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“Is It a Bird? Is It a Plane? No! It’s SuperMedia!”

Networked Journalism

To live up to its billing, Internet journalism has to meet high standards both conceptually and practically: the medium has to be revolutionary, and the journalism has to be good. The quality of Internet journalism is bound to improve over time, especially if more of the virtues of traditional journalism migrate to the Internet. But, although the medium has great capabilities, especially the way it opens out and speeds up the discourse, it is not quite as different from what has gone before as its advocates are saying.

(Nicholas Lemann, 2007)¹

There’s never been a better time, I tell students, to be a journalistic entrepreneur – to invent your own job, to become part of the generation that figures out how to produce and, yes, sell the journalism we desperately need as a society and as citizens of a shrinking planet. The young journalists who are striking out on their own today, experimenting with techniques and business models, will invent what’s coming.

(Dan Gillmor, 2007)²

2.1 Introduction

It seems to me that both the arch-skeptic and the Internet evangelist can be right. In fact, both Nicholas Lemann and Dan Gillmor *have* to be right. If it is to have any value then journalism must retain its core ethics and its vital skills. But if it is to survive then it must adapt. It must go further than that and offer something more. In the previous chapter I set out the structural problems for journalism now and going forward. I have suggested that it

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simply has no alternative but to embrace new business models if it is to thrive over the next period. Not many media people would disagree violently with that. But I have also made the case that the way journalism works will have to change profoundly. In this chapter, I will give the newsroom perspective on these changes. I will put journalism back at the heart of this debate. And I will explore some of the practical, moral, and political challenges it poses.

I want to use the idea of Networked Journalism to describe a way that journalism can change to meet the challenges of the digital era. In later chapters we will look at how Networked Journalism will address the key issues such as politics, terror and development. We will then look at how Networked Journalism can offer creative opportunities for the news media. We will look at the idea of Editorial Diversity and finally the need for greater Media Literacy to sustain Networked Journalism.

But first let me set out what I mean in the wider context of the conceptualization of journalism. This will not be a history of journalism or a survey of the theoretical or sociological literature that has sought to define the term. But to know where we are going it is important that we refer to the past, the present and the ideological debate around the nature of the beast.

First, we need to realize that journalism is not a given. It has changed over time to adopt different forms and procedures. What we have at present in the West – and it is still the Western model that predominates – is a comparatively recent cultural and economic form of the industry. While there are aspects that are grounded in nineteenth-century mass communications, most of the conventions and structures are drawn from the mid to late twentieth century. Journalism is like the motor car with its roots in the late nineteenth century. It was pioneered in the early twentieth, reached its heyday in the late twentieth but is now being questioned. And, like the automobile in the age of global warming, it is being questioned not for its technical performance but because it simply doesn't meet the needs and aspirations of the *coming* age.

Then we will look at what it is like to be an online journalist or a journalist who has to deal with the new realities of multi-platform media. We will take some classic journalistic problems and see how they might change through networked journalism. What impact will Networked Journalism have upon the following:

- the temporal nature of journalism;
- the distance/representation tension;
- the cycle of newsroom sensitivity;

- the role of the audience; and
- trust and authority.

These issues sound almost philosophical but they are the bread and butter of journalism. If the idea of Networked Journalism can't stand up to the daily battering of these practical tests then it is irrelevant.

I am not suggesting that all journalism must be Networked. Much media production will continue to look pretty familiar to a mainstream journalist. Some will remain resolutely apart from connectivity. There will be great differences in the degree to which a particular journalist or news organization is networked depending on the actual story, the market, the national or local circumstances and the resources available. However, my definition does seek to go further than the narrow definition of networked as meaning someone who uses a particular network for a specific journalistic act. There is a larger purpose to the idea of Networked Journalism. It could just be the description of what will happen. It could just be a novel approach to journalism. But I hope that it can be much more than that. Ultimately, I hope it offers a contribution to the reformation of the global public sphere. Networked Journalism is a return to some of the oldest virtues of journalism: connecting with the world beyond the newsroom; listening to people; giving people a voice in the media; responding to what the public tells you in a dialogue. But it has the potential to go further than that in transforming the power relationship between media and the public and reformulating the means of journalistic production.

