streaming video capabilities.

¹⁹ M.Bunz, “What will the BBC’s new social media editor do?”, guardian.co.uk, 19 November 2009

NEWS AGGREGATORS

But another real competition for traditional media outlets is news aggregators. Many different news aggregators exist, those run by search giants such as Google and Yahoo and those based on reader interaction such as Digg. Google News however, also collects brief excerpts from articles on its homepage, and makes them available via a search function. Others like huffingtonpost.com and thedailybeast.com, provide aggregation alongside original reporting and commentary.

Five year old The Huffington Post is now seen as a viable threat to the more established The Washington Post as a news and opinion site. In March 2010, Nielsen attributes more than 13 million unique visitors to the Huffington site.²⁰ That's a 13 percent increase month over month and 94 percent year over year, landing in the top 10 news sites for March. The New York Times was ranked sixth, while The Washington Post did not even make it to the top ten rankings. But whether Huffington Post can translate that web traffic to revenue is still work in progress.

Not everyone however, accepts the ground shift. Rupert Murdoch has accused news aggregators including search engines of exploiting the internet.²¹ He wants paywalls for his newspapers' websites and dismissed critics' fears about consumers who are used to getting their content for free not being prepared to pay for it. Murdoch believes the internet can't take stories for nothing and that consumers can be made to change their consumption habits. He was quoted as saying "*When they (consumers) have got nowhere else to go, they will start paying.*"

From June 2010, the content on the online sites of The Wall Street Journal and UK's The Times and Sunday Times was no longer free. Whether this business model will work or not, remains to be seen. Traditionally however, financial websites are more likely able to charge for niche and market-sensitive information and be profitable. Yearly subscription revenue from the website of the Financial Times for example, (FT.com) rose 43 percent year on year in 2009. FT chief executive John Ridding acknowledges that there are differences between print and online news. FT does not have an immediate paywall. The site allows users some free stories before being asked to pay for content. He says "*the nature of and consumption of journalism (on the web) is different to newspapers. People come in for one story. You hope they will become a registered user or a subscriber. They may not all become subscribers.*"²²

The news industry is in a period of transformation where an old media system is disappearing and a new media system is budding. An age where the passive-watcher culture is giving way to a participatory culture and where a society previously hooked on traditional media is giving way to a much more complicated media landscape where the ordinary citizen has the ability to control media technologies and tell their own stories in powerful, innovative and creative ways. This is an era where our social, cultural and technological ways of life intersect.

Henry Jenkins, Director of Comparative Media Studies at MIT says the essence of convergence culture is the audience has the power to respond, innovate, experiment and re-contextualize media in new ways. "*Convergence culture is a world where every story, every sound, every brand, image and relationship plays itself out across a number of media channels. Collective intelligence or the*

²⁰ G. Reagan, "How the Huffington Post's traffic is killing rival news sites", Business Insider.com, April 2010

²¹ P. Harris "Rupert Murdoch defiant: I'll stop Google from taking our news for nothing" Guardian, April 2010

²² S. Busfield, "FT.com subscription revenue up 43%", Guardian.co.uk, 4 March 2010

group as a whole can put together knowledge in a more complex way than an individual is capable of doing.”²³

²³ H. Jenkins *“Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide”* New York University Press, 2006

3. Twitter: news media outlet of the future?

Four researchers from the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology's Department of Computer Science have performed a multi-part analysis of Twitter and how it works. The group wanted to find out whether Twitter is just a social network or a news media outlet by itself? Haewoon Kwak and his associates Changhyun Lee, Hosung Park, and Sue Moon built an array of twenty personal computers to trawl the entire contents of Twitter for a period of one month, July 2009.

This author interviewed Haewoon Kwak and he said based on their empirical findings, Twitter redefines and to some extent enlarges the definition of news media.

According to Kwak and his team, the role of traditional news media is played by traditional news accounts in Twitter. Moreover, based on their findings, these news accounts are more powerful than traditional news media and the reasons are two-fold:²⁴

One is motivation. Some studies report that different motives lead to different levels of attention and show that motivation to gain information for personal or social use leads to greater cognitive involvement.

A Twitter user actively follows others and subscribes to their tweets. Also, they can stop subscribing to tweets whenever they want to do so. In other words, Twitter users themselves actively choose and subscribe to their favourite news sources and the motivation to read tweets such as gaining information or entertainment is stronger than just passing time.

The other is the form of news. The study argues that for politically inattentive citizens, soft news is more effective than traditional news. Both a short message (tweet) and social interaction (retweet) among users puts Twitter ahead of other sources of news. Thus, Twitter can be an effective medium to disseminate political messages.

From these two observations, Kwak et al think that news accounts in Twitter can have more power than traditional news media.

As shown in the figure below (a Retweet Tree Analysis of tweets during the Air France plane crash in July 2009) retweets occur fast and widely. Also, the diameter of a network is very small.

Kwak adds, by retweeting, the voice of the common people can become loud in Twitter; about a few hundred thousand people can listen.

²⁴ <http://an.kaist.ac.kr/~haewoon/papers/2010-www-twitter.pdf>

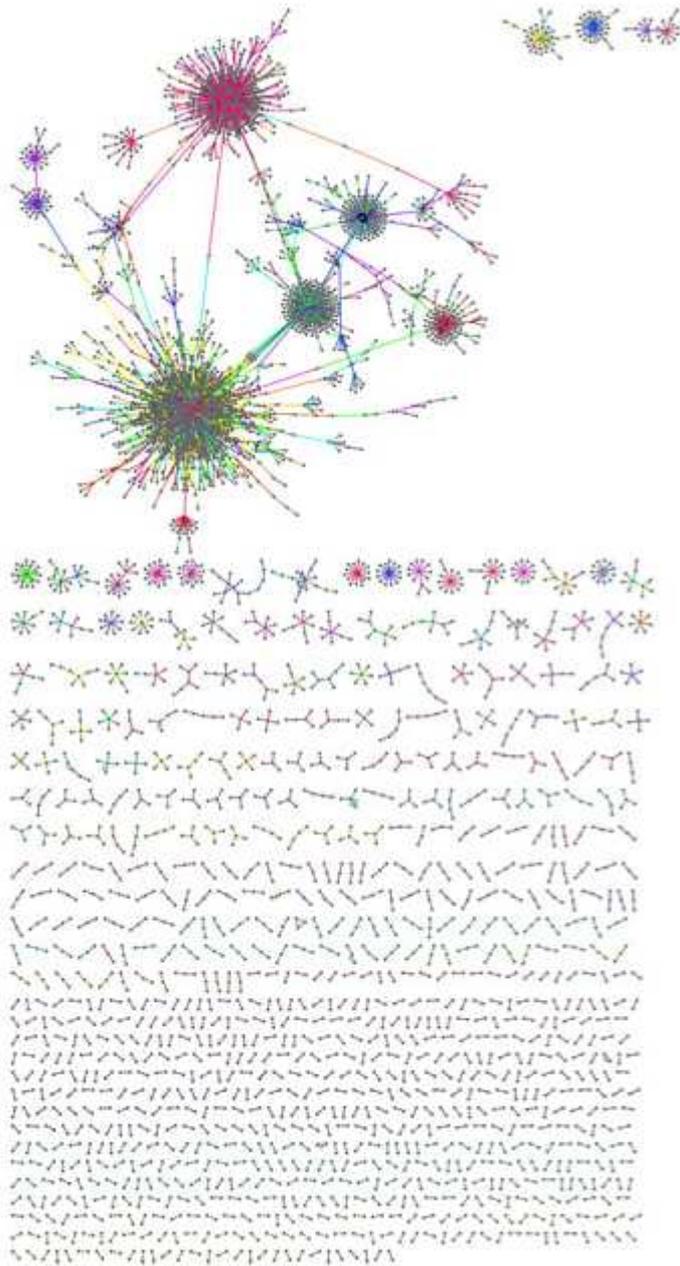


Figure 15: Retweet trees of 'air france flight' tweets

The Twitter Effect is defined as the rapid spread of information through the micro blogging service Twitter. The tweets can spread out like the branches of a tree and reach a very large number of Twitter users.

Pingdom, a company that tracks site availability suggested this formula.

*The Twitter Effect = (Original tweet x followers) + (retweets x followers of retweeters) + (retweets of retweets x followers of those) and so on.*²⁵

In the four years since its inception, Twitter has quickly become an important tool for journalists. When breaking news occurs in any part of the world, Twitterers quickly agree on a tag that organizes the material comprising a hash mark and a short word. Once you have the “hashtag”, you can then use Twitter’s search engine to filter out everything but those tweets that are intending to comment on or report on a news event.

One such event was when a plane crashed in New York’s Hudson River. When dozens of New York-based Twitter users started sending 'tweets' about a possible plane crash in the city, the news spread like wildfire across the Twitterverse. Indeed, Twitter users broke the news of the incident around fifteen minutes before the mainstream media alerted viewers and readers to the crash. The first recorded tweet about the crash came from Jim Hanrahan, aka Manolantarn, four minutes after the plane went down, who wrote: *"I just watched a plane crash into the hudson riv [sic] in manhattan."*²⁶

Twitter is a micro blogging service. Text messages known as “tweets” are capped at 140 characters. Since its launch in 2006, it has been gaining popularity worldwide and media companies have been quick to explore its possibilities. Figures presented by ComScore showed 73.5 million unique individuals registered in Twitter in January 2010, up 8 percent from December 2009 when it peaked with 65.2 million visitors. Twitter’s annual growth rate makes up a phenomenal 1,105 percent.²⁷

In a 2009 Huffington post interview, Twitter co-founder Biz Stone commented on how surprised he was at how quickly and expertly news organizations like the *New York Times*, CNN and others -- began to use Twitter. *"They just jumped in and impressed us with how they engaged, and their hybrid approach. Reuters, for example, began watching Twitter for trends, and found it worked. We gave help, support, and even our API (application programming interface) to the Reuters Lab people. Then CNN began using us to access information, and to find and create stories. Rick Sanchez at CNN, for example, is using both Facebook and Twitter and getting real time feedback and the Los Angeles Times took the Twitter feed about the wildfires and put it on their home page."*²⁸

Traditional news media exist for “authoritative” news sources, those that provide a deeper view to news. According to Kwak, those who have a good social position still read newspapers and watch TV news, therefore the frame of traditional news media remains important. However, for many people, traditional news media is considered an “additional” means to get information. They prefer Facebook and Twitter to the traditional means. To solve this problem, the Korean group recommends that traditional news media need to strongly integrate with social media such as Facebook or Twitter; the new medium is obviously Internet rather than paper or TV.²⁹

²⁵ S.Shankland, *"The Twitter Effect: Possibilities and Limits"*, 4 February 2009

http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-10156481-2.html

²⁶ C. Beaumont, *"New York Plane Crash: Twitter breaks news, again"* 16 January 2009

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/twitter/4269765/New-York-plane-crash-Twitter-breaks-the-news-again.html>

²⁷ http://www.ecommerce-journal.com/news/26966_twitter-continues-gaining-popularity-visited-735-mn-people-january

²⁸ R. O'Connor, *"Twitter Journalism"*, Huffingtonpost.com, 20 January 2009

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rory-oconnor/twitter-journalism_b_159101.html

²⁹ Author email interview with Haewoon Kwak, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) 18 May 2010

These days, it is very hard to find a Web 2.0 technology (social media networks, blogs, microblogs, podcasts) that news companies have not embraced. If the essence of Web 2.0 is about sharing and organizing, the essence of journalism is about being the voice of the community so isn't it the journalist's role to adapt and bring journalistic values to these social media environments to better serve the public interest? Geneva Overholser, director of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism thinks it is so. "Those of us who ground ourselves in what we know to be an ethically sound and civically essential mode of information gathering and information dissemination has to find a way to be in these conversations—whatever we call the conversations or ourselves. Our job is to keep an eye on the public interest."³⁰

³⁰ G. Overholser, " *What is journalism's place in social media?*", Nieman Reports, Fall 2009 issue <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=101882>

4. Editors Survey: Social Media in News Operations

This chapter deals with social media in news operations.

How do social media and other web 2.0 technologies such as blogs affect newsroom operations in reporting a news event?

The participants have been chosen for their “representative” status in the hierarchy of the journalism system. As media controllers, bureau chiefs, managing directors and editors of some of the biggest news organizations, it is hoped that their opinions would give a *snapshot* account of the current usage of social media in newsrooms.

The respondents selected are in very senior positions and are able to discuss the issues under consideration.

News editors and managing editors who participated in this survey were:

1. Nic Newman, ex-Future Media and Technology Controller, British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) UK
2. Roberto Coloma, Bureau Chief , AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP) Singapore
3. Shailesh Shekhar, Editor in Chief, INDIA TODAY Group Digital
4. Sheikh Raffie Abd Rahman, Chief Operating Officer/Editor, BERNAMA Radio24, Malaysia
5. Akhmad Kusaeni, Deputy Editor in Chief, ANTARA NEWS AGENCY Indonesia
6. David Millikin, Editor in Chief, AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP) North America- US & Canada

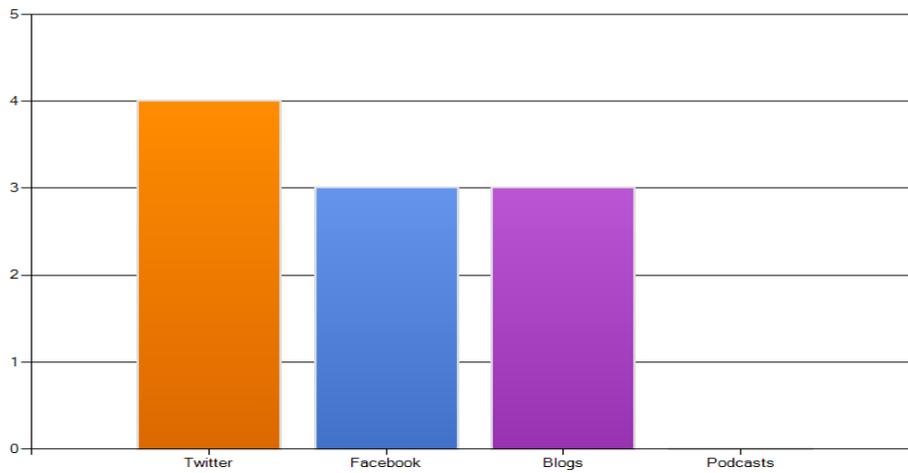
Questions asked involved coverage of a recent specific event (Haiti earthquake: January to February 2010 coverage) and the type of social media used so as to determine social media tools frequently used by newsrooms for coverage and why. Editors were also asked about their thoughts on the main risks of the medium and their outlook for the changing news business model.

While the choice of a pinpoint event (i.e. Haiti earthquake) may be questionable to some as editors tend to prioritize a local story rather than one that happens on the other side of the world, it can be argued that in the social media sphere which is a global portal, local content can go international if not worldwide in seconds or minutes and vice versa from global to local.