2.2 Where Does It Come From? The History of Networked Journalism

In the past journalism has been a cult, a fraternity, a guild. Its members have evolved rituals, a language and customs that define their trade and mark out their territory. The literature of journalism is heavy with the claustrophobic culture of the newsroom. From the tribal behavior of the hacks in Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* chasing false leads across Africa³ to Michael Frayn's bathetic soap opera *Towards The End Of The Morning*,⁴ the British media is rightly represented as a cross between a Public School and a Public Bar. And in the US, Hollywood's unerring sense of reality and illusion has captured US journalism's earnest melodrama, eternally enacting a moral pageant through *Citizen Kane*,⁵ *His Girl Friday*⁶ to *All The President's Men*⁷ and *Broadcast News*.⁸

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These are the myths that men cling to when drowning in seas of quotidian compromise. Journalism likes to think it is a superhero when it is really Clark Kent. Proprietors and editors like to hobnob with the great and the good but journalism as a trade is not comfortable with a permanent place at the top table. And yet the fact that journalism is not as institutionally powerful as it might like to think it is has allowed the news media a unique place in politics. This relative autonomy has given it a role and space in society somewhat apart from both the people and other institutions. One of the defining characteristics of journalism is its unstable relationship with authority. On this I am with the British commentator, Simon Jenkins:

The British media does not do responsibility. It does stories. And stories tell better when they are about individuals, not collectives. The media is unconcerned with what people like me find decorous or important. It kicks down doors and exposes the hidden corners of the human condition. It fights competition, plays dirty and disobeys the rules. There is nothing it finds too vulgar or too prurient for its wandering, penetrating lens. The press does not operate with any sense of proportion, judgment or self-restraint because it is selling stories, not running the country. The unshackled and irresponsible press sometimes gets it wrong. But I still prefer it, warts and all, to a shackled and responsible one. (Simon Jenkins, *Journalist*)⁹

This sense of a cultural practice with an internal logic apart from society is core to understanding what we mean by journalism, and how that might change as Networked Journalism.

I take the basic activities of journalism to be to report, analyze, and comment on the world from one to many. Both the producer and consumer recognize the act and the nature of the process as journalism. "Selling stories," in Jenkins' phrase, has been going on for some time. And there is still much in common between early variants and even the most cutting-edge of current practitioners.

It could be argued that seventeenth-century pamphleteers in England were an early form of blogger.¹⁰⁻¹² There was a rapid expansion in the production of printed material of a topical and political nature during the English Civil War and the Interregnum. The public and political elite used it as a weapon in their ideological warfare. These pamphlets were a mix of propaganda and reportage and had an audience that was acutely conscious of the code and language used to make specific and general points. It all sounds very much like a wood-cut version of today's political blogs.

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The Swifitean scribes in the eighteenth-century coffee houses so beloved by Habermas can also be seen as analogous to New Media journalists. They worked in such small geographical and cultural confines that their relationship with their audience permeated every moment of their work, from commission to dissemination.¹³ I do not claim that this period of journalism was some primordial paradise, although it has some pleasing resonances with the idea of Networked Journalism. My point is that historically, what was being produced was recognizably journalism but it was also fundamentally different to what was to come next. Journalism changes. That is very much where we are now. The eighteenth-century topical writer enjoyed a similar contiguity with his readership as that between a blogger and his or her readers, albeit in the Square Mile of Georgian London rather than in cyberspace, one keyboard speaking directly unto another screen. And they had the same loose relationship with classical objectivity that bloggers demonstrate, switching from reportage to propaganda and back again with ease. But they also pioneered the communication of important facts, such as stock market reports, and helped the evolution of political debate through the media, in a way that has definite parallels with contemporary online journalism.

The industrialization of journalism from Dickens¹⁴ time onwards changed that relationship into the commodified structure that underpins mainstream media today. Journalists became 'professionalized' through training, trade association, and specialization. New technology such as the telegraph, trains, and mechanized printing made the mass media possible. A tremendous increase in personal wealth, education and free time meant that there was a mass market for that journalism. Thanks to the genius of entrepreneurs like Lord Northcliffe¹⁵ in Britain and Joseph Pulitzer¹⁶ or William Randolph Hearst¹⁷ in the US the product was "democratized" into an item of mass communications culture. The way it was produced and distributed changed so much that although they were still recognizably news-sheets, they had little else in common with their eighteenth-century forerunners.

Where before it was cliques talking within or between themselves, now the media could claim, with some reason, that it was a national popular conversation. Indeed, great papers like Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* or Pulitzer's *New York World* frequently claimed to speak *for* the people. They certainly appealed *to* the people who bought them in their millions. These organs of mass media production appeared to represent general attitudes and aspirations. Ultimately they were owned by individuals or boards, and they were produced by company employees. Broadcast journalism did very little to change this hierarchical, Fordist construct.

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This type of journalism reached its zenith in the period between 1950 and 1990. It brought an extraordinary variety of journalistic formats and platforms. It has given journalism an almost universal reach, even throughout restrictive or under-developed societies. From the appalling viciousness of the Nazi paper *Der Stürmer*¹⁸ to the campaigning zeal of Cudlipp's *Daily Mirror*¹⁹ to Walter Cronkite's CBS Evening News,²⁰ mass "industrialized" journalism has helped report and influence history. Journalism has become a major global industry and a cultural institution in its own right. And its representations of reality have become integral to the way we mediate our lives and recollect our histories. The exponential growth of public relations in political, commercial, and civic organizations is itself a testimony to the way that journalism is seen as a force in economic and social affairs. This was simply not the case before industrialization and not remotely to this extent until the middle of the twentieth century.