4.1 Results Analysis

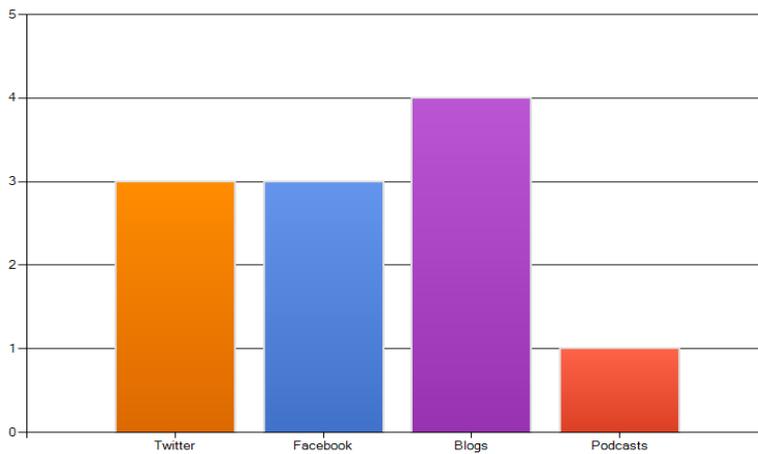
Here are the main findings of the SNAPSHOT SURVEY.

Which of these social media did your news organization use to get or RECEIVE news about the Haiti earthquake?

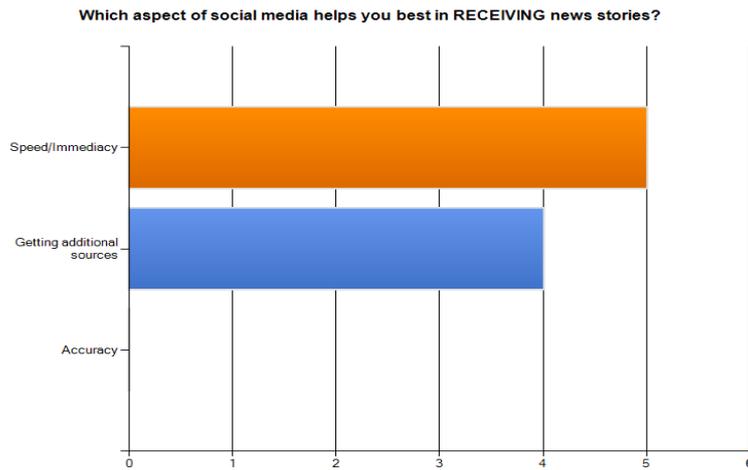


Editors used Twitter the most to get or receive news about the Haiti earthquake.

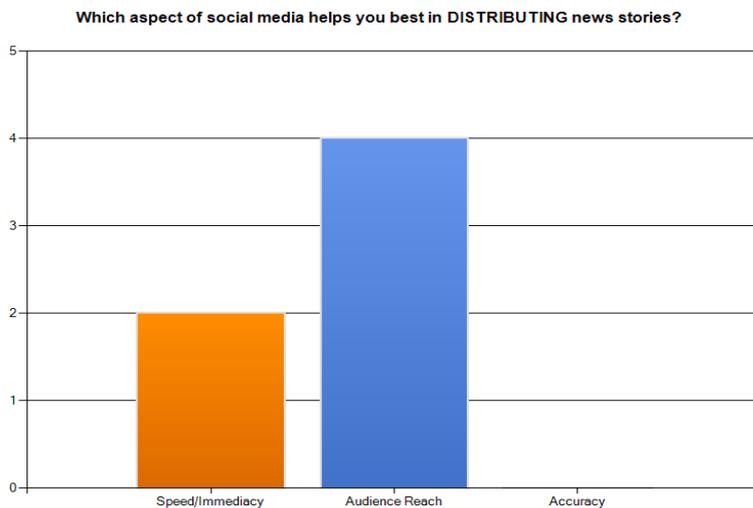
Which of these social media did your news organization use to disseminate or DISTRIBUTE news about the Haiti earthquake?



Editors used Blogs the most to disseminate or distribute news about the Haiti Earthquake. Blogs allow for more space for analysis and to give context to the news. It also provides for company branding.



5 out of 6 editors surveyed say Speed or Immediacy is the aspect of social media that helps them best in receiving news.



Most of the editors surveyed believe Audience Reach is the aspect of social media that helps them best in distributing news stories.

As for the **MAIN RISKS** with using social media for news gathering and news distribution, the answers were unanimous about concerns regarding accuracy, the need for verification and the loss of control over the information.

“For news gathering: trust, accuracy and identity are the main risks. Are people who they say they are? For news distribution, it’s resourcing ...to do this effectively and handle two-way implications.”

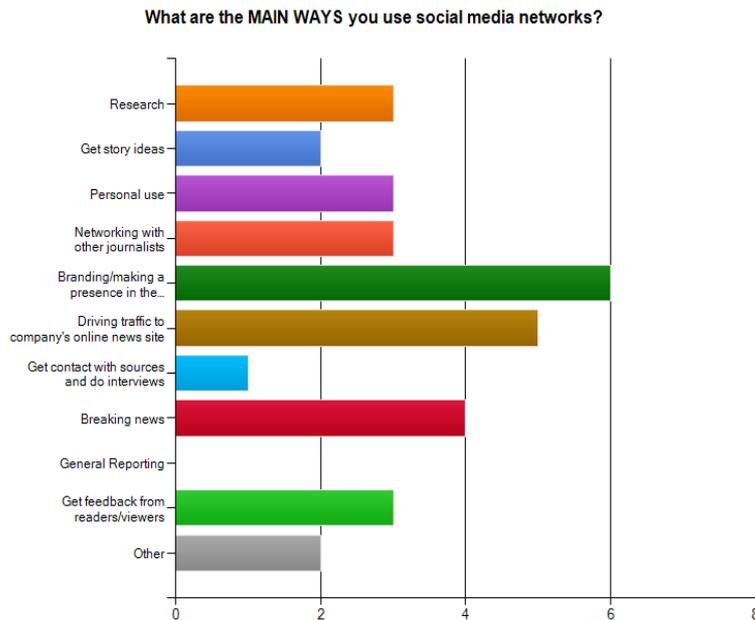
Nic Newman, Future Media and Technology Controller, British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) UK

“Our main concerns are corroborating facts, managing authenticity and managing news escalation.”

Sheikh Raffie Abd Rahman, Chief Operating Officer/Editor, Malaysia’s Bernama Radio24 News

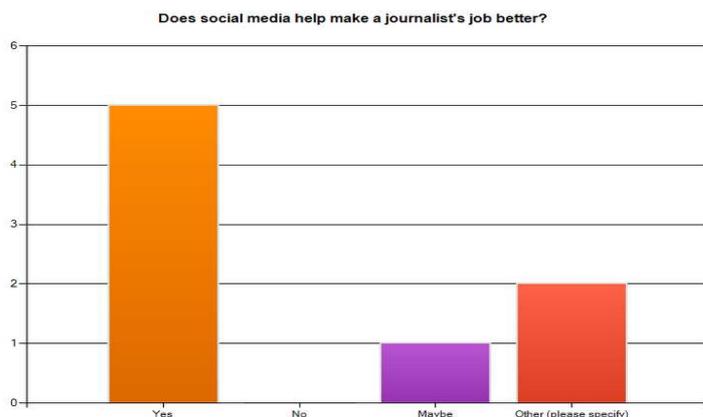
“The main risk of using social media for news gathering is accuracy. As for news distribution, you lose control over your information with each layer of transmission, as people condense, distort, interpret and comment on variations of the original report.” Roberto Coloma, Bureau Chief, Agence France Presse (AFP) Singapore

“In news gathering, it is difficult verifying the origin of the source material.” David Millikin, Editor in Chief, Agence France Presse (AFP) North America



As for the **MAIN WAYS** their newsrooms use social media networks, the top 3 answers were:

- Branding and making a presence in the social media sphere
- Driving traffic to the company’s news website
- Breaking news