And yet in all this time, journalism was not "networked." Now it can be. What the digital revolution represents is another deep shift in the nature of journalism, at least as momentous as the move from coffee shop to newsroom.

2.3 Networked Journalism – A Definition

Good journalism has always been about networking. The image of the lone reporter piecing together facts through pure observation, like Sherlock Holmes with a deadline, was always a myth. The best journalists have always listened, conversed, and researched. They have always followed stories up and understood the coverage of an event or issue within a wider context. They have adjusted their reporting in response to feedback from colleagues and consumers. But the idea of Networked Journalism takes this in to a new level and in to a new paradigm. This is the definition of Networked Journalism by blogger Jeff Jarvis:

"Networked journalism" takes into account the collaborative nature of journalism now: professionals and amateurs working together to get the real story, linking to each other across brands and old boundaries to share facts, questions, answers, ideas, perspectives. It recognizes the complex relationships that will make news. And it focuses on the process more than the product . . . I believe that the more that journalists behave like citizens, the stronger their journalism will be. In networked journalism, the public can get involved in a story before it is reported, contributing facts, questions, and suggestions. The journalists can rely on the public to help report the story; we'll see more and more

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of that, I trust. The journalists can and should link to other work on the same story, to source material, and perhaps blog posts from the sources. After the story is published – online, in print, wherever – the public can continue to contribute corrections, questions, facts, and perspective. (Jeff Jarvis, media commentator)²¹

This is a pragmatic definition that I accept as far as it goes. As Jarvis himself recognizes, the term has deeper roots in communications theory and analysis. I believe that for Networked Journalism to mean more than just interactivity it must be considered in the much broader context of changing technology and social behavior. This is how one group of communications scholars describe the new flow of ideas:

With the advent of the multimedia Internet, publics can traffic in both professional and personal media in new forms of many-to-many communication that often route around commercial media distribution. Personal media and communications technologies such as telephony, email, text messaging, and everyday photography and journaling are colliding with commercial and mass media such as television, film, and commercial music. (Annenberg Centre for Communication, USC)²²

So where does journalism fit in to this New Media landscape? In principle, I believe that it is difficult to separate it out. That is an important characteristic of Network Journalism. It is very much part of all the other communication that happens digitally. The war between Old and New Media is ending. It is becoming a false distinction. But let us start by trying to look at some of the factors that have changed in the transfer from one to the other, for journalism, before we consider Networked Journalism further.

Here is a list of differences that I will then try to unpack. In each case we can see how New Media technology offers opportunities to tackle problems that journalists labored with under with Old Media. New Media also brings threats and problems of its own. But first I want to explore how these changes can meet the needs of the twenty-first-century media consumer:

<i>Old Media Problems</i>	<i>New Media Solutions</i>
Barriers to entry	Permeable
Unresponsive	Interactive
Crude technology	Infinite technology
Expensive	Cheap
Deadlines	24/7
Single platform	Multiple platforms
Linear	Multi-dimensional

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2.3.1 From barriers to entry to permeability

In the past the journalism industry has had high barriers to entry. By this I don't particularly mean at the individual level. Generally speaking, in terms of recruitment, journalism has always been fairly open to all talents (and sometimes to those with none). Veteran political journalist Andrew Marr notes in his history of journalism²³ how in the modern era there has been a tendency towards graduate-only entry to the business with the expansion of higher education, media studies, and professional training. But in practice a Higher Education degree remains non-compulsory or less of a hurdle in an age of expanded higher education. However, starting a journalism business, especially broadcast or mass media, has until recently been very difficult with a whole series of legal and regulatory obligations. In most countries, until recently, the creation of news media enterprises was regulated largely for political reasons. Broadcasting was especially controlled as a way of rationing limited spectrum width. In a digital age the idea that government would spend its time and taxpayers' money trying to close "pirate" radio stations seems absurd. But for most of broadcasting history in many countries that has been the reality. Despite protestations of support for freedom of expression most societies have made it difficult to create journalism enterprises. The capital costs were relatively high. Apart from the staffing costs and equipment there are the ancillary costs of marketing and distribution systems. It is all relative, of course. I once asked a rural Ugandan radio station what investment they needed to transform their busy but basic output. "Another microphone so that we can conduct interviews and have live debates" they said. Now you can launch a new website with a few clicks of the mouse. That may not be enough to compete immediately with a major media organization. But if you do have an idea and a customer base then the venture or cooperative capital will follow. The obstacles to entry and growth are now much reduced.

2.3.2 From unresponsive to interactive

In the past Old Media was responsive only in terms of sales, viewing figures, and advertising. In other words, it was only concerned with commercial imperatives and secondary contact was highly limited. Apart from the cash-price exchange, direct contact with the consumer was typically through cross-word competitions and letters pages. Now every mainstream media outlet has an email address at the very least. Most have forums where the consumer can comment and many encourage user-generated content. Where before the

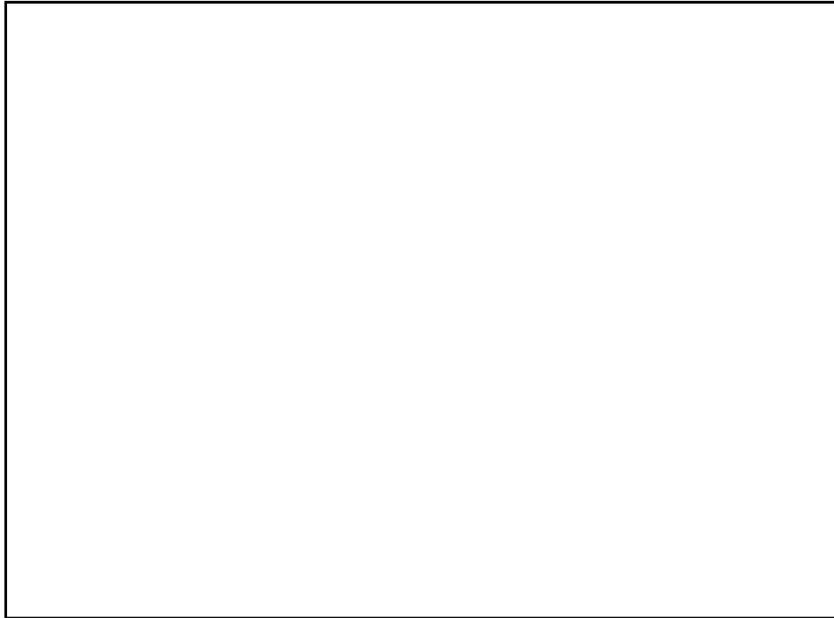


Figure 2.1 The new *Daily Telegraph* newsroom with its “spoke” design to reflect the new reality of multi-platform production

news media produced its goods in glorious isolation, now the consumer can provide information and views that contribute to a network of editorial production. The BBC has its User Generated Content Hub while newspapers like *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Houston Chronicle* have their own online area for hosting reader’s blogs.^{24,25}

This has helped shift the balance of power between the media and the consumer. Where before journalists or editors decided and you listened, the consumer is now becoming an intimate part of the process. When this happens in a positive way then it is Networked Journalism in action. Partly, this is driven by greater commercial sensitivity. Old Media audiences are declining so news organizations have to get much better at measuring what consumers want and then giving it to them. If done in a crude way this can simply mean DVDs handed out free with newspapers or reality TV shows instead of news. A more sophisticated version means creating a tailored output and a raft of different ways of keeping in touch with the customer. Technology now allows consumers to choose their own RSS feeds, to

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channel hop or record an almost infinite variety of digital offerings. The news media organization and the journalist have to chase the consumer. News media organizations now have to recognize the resource that the public offers. Now every time there is a serious incident, media organizations appeal for viewers to send in mobile phone pictures and video. This is the start of Networked Journalism.

2.3.3 From crude technology to infinite technology

Old Media news communication now seems incredibly crude. Imagine a reporter on assignment before the advent of the mobile phone. I remember hunting down phone-boxes to file copy. My colleagues remember waiting for film stock to be developed. In the US the phrase “film at 11” in broadcast news refers to this phenomenon. TV news stations had to develop film for broadcast, and they could not get this done in time for the 6pm news. So anchors on the 6pm bulletin would entice viewers to the later broadcast by promising them “film at 11.” Journalism was physically constrained by technology, distance, and space. There were strict physical limits on the capacity of journalists to transmit information or to package it. Newspaper journalists bashed away on typewriters with duplicating paper that was handed to sub-editors who then passed the copy on to printers who laid out bits of metal to be banged onto sheets of paper by vast heavy machinery. The whole process was laborious and prolonged. Now thanks to better transport, the mobile phone, satellite, digital cameras and digital editing and rapidly increasing server space and broadband speeds, new communications are almost as fast and as big in capacity as the journalist’s ability to fill it. Peer-to-peer interactions allow media organizations to access the server power of all their customers. Of course, there are production limits, but compared to even a decade ago they are far less constraining than the self-imposed limits of deadlines or budgets.