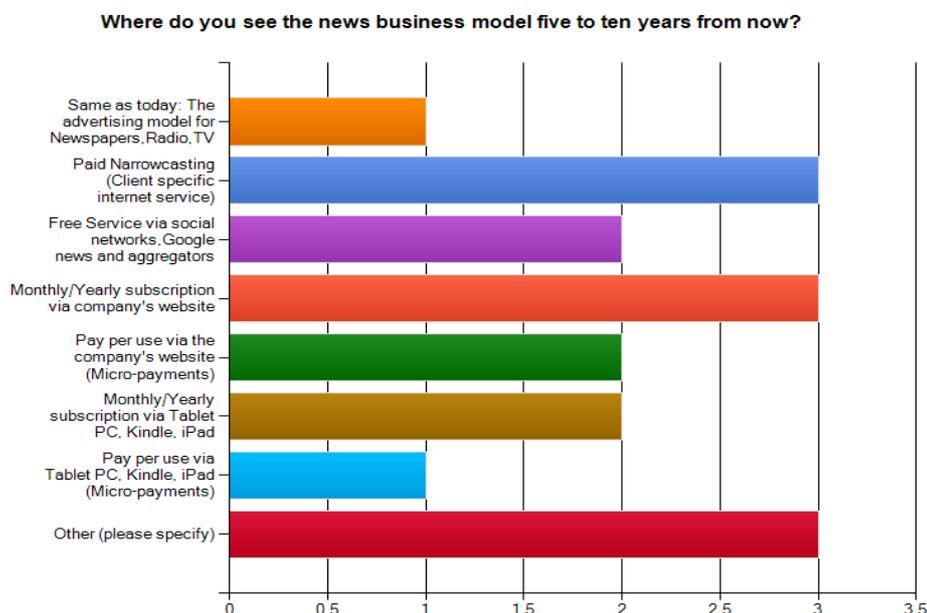
Most respondents agreed that social media help make a journalist’s job better but some hints about caution were given.

“Watch out for inaccurate information, wrong facts or exaggerated versions.” Shailesh Shekhar, Editor in Chief, India Today Group Digital

“Social media help journalists understand what issues people really care about. They are great for networking and for trawling raw information but one must guard against distortions and opinions disguised as fact.” Roberto Coloma, Bureau Chief, Agence France Presse (AFP) Singapore

“Not better. Just inevitable that it (social media) will change things. Journalism will be more transparent and use a wider variety of views but there will be new pressure on journalists to have time to think.” Nic Newman, Future Media and Technology Controller, British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) UK

The final question was about the outlook for the news business. Where do they see the news business model five to ten years from now?



The answers were varied depending on the type of media each company offers. AFP is a news wire agency with a television arm and a website. India Today Group Digital is the web arm of the India Today Media Group which has television and publishing divisions. Antara News Agency is Indonesia’s national news agency and a public corporation with 32 bureaus across the archipelago. It has news wire and television units. Bernama Radio24 is the radio news division of Bernama, Malaysia’s national news agency which also owns a television channel. The BBC or the British Broadcasting Corporation is the largest media organization in the world and headquartered in the UK.

Agence France Presse (Singapore): A hybrid of three modes, namely subscriptions (monthly payments based on yearly contracts), Pay per view (purchasing a-la-carte at higher unit prices than subscription rates) or Ad-revenue sharing.

India Today Group Digital: Monthly or yearly subscription via the company’s website or monthly/yearly subscription via Tablet PC, Kindle or iPad. (Micropayments)

Bernama Radio24 (Malaysia): Paid narrowcasting (client specific service) or free service via social networks, Google news and aggregators or Pay-per-use via the company's website (Micropayments).

Antara News Agency (Indonesia): A combination of business models.

Agence France Presse (North America): A combination of business models.

British Broadcasting Corporation (UK): All of the above. Multiple business models depending on the news organization.

It can be inferred from the respondents' answers that paid content is still part of the plan for news companies despite opposing views that users will not pay for content in the future attributable to the fact that a lot of information can be accessed for free. The respondents' answers however support research findings by media researchers Borrell and Associates which concluded that content charging had re-entered the online agenda.³¹

Academic research is still reluctant to propose a lone business model for online media, but many analysts agree that generating various revenue streams is more appropriate than relying heavily on one.³²

Having more than one source of revenue partially protects online news outlets against market instability or vacillation and allows them more flexibility in reacting to severe shocks (such as the global credit crunch and the resulting financial crisis 2007-2010). The importance of developing multiple revenue streams supports the idea of some form of content charging.³³

³¹ Borrell Associates, "*The Free vs. Paid Debate*", October 2001
http://www.borrellassociates.com/reports?page=shop.product_details&flypage=garden_flypage.tpl&product_id=498&category_id=22

³² Ihlstrom C, Palmer J "*Revenue for Online Newspapers: Owner and User perceptions*", October 2002
<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/rema/2002/00000012/00000004/art00004>

³³ Herbert J, Thurman N, "*Paid Content Strategies for News Websites*", June 2007

5. Journalists Survey on Social Media

Since this paper is also about how journalists are using social media in their work, the survey questionnaire was sent to a journalist group in LinkedIn, a social network for professionals.

The population was defined as working journalists. The survey was also disseminated to 20 journalist contacts via Facebook and 5 journalist contacts via email. The population size of “Journalist and Journalism” group on LinkedIn is 1,946 (as of 8 June 2010). This study will take that population and add the other 25 journalist contacts to make the population size as 1,971.

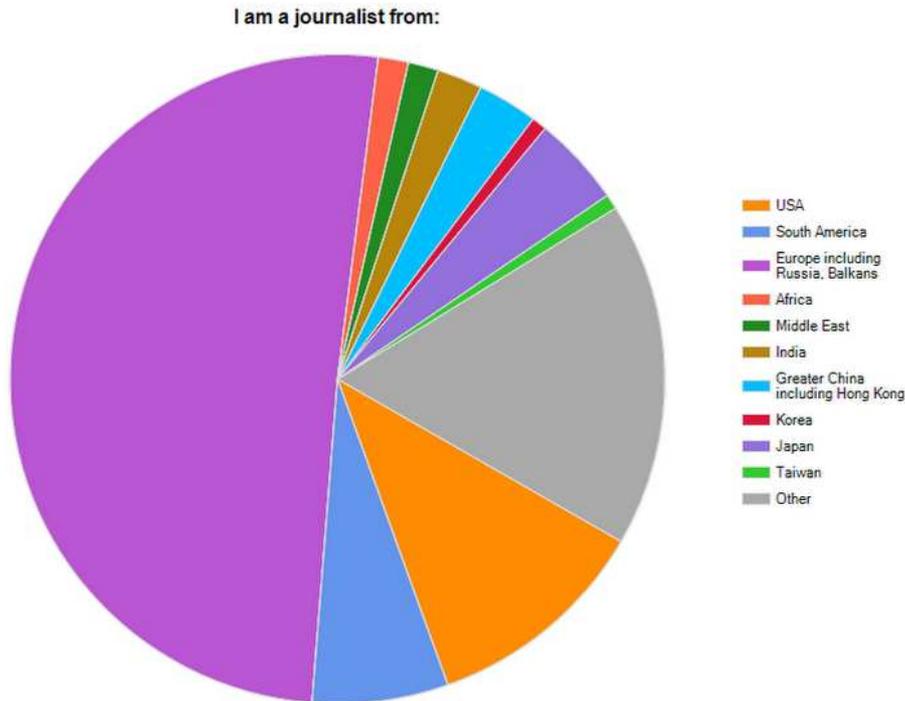
135 responded to the survey, making it the sample size. The sample is nearly 7 percent of the population size. The marketing industry standard for acceptable percentage of survey respondents is 4 percent of the population size. Four percent of the population is 78.56, so our survey was well above the minimum

Upon consultation with experienced marketing professionals who craft surveys, a tight survey design was deemed necessary with a limited number of questions. It was strongly advised to structure questions that will make it easy for working journalists to complete the survey in less than 5 minutes. Consequently, the author only included questions that are geared toward describing the participants and assessing their sentiments on how they use social media in their work

The study period was designated for one month beginning 26 May 2010. Reminders were sent during the time the survey was live. Reminders are a standard part of online surveys.