2.3.4 From expensive to cheap media

All that old technology was incredibly expensive. Flying out a reporter to cover a story with a crew is so much more resource intensive than a multi-skilled journalist. The communications costs of transmitting that story have plummeted thanks to optic fibers and silicon chips. Ultimately, what could be cheaper than a website? The reduction in production and transmission costs means that it is easier than ever to spread the product across platforms.

Digital material is easily replicated, reworked and redistributed on to mobile TV, podcasts, and online video. It all means that, dollar per minute, news is getting cheaper.

2.3.5 From deadlines to continuous news

All of the above means that journalists no longer have one deadline to work to. It's not just the 24 hour news channels that work around the clock. Recently, many national daily newspapers have decided to start breaking their own stories on their websites. Understandably, newspapers want to keep editorial value back for their hard copy platform. But in a world of online news and 24 hour news channels there is always the danger of an exclusive being scooped by a rival. Even a journalist working primarily to one outlet and one deadline has to consider contributing to a blog about the work, recording a podcast, or going online to respond to audience questions. "Appointment-to-view" television news shows and newspapers that you buy at a certain time of day will not disappear, but they will find it impossible to stand alone.

2.3.6 From a single platform to multi-platform journalism

The 24/7 journalist now has to service a variety of platforms. This is partly a function of the change-over from Old to New Media. So typically a newspaper will keep printing but will also have a website. It is partly a function of the fragmentation of audiences. As we are able to use a greater variety of communications devices the provider has to put their content onto those platforms. Evidence shows that this is not just a question of "cut and paste." One survey of how people will consume news on mobile phones,²⁶ for example, showed that the material had to be radically different. Video packages that worked online or on TV were physically unwatchable and unattractive on mobile TV. At the same time there is the Holy Grail of convergent technology. This can be exaggerated. Certainly it makes sense for a computer and a TV to do the same things, but I do not foresee a single-device world any time soon. People are increasingly enjoying the differentiation that separate platforms provide. Journalism has to show the creativity to cross technological boundaries in a way that plays to the consumer's enjoyment and employment of differentiated functionality. Networked Journalism is the way to exploit that increased connectivity.

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2.3.7 From linear to multi-dimensional news

“Linear” has a variety of meanings²⁷ in news media terms. In the context of production it means the media organization starting with a story idea and going through a linear process of putting research, material, and presentation together to create a product. In consumption terms it means the idea that the viewer or reader will start at the beginning of that product and go through to the end. New Media means that where stories were static before, now they are multi-dimensional. They are now a process rather than a product. They have a different character depending on which platform they are on. And yet they may be created by the same person in all those forms. Where, before, the public consumed passively, now it can intervene *at any stage* of the process. Multi-dimensional Networked Journalism will deliberately engage with the public at all stages. It will invite contributions to the editorial selection process, to news gathering and to reworking the product according to audience responses. The public will help choose, research, produce, and disseminate the journalism.

2.4 What Networked Journalism Looks Like

So that is how New Media journalism is different from the past. Networked Journalism exploits those new conditions. Networked Journalism is about working with the grain of New Media. But there is more to it than that. It is about the journalist becoming the facilitator rather than gatekeeper. But that is just to view it as a production process and from the news media point of view. Increasingly in the New Media world we have to understand that the public is using this information and relating to it in ways that we are only just starting to map, let alone understand or explore. At this point we are entering the territory of the “imagers,”²⁸ the people who are trying to understand how our use of new technology will change the way we communicate. This isn’t science fiction, as it often draws upon existing models. As *Daily Telegraph* technology blogger Shane Richmond points out:

Social networking, as well as being fun, addictive, diverting and so on, meets a basic human need: it allows us to feel part of something. The challenge at the moment is ensuring that people stay with your platform, rather than moving on when the next fad comes along. It’s not a challenge that news providers can avoid either. Young people are increasingly getting their news

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from within social networks. (Newsflash: they always did, it's just that we didn't label *offline* social networks.) In the past, those people eventually found their way to newspapers and print media. What about in the future? (Shane Richmond, *Daily Telegraph*)²⁹

The Networked Journalist has to become comfortable with the idea of this social networking. The way that individuals form small communities online, and at the same time have access to a much wider group, is very much an echo of the way that people used to relate to old media. In the past we shared our experience of news by talking about what we had read in the newspaper or seen on TV. Now increasingly people will do that online and the best news producer will have to become attractive to social networkers. They will also have to become a social networker themselves. This means doing things like the *Daily Telegraph* has done with *My Telegraph*³⁰ where it provides very easy and attractive weblog hosting with a ready-made community of bloggers and blog-readers attracted by the *Telegraph* brand and by its wider editorial input. And the *Telegraph* itself has become a blogger with its mix of newsroom commentary and news reporting on its newsroom blog. Beyond blogging, however, the Networked Journalist has to find new ways of intervening in or creating a wider range of social communication networks.

Something as simple as the comments posted on a *Facebook* profile wall have validity as crowd-sourcing mechanism. Have a look at the sites set up by US Presidential candidates and it is possible to see a flow of interesting (as well as fatuous) comment from young people, a group notoriously hard to reach by conventional media. Networked Journalists have to be aware of the potential resource this kind of platform offers, both in terms of information gathering, but also in building a consumer community.

The journalist's job will be to ensure every opportunity to have "amateur" input at every stage of the process. There is no reason why the public can't contribute, they are doing it already. RSS feeds allow us all to select which data we want to import directly, for example. Links and email allow the public to "edit" information by selecting and referring on bits of information. And as *YouTube* and any number of online video sites testify, the public is perfectly capable of using cheap and easy recording equipment and software to package and broadcast their own information. Of course, we may have to apply the 1 percent rule that Professor Jay Rosen of New York University uses for citizen journalism. Only 1 percent is of a high quality, 10 percent is acceptable and the rest is poor or banal. But it can all contribute to Networked Journalism.

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This is already happening. Look at the way that the public used mobile phones to capture images of the demonstrations in Burma in late 2007. Some were posted on personal blogs but many more were sent to news organizations which couldn't get their own staff to the protest locations. They were not the same as a journalist sending a report. It meant that the news organization had to be conscious of the partiality of the people sending the material and the difficulties of establishing provenance. Much of it was out of focus or grainy. But does anyone doubt for one second that the citizen journalism from Burma enhanced our understanding of what was happening?

Another example of imaginative and effective engagement with the public was demonstrated by the Florida newspaper, *The Fort Myers News Press*. It is a great example of what is called "crowd-sourcing," exploiting the public as a journalistic resource. After Hurricane Katrina *The Press* took legal action against the US Federal Emergency Management Agency, (FEMA), to obtain all the data on relief payments to local citizens. It generated a massive data-set which the newspaper put online. It then asked its readers to comb through the information. Within 24 hours 60,000 searches were made. These produced hundreds of stories for journalists to follow up of anomalies in relief payments. Neither the journalists nor the citizens could have achieved that editorial output on their own. It was a tremendous example of Networked Journalism in action. These are all great individual instances of innovative connectivity. But I believe they can add up to something that offers a much more substantial benefit to the news media.

2.4.1 The networked newsroom

In Chapter 5 I will look at the way that networked means editorial production and training will have to change. But as part of the definition of this more connected or "distributed" journalism I want to imagine a different kind of "newsroom." Of course, the idea of a newsroom as a physical place becomes increasingly redundant. As news organizations go online they have moved their desks around to reflect the change in production methods but the shift from linear to multi-dimensional goes further than that. I want to avoid the mistake of replacing one set of models for another, so what follows may be schematic but it is not prescriptive. And while what I will describe appears to be complex, we must always remember that topical news journalism, in general, and breaking news in particular demands simplicity, speed, and executive expediency. Sometimes the Networked Journalist will have to cut to the chase. Not all the elements I will describe will happen

all the time. In my attempt to give some sort of conceptual structure to this process I am indebted to the work of Birmingham City University's Paul Bradshaw and his "Model For A 21st Century Newsroom" at his website, *Onlinejournalismblog.com*.