5.1 Results Analysis

The 135 journalist respondents who completed the survey are from the United States, South America, Europe, China, Middle East, Africa, Japan, India, Southeast Asia and Australia.



There were 15 journalist respondents from the United States, 9 from South America, 68 from Europe, 2 from Africa, 2 from the Middle East, 3 from India, 4 from China, 1 from South Korea, 6 from Japan, 1 from Taiwan and 24 journalists from other geographical locations (specifically 13 Southeast Asia and 11 Australia).

SIGNIFICANT THEMES FROM THE STUDY:

Social Media has affected:

- *The nature of the journalist*
- *The nature of the newsgathering process*
- *The way information is disseminated*

1. Social media has affected the nature of THE JOURNALIST.

Traditional roles (reporter, editor, soundman, cameraman, photographer, photo editor, etc) are morphing together.

“I tweet/blog/podcast/broadcast as part of my full time role with our national public broadcaster and do some freelance MCing [sic] and event hosting on the side. It's all part of a hybrid identity now of

being a radio presenter/producer/docu maker and journalist! It's fun - but busy.” **-Journalist from Australia**

“I think it adds a new fabric in how we do our jobs. It puts the small publications and radio stations on a level playing floor. “

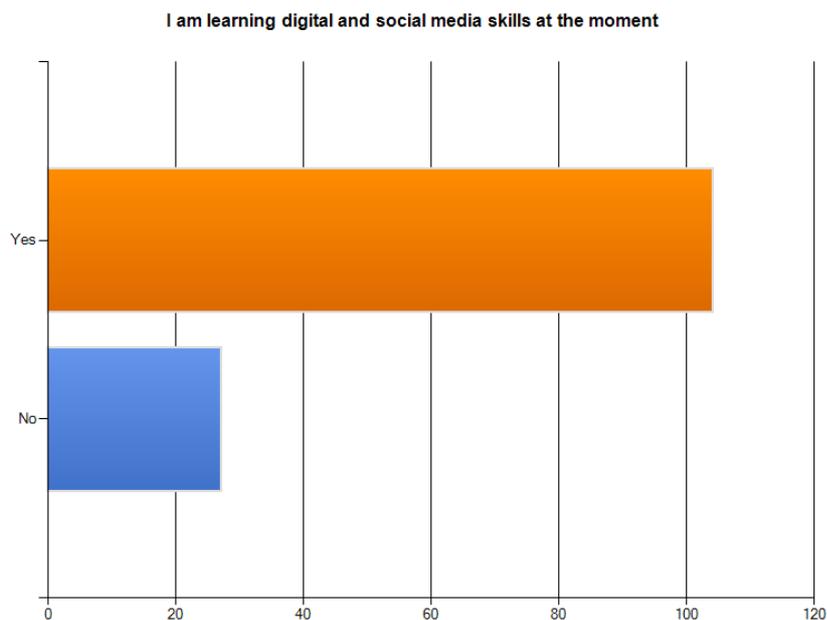
-Reporter from West Virginia, USA

“Journos [sic] have to embrace social media outlets because these are a rich source of potential stories.”

--Freelance journalist in Singapore, a journalist for over a decade

“I 'grew up' as a straight print media journalist - learned my trade on the job (no formal training) on UK national newspapers and magazines. Over the last five years I am seeing that market dwindle, rates drop and opportunities shrink. I do think that the whole industry is having to adapt and adopt online media as part of one's repertoire. I personally do not have any training in multimedia skills and do not use them in my work. Maybe I'm missing a trick! ”

-Freelance journalist in the UK, a journalist for twenty-five years, is on LinkedIn and Twitter

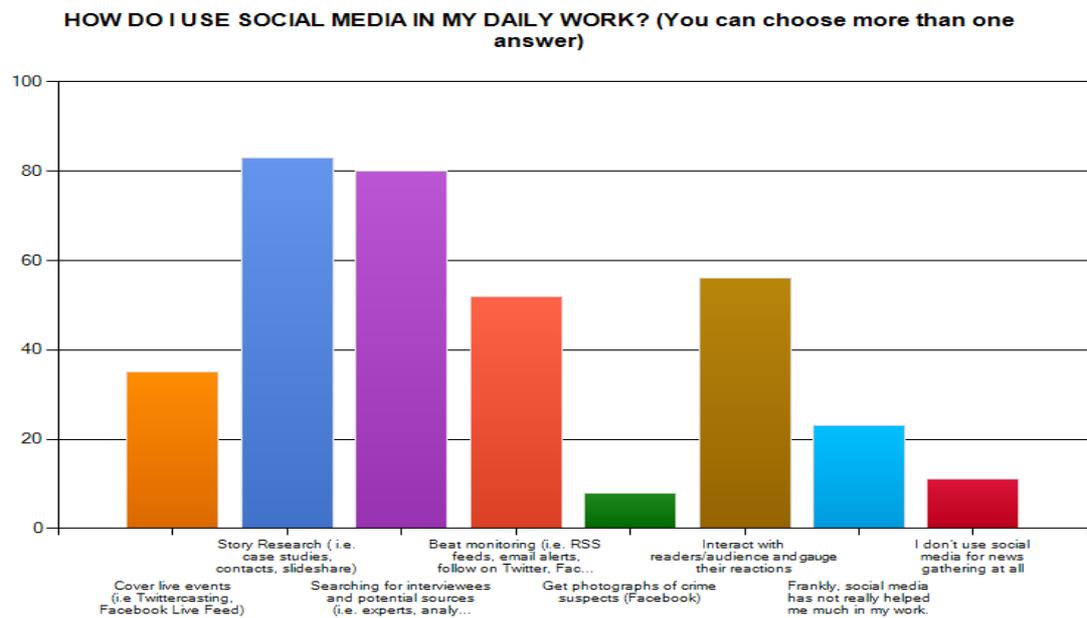


Over 100 respondents admitted to learning digital skills because it's a must now in the industry. Here is one of the views expressed:

“I think it adds a new fabric in how we do our jobs. It puts the small publications and radio stations on a level playing floor.” **- Reporter from West Virginia, USA**

2. Social media has affected the nature of THE NEWSGATHERING PROCESS.

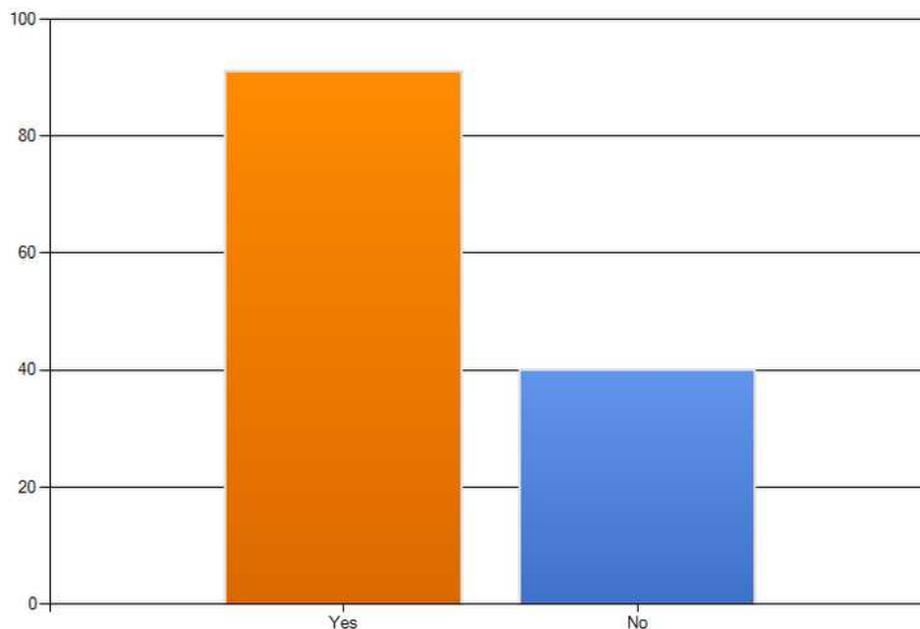
- Getting tips or leads and the changing concept of what scoop or breaking news is
- Beat monitoring
- Getting interviewees for a story
- Journalists as a “filter” for information coming their way
 - journalists must sift through the rubble of cyber noise and verify facts.



3. Social media has affected the way INFORMATION is DISSEMINATED.



If a public figure says something in a Tweet or a Facebook comment, would you consider it a valid quote?



WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

A social media network account is now an accepted extension of a person but ...

"I think it is acceptable to quote directly from a posting in Facebook / Twitter if it is a personal comment or opinion." – Newspaper journalist blogger based in Taiwan

“Part of the journalist' role is to filter information coming their way. It's key to delivering accurate reporting. No true journalist would run with an un-checked story.”- *Singapore journalist*

“I do wonder how it impacts our ability to dig deeper into stories as we might have better in the past without all the demands and distraction of social media.” – *Australian journalist*

5.2 Other views on social media usage in the media industry

Jon Snow, presenter of ITN Channel 4 News in the UK, who has over fifteen thousand followers on Twitter and writes a blog says *“This is the golden age of journalism. Researching for a story has never been easier. We get a lot of information from our viewers.”*³⁴ *“Twitter, in terms of promoting our content, and in terms of attracting journalistic contribution has made a big impact... (Social media offers) interactivity - the general “democratisation” of what we do and audience research and reach.”*³⁵



(Source: <http://twitter.com/jonsnowblog>)

5.3 Chapter Conclusion

This survey is by no means perfect, but it has served its purpose as an attempt to get some semblance of social media usage among journalists from different parts of the world and their sentiment about the digital shift and the impact of social media. Admittedly however, there were certain limitations to the study such as sample population and language barrier.

To have a guarantee that only journalists are participating in the survey, we just concentrated on LinkedIn, the social network for professionals. Each person who has an account on LinkedIn also has a work background profile. Members of a particular group have to apply for entry and can be accepted or rejected by the group creator, after checking the applicant's profile. While this may limit

³⁴ Jon Snow addressing a group of journalists during a visit to ITN Channel 4 Newsroom in London, 03 June 2010

³⁵ Author email interview with Channel 4 presenter Jon Snow, 10 June 2010

the study's sample population, it gives authenticity to the actual participants of the survey who in this case are journalists.

It was noted too, that the survey was somewhat restricted by the fact that it is only available in English. It is therefore a possibility that there could have been more respondents to the survey if it was made available in various languages.

It is therefore suggested that future surveys on this topic should take into consideration language options and the inclusion of other more general social network sites such as Facebook but with precise rules as to the verification of actual participants. This author also suggests that age-stratification be included in future studies so as to identify whether journalists learning digital skills are above or below a certain age bracket.

Despite its limitations, the survey highlighted important features of social media usage—participatory culture and audience engagement.

The author has concluded that in a Web 2.0 world, one can't afford to be a spectator or a mere onlooker. In the social media sphere, one must participate and put oneself out there. Introduce yourself or get introduced, a very social aspect. One must also be ready to answer questions and be willing to face praise or criticism from members of the group. One must also set aside time to check the replies, comments, continue the thread of discussion or "the conversation" and send reminders.

JOURNALIST TREND : THE ONE-MAN BAND

The findings on the survey reveal that journalists are beginning to leverage on social media to receive, gather and distribute news. Some freelancers commented that it is still difficult to get jobs or promote their work through social media, and most still rely on professional and personal contacts. There are also comments from some journalists that classifying journalists as print, broadcast or online will soon be a thing of the past. These days, especially for journalists working in media conglomerates --- they write and produce news stories for the paper, the TV arm, the website or even the radio unit. The digital journalist, a one-man band who carries a video camera that also allows for still photos, a voice recorder for audio clips, notebook for taking notes and sometimes even portable lights just in case the setting is a bit too dark for the cameras.

In Asia, television journalists in Bloomberg carry digital cameras, microphones and lights as they film, write and edit their stories on their laptops. Singapore's Channel News Asia trained its television and radio journalists for desktop video and audio editing as part of its convergence efforts. News presenters blog and the station's programs have Facebook pages. When asked about the main challenges faced by news companies in the age of social media and the changing tastes and habits of audiences, managing director Debra Soon maintains that the priority is still to come up with quality journalism and to go where the audience is. *"Like any enterprise, operating a news channel and producing content need as much entrepreneurial management as solid journalism and production expertise. The main focus is to ensure that we stay commercially viable in the current era, as we continue to enhance the customer experience by improving content and improving and providing*

*more avenues and platforms for viewers, readers, watchers. In short, we have to make sure we have a presence in both traditional and non-traditional media.”*³⁶

In Europe, Italian newspaper Corriere della Serra’s website added *Corriere TV* as part of its efforts to make its website more multimedia. The company also launched its iPad app in May 2010. According to an editor the author spoke with, the company may soon be looking at training its newspaper journalists for multimedia skills. *“The digital Corriere della Sera experience will be enhanced with multimedia content in the form of videos, photo galleries and audio clips to complement the articles by the paper’s journalists. By the end of June, the Corriere app will be in its definitive form and the traditional newspaper will be flanked by a specially designed, iPad-friendly Corriere della Sera.”*³⁷

Media companies are changing with the times. The survey has shown that journalists do realize there is a need for journalists and journalism to transform and evolve along with the changes happening in the technological and cultural scenes. Most of the respondents say they are not worried about making the transition and many of them are already preparing themselves for the digital shift by learning multimedia skills.

³⁶ Author email interview with Channel News Asia managing director Debra Soon, 1 March 2010

³⁷ <http://www.corriere.it/International/english/articoli/2010/05/26/Corriere-debuts-iPad.shtml>

6. The Future of News

Who are the journalists of the future? And, does journalism still matter?

Journalism for its part is not dead but merely evolving and the journalists of the future need to reinvent themselves too. Geneva Overholser of the Annenberg School of Journalism emphasizes the need for journalists to adapt. “Too often, it seems, those of us who’ve been about building community through our journalism seem to assume a kind of “how dare they?” attitude toward those who construct communities through social media. We’ve got to get over that. People are vastly more powerful now as consumers and shapers of news. The less loudly journalists applaud this development, the further behind we’ll be left until we fade to irrelevance.”³⁸

Like it or not, the journalist of the future has to be more technology-savvy as news organizations become more digital-centric.

Many journalism schools are already preparing their students for this certainty. In the UK, Birmingham City University began offering a Master of Arts Degree in Social Media in September 2009, exploring the techniques of social media. Over in the US, Western Kentucky University wants students to be journalist-entrepreneurs and to think more about business. Its new iMedia certificate includes a course in interactive advertising.³⁹

Technology hasn’t changed the need for a compelling story. The story should be well-written, fact-verified and credibly sourced as journalism should be. But digital tools offer new ways to tell the story and web 2.0 provides distribution platforms that are unmatched.⁴⁰ Digital content delivered anytime, anywhere, to anyone on social media networks, television, radio, mobile phone or even tablets is predicted to be the future of news.

What does this mean for journalists? Juan Senor, a partner at Innovation Media Consulting and a Visiting Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism says journalists need to master new skills in the following:⁴¹

- Multimedia (photos, graphics, video)
- Adobe Flash (graphics software)
- Video editing (Adobe premiere, Apple Pro)
- Digital Narratives (Constructing stories with info-graphics)
- Journalists will have to learn to work with an info-graphics team or a news visual design team to reinvent how to tell stories in digital platforms.