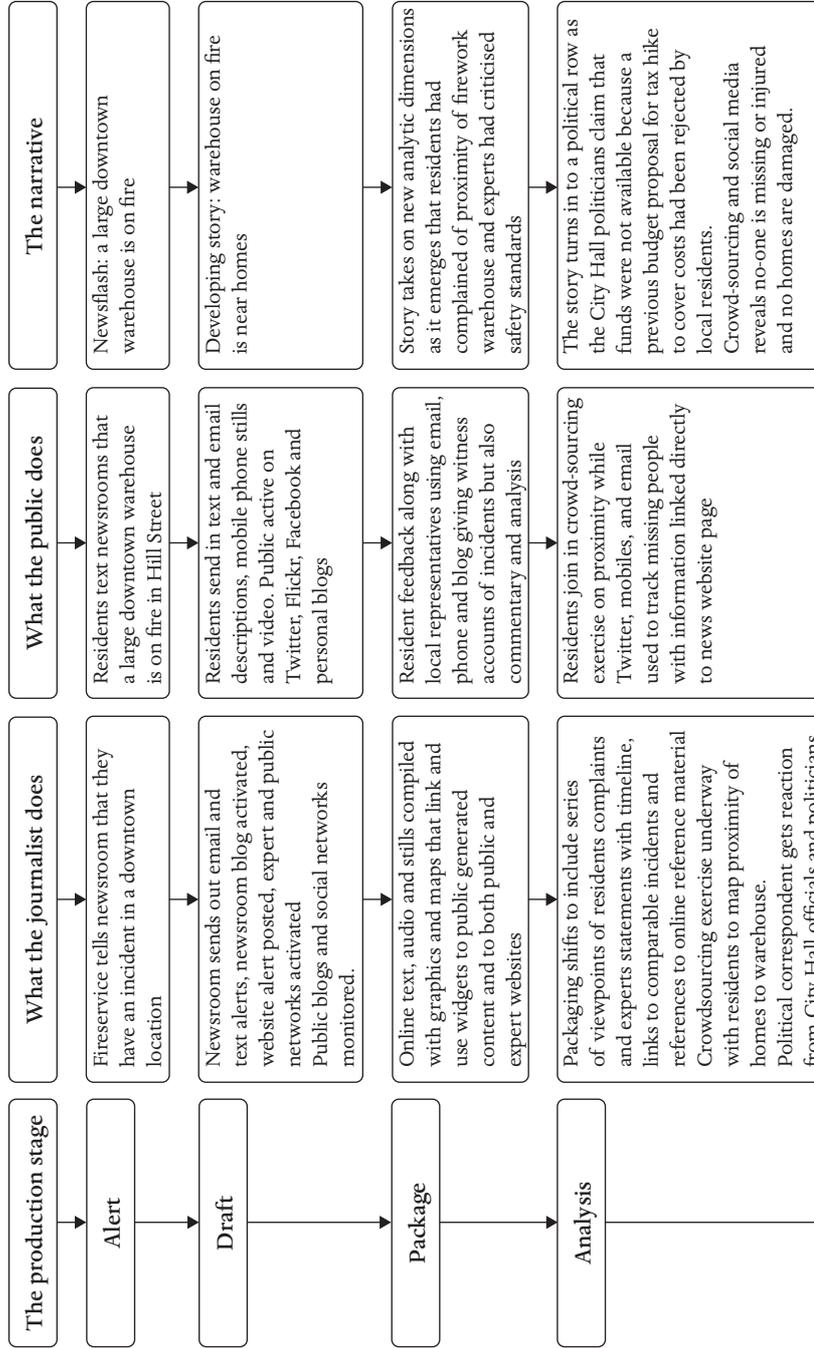
2.4.2 The warehouse fire – Networked Journalism in action

In the following simple example I show how a variety of new media technologies can work alongside traditional reporting (see Figure 2.1). We take a city newspaper which has full online facilities and see how it responds to a warehouse fire. What is different about this networked piece of journalism is that it is continually subject to public input from the moment the story originates to its aftermath days and weeks later. With this practical event-based piece of journalism there is a degree of complexity, but the processes are all directed towards fast and focused news gathering and reporting. It does not include other elements of potential networked input such as the audience contributing to story selection. It takes us through the different stages of a story, which in practice will not be clear cut. It moves from the Alert, to early Draft versions which are little more than newsflashes, to more sophisticated Packages of information. Then as the facts emerge the story takes on Analysis and finally Consolidation and Interactivity. Beyond that the story continues as a longer-term issue and a prolonged conversation between experts, residents, and politicians mediated in part by the journalists.

Of course, real stories do not fit so easily in to such diagrammatic form. But what is important to note is the high degree of communication between the journalist and public. And this is not just in terms of information. As the story is "published" it is made up of public-generated material put up in relatively unmediated fashion. This means that the story is not stable. The first impression of a straight-forward incident develops in to another story about risk which in turn is challenged as more people join the narrative's network. It is the journalist's job as a facilitator to bring the participants in to the network, not to act as a gatekeeper to guard the media version of reality.

2.4.3 Networked sourcing

The Networked Journalist will continue to have "conventional" sources such as other media, agencies, public relations, and government. But increasingly