THE NEW WORKFLOW

Javier Zarracina, the graphics director of The Boston Globe says “we need a multimedia newsroom to create content for the new formats”⁴² such as the tablets. He also suggested the need for a new workflow in the newsroom whereby a macro editor oversees a team of code developers, web and

³⁸ G. Overholser, “*What is journalism’s place in social media?*”, Nieman Reports, Fall 2009 issue

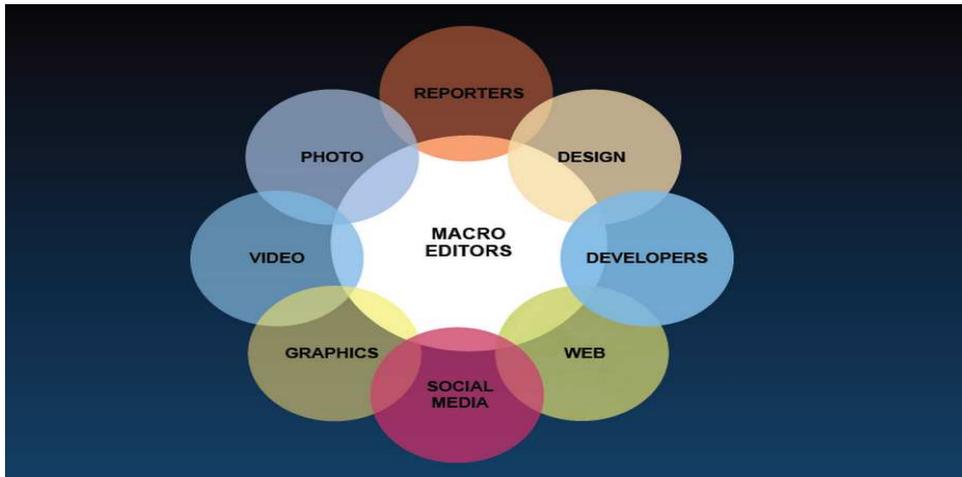
³⁹ M. Skowran, “*Journalism Schools introduce new degrees focused on future*”, Poynter Online, August 2009

⁴⁰ <http://www.wku.edu/pcal/the-imedia-certificate>

⁴¹ Author interview with Juan Senor, 26 March 2010

⁴² Javier Zarracina’s presentation, Oxford Tablet Summit 2010, University of Oxford, 18 May 2010

graphic designers that work alongside the photo editor, video editor, social media editor and the reporter.



“The New Workflow”

(Source: Javier Zarracina, Graphics Director, The Boston Globe)

Here’s a sample of a multimedia project using the **new workflow**. When US Senator Ted Kennedy died of brain cancer in August 2009, the Boston Globe team came up with a **digital narrative** telling the story of Ted Kennedy’s life and times using archive materials, photo album, videos of his speeches, interactive graphics explaining the physiology of malignant brain tumours and a social media page engaging the public to share their memories of Ted. There was a separate story about the privileged and tragic Kennedy family that appeared on the print version of the newspaper.



“Ted Kennedy Project”

(Source: Javier Zarracina, Graphics Director, The Boston Globe)

NEWSROOM OF THE FUTURE : Fully integrated and Multi-platform

If journalists are being required to change for a new and more social media landscape, newsrooms too will have to change accordingly.

There are various interpretations to the concept of a fully integrated newsroom that you can find on the internet. Here’s a design from Innovation Media Consulting.

For the big media companies, it is about reorganizing newsrooms and undergoing a transformation process. While there are many designs you can find on the web, media strategists suggest that the newsroom of the future should include the following elements:⁴³

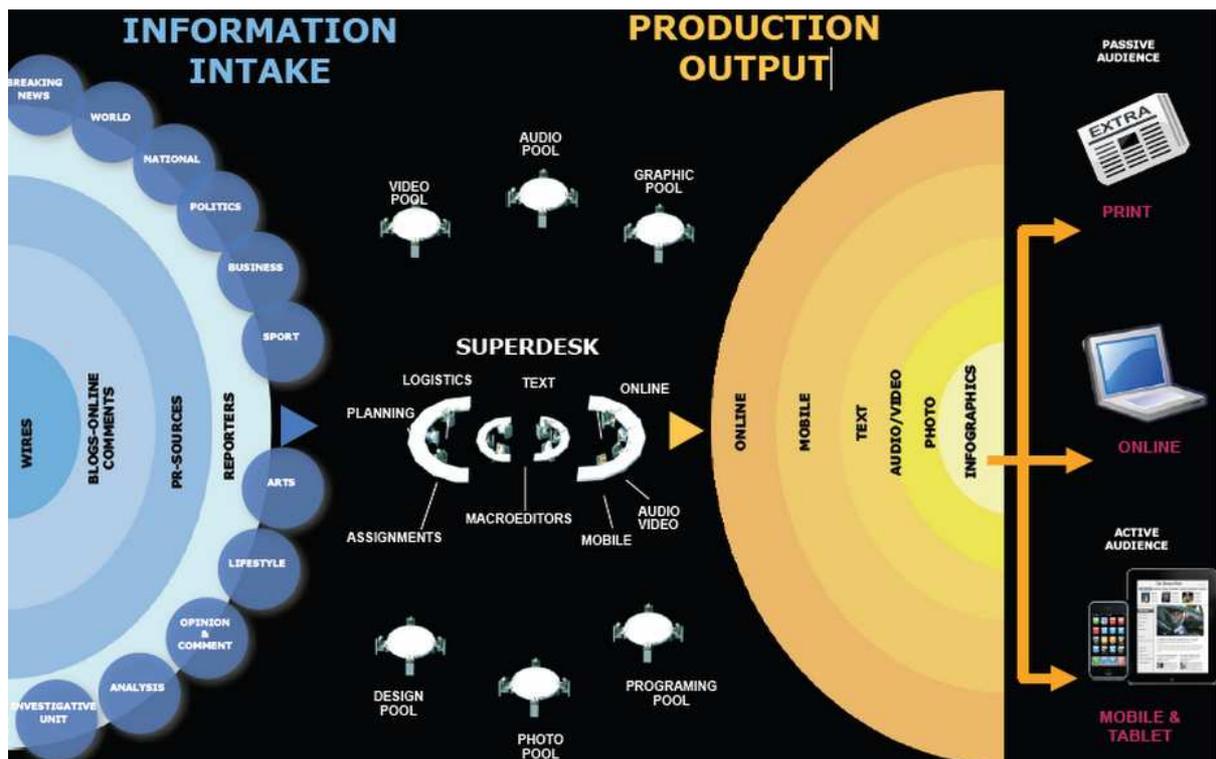
- Sections currently included in the newsroom such as news gathering unit (information intake), news production (output) and graphics unit, etcetera.
- Hub or Super Desk: “the chiefs sit here, where the action is, not hiding in offices. They are visible, accessible and responsible.”
- Graphic Desk: “info graphics and photo desk, located next to the super desk, producing visual journalism where ‘show, don’t tell’ is the norm.”

⁴³ <http://www.fernandosamaniego.com/2009/07/25-tips-for-a-modern-newsroom-1.html>

- Radar Desk: “for monitoring the world via technology focusing on the why and what’s next as opposed to the who, where.”
- Community Desk: “for monitoring, moderating and integrating audience comments, pictures, videos, tips and opinions into every page and section of paper and digital media.”
- Assignment Desk: “planning and assigning resources...; the superdesk relies on the assignment desk to continuously track the whereabouts of reporters, photographers and correspondents and coordinate their schedules.”
- Mini TV/Radio Studios: for news updates; for that 1-minute summary at the closing of the stock market; to interview the local celebrity in radio or video; for video chats and the like.
- Hot Desks: for the contributors and freelancers who need occasional desks as the modern newsroom will maintain a less permanent staff.
- Other Possible Elements: Meeting Rooms, Public Gallery & Conference Rooms, in which city and community events take place next to “their” newsroom; an Innovation Desk to experiment across all platforms and introduce new products; Digital Walls, where live statistics are shown as well as tweets and inputs from users.



“Fully Integrated Newsroom “
 (Source: Innovation Media)



“Multimedia or Multi-platform Newsroom”

(Source: Oxford Tablet Summit 2010)

NEWSROOM OF THE FUTURE (for small players): Crowdsourced, Google Wave savvy, lean staff and social-media ready

A good example of this vision is Penn State University’s campus blog *Onward State*, which rivals the 112-year old campus paper *The Daily Collegian*. *Onward* has constructed a virtual newsroom that collaborates in real-time with Google Wave, outsourced its tip-line to Twitter, and is unashamed about linking to a competitor’s story,⁴⁴ in the way that established news aggregators do.

Google Wave is a real-time communication platform launched in 2009. It’s a free tool on Google and allows for virtual collaboration at no cost to the user. In a single browser tab, the editor in chief has a unique view of the entire newsroom. Editors can toggle between multiple conversations among themselves or throw an idea around despite the staff being in various locations.

GOOGLE AND ITS ROLE IN THE FUTURE OF NEWS

Google has been blamed for killing the news business by siphoning print ad dollars to online ad revenues. But not a lot of people know that since last year Google has been trying to help the industry devise some systems to direct more audience and ultimately more money to news organizations.

In 2009, Google’s engineers and strategists have been collaborating with hundreds of news organizations in the United States from the Associated Press, the Public Broadcasting System, and the New York Times to local television stations and newspapers. The premise of the collaboration

⁴⁴ <http://mashable.com/2010/03/23/future-newsroom/>

with news companies is to engage the audience and make them willing to search for good news stories, trawl through engaging websites and perhaps pay for subscription on one or various platforms.

One of Google's news experiments is *Fast Flip* launched late last year. It is a publisher-friendly alternative user interface for consuming the news "designed to help you flip through news online as fast as you would if you were holding a print magazine or paper." It has web and mobile versions and additional features such as sharing stories via email, story liking and dynamic content.⁴⁵

Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google was quoted as saying "*It's obvious that in five or 10 years, most news will be consumed on an electronic device of some sort. Something that is mobile and personal, with a nice color screen. Imagine an iPod or Kindle smart enough to show you stories that are incremental to a story it showed you yesterday, rather than just repetitive. And it knows who your friends are and what they're reading and think is hot. And it has display advertising with lots of nice color, and more personal and targeted, within the limits of creepiness. And it has a GPS and a radio network and knows what is going on around you. If you think about that, you get to an interesting answer very quickly, involving both subscriptions and ads.*"⁴⁶

6.1 Chapter Conclusion

Web 2.0 technology and in particular social media networks are allowing us to create communities within communities, breach geographical and cultural barriers and level the playing field (somewhat) where anyone is given the chance to express himself and possibly be the next big thing on the web. In this new landscape, social media networks, thanks to the internet and smart devices are now not just simple sites for conversations, exchange of information and playing casual games but also a public space for coordination, mobilization, education, charity fundraising and doing business as well. Since journalism has always been about being vanguards of the community, listening to people, researching facts, giving a venue to a broad range of voices and representing public interest social media networks should be the natural platforms for journalists to gravitate to? Aren't journalists supposed to go where the audience is and participate in community conversations? And if that place is the social media sphere where audiences are personalised, fragmented and diversified, then the answer should be, so be it.

⁴⁵ <http://mashable.com/2009/09/14/google-fast-flip/>

⁴⁶ J. Fallows, "How to Save the News", The Atlantic, June 2010

7. Summary and Conclusion

“We are in the middle of some kind of industrial revolution in the media.”⁴⁷ At the centre of this revolution is the rise of social media and the emerging Tablet PC explosion bringing with them new consumer demands and new ways of newsgathering and news distribution. Naturally, newsrooms are metamorphosing and journalists are transitioning in response to the social, cultural and technological changes happening.

Journalists surveyed confirmed that they are beginning to leverage on social media to gather stories and are using news aggregators and subscribing to RSS feeds and blogs to assist them in their work. Meanwhile, news managers and editors surveyed showed that while Facebook and micro blog Twitter are used for newsgathering especially during breaking news stories, there is still some hesitancy in using social media platforms to distribute content for fear of losing control of the information. But both journalist and editor groups agree, it is inevitable that social media will change things maybe for better or worse but they will surely bring about transparency, accountability and a broader range of voices and viewpoints. Although for the journalist, the tide of change will also bring about pressures on the need for multi-skilling, ability to produce rapidly, having less capacity to reflect, having less time to write beautifully and possibly a shorter period to verify facts.

DOES JOURNALISM STILL MATTER?

Journalism is not dead but merely adapting and the journalists of the future need to reinvent themselves meaning they “need to care about where audiences are and how they are going to reach those audiences”⁴⁸ whether they are online, in print, broadcast, mobile or social media platforms. But it is hoped by industry practitioners that values will be preserved and upheld as “accuracy, proportionality and fairness, as time-honoured journalistic values, are well worth adoption by those conversing through social networks. Useful, too, would be journalism’s emphasis on including a broad range of voices.”⁴⁹

Lindsey Hilsum, international editor of UK’s Channel 4 news says, the new forms of journalism that come about from social media can open new doors for the journalistic craft. *“It means we can get information from corners of the world where previously there was very little. It gives the “voiceless” a chance to speak. It democratizes media and allows viewers, listeners and readers to participate.”*⁵⁰

Meanwhile Richard Sambrook, former Director of Global News at the BBC said social media should not make us forget the value of journalistic credibility -- the value of trusting someone to bear witness to an event. *“Bearing witness is a journalist’s job. This is something technology cannot provide.”*⁵¹

EXCITING TIMES AHEAD

⁴⁷ BBC HardTalk interview with Tina Brown, Editor and co-founder, The Daily Beast, 19 January 2010

⁴⁸ D. Benkoil, “How journalism is getting better”, PBS Mediashift, 15 March 2010

⁴⁹ <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=101882>

⁵⁰ Author email interview with Lindsey Hilsum, International Editor, UK Channel 4 News, 30 May 2010

⁵¹ Richard Sambrook RISJ lecture “The internet and mainstream media”, University of Oxford, 3 February 2010

Good journalism has always been about networking because the best journalists have always listened, conversed and researched.⁵² There is still much to be learned about the social media revolution and we are still in the early days of experimentation.

The changes happening in the news industry brought on by the rapid advances in technology should not be seen as a threat to traditional mass media but instead complementary --- in reaching targeted audiences in a world of personalized media by offering digital narratives and customizable news experiences that allow users to share and participate.

For a long time, the conversation between mainstream media and the audience has been one-way even during the early days of the internet. That was Web 1.0. Then Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube came and all of a sudden the audience can communicate back and give feedback. That's where we are now, in the Web 2.0 phase. In the next ten years we may witness another transition, this time to Web 3.0 or what techies call the semantic web whereby businesses including news organizations can **capitalize on the conversation** because new technology will allow them to better understand and quantify the audience in a multiplatform environment.

By using data mining, custom algorithms, predictive analysis software and intuitive applications or apps --- knowing the audience and their online and social media behavioural pattern will be the basis for future business models of news companies and their online advertisers.

The more time people spend online, the higher the probability that the time spent can be monetized. Web 2.0 technologies will soon pave the way for a Web 3.0 world. Neal Mohan, Google's Vice President of Product Management says *"the online world will be a lot more attuned to who you are and what you care about, and it will be interactive in a way it never has been before."*⁵³

These are challenging but exciting times, as both social media and the journalism practice are undergoing a revolutionary phase. How long? Five years? Ten years? It's anybody's guess. Technological innovations are happening so fast, and the media industry is running to keep pace with them. While these web innovations may be disruptive (for now) as most innovations are, this upheaval is a much needed one --- a cathartic change from which a better news media industry will emerge and new or hybrid forms of journalism will surface.

⁵² C.Beckett, *"Supermedia, saving Journalism so it can save the world"*, Blackwell Publishing 2008 p.46

⁵³ J. Fallows, *"How to Save the News"*, The Atlantic, June 2010

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