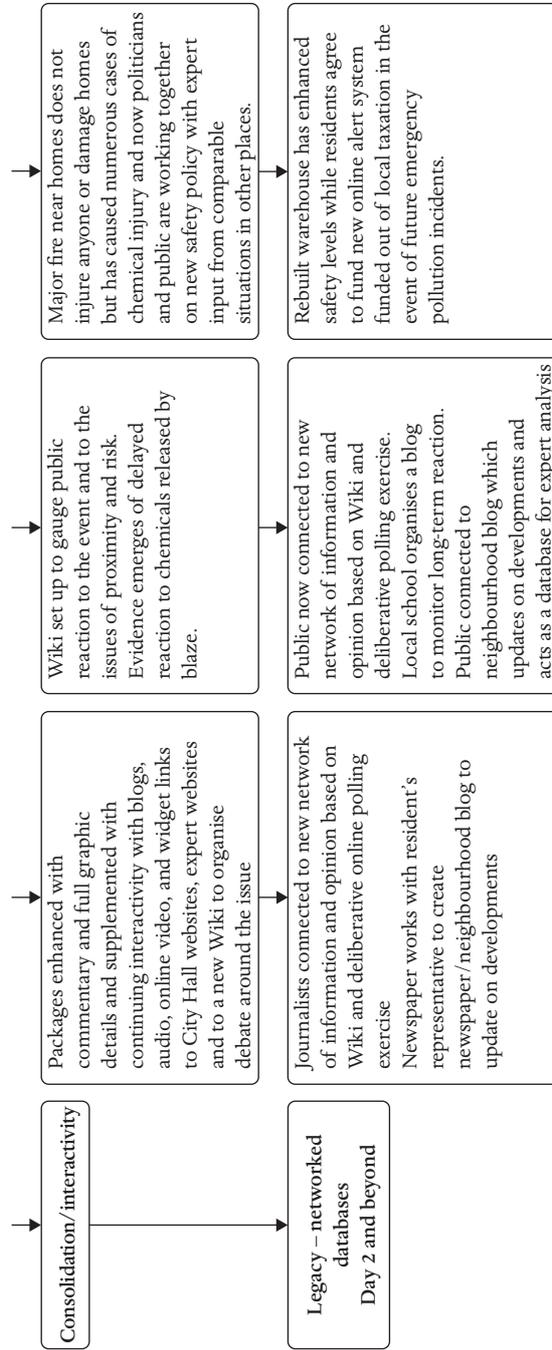


Figure 2.2 A Networked Journalism narrative – a warehouse fire

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they will benefit from what their communities of interest are able to contribute. Instead of occasional forays in to the public sphere they will be intimately connected to that network on a perpetual basis. In this world the Networked Journalist will be doing all those online things. They will be connected to RSS feeds, members of social networking sites, interacting with other blogs, linking different parts of their network to each other. But as journalists they will also have the skills to reach out to the offline world and engage with the parts of society that were ignored by conventional media. The point of the *Fort Meyers Press* example given above is that while it exploited a network of online citizens to enhance its journalism it also reached out to a lot of people beyond the digital network.

And what comes “after” the story is nearly as important as its sourcing and production. The continuous relationship between the journalist and the public is what is going to sustain Networked Journalism as a community and, therefore, as a business model. So that means that every piece of editorial must be lodged in a structure that can perpetuate its value. It will be inserted in to social networking sites. It will be properly annotated so that anyone using tagging and bookmarking will come across it. It will be linked to the relevant subject databases and digital mapping systems. And at each point it will offer anyone using that data a route back in to the journalistic network. By referencing or linking back it retains the value and builds the community of interest.

So that is what Networked Journalism looks like. I think it is a credible series of possible models. It is not the only form that journalism will take, but as way of working it offers a practical and creative approach to journalism in the new media environment. It is also a valid response to the current challenge to the deeper problems facing journalism. Let us now examine how a more connected form of news gathering and distribution could address some of the systematic and constituent problems that face any form of news mediation but especially at this moment in history.

2.5 How Networked Journalism Can Save the Media

We have already described above how New Media technologies are providing Networked answers to journalism’s limitations in terms of process, the way that journalism works. We have seen what Networked Journalism looks like in principle and practice. In Chapters 3 and 4 we will address

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how Networked Journalism might improve journalism in practice in specific subject areas. Then in Chapter 5 I will give some training, education, and production ideas for fostering its development. But first of all let us see how New Media technologies and a more networked journalism can address some deeper editorial problems. These are the eternal quandaries of journalism, but they are made more acute by today's increased pressures of economic and social change. I would label them as the problems of *trust*, *time*, *place*, *humanity*, and *audience*:

- How do we keep public trust?
- How can we tell stories with accuracy and context when we only have a limited time to gather information and publish it?
- How do we connect people in different places?
- How do we put humanity at the heart of journalism?
- How do we retain the audience's attention?

2.5.1 The problem of authority and trust

So how can Networked Journalism address the crisis in authority that threatens the news media? Journalism is utterly pointless if it is not trusted. If the information is not believed then it becomes something else: fiction, polemic, or propaganda. In the digital era the Internet will provide vast amounts of communication and informational data and activity. But if it is not trusted then it is not news journalism.

This is not to say that traditional journalism has a history of being greatly trusted either. One of the fundamental reasons that I am so passionately committed to finding new ways of producing news is because I realize that journalism is subject to increasing skepticism and cynicism. Along with politicians and most authority figures and institutions, journalism is questioned to a greater degree than ever before. I welcome that. Too often in the past journalism has been partial, inaccurate, and downright false. It has been arrogant and complacent. A questioning approach by journalists is a job requirement, but the disdain for their subject and audience that some in the media have shown in the past is a disaster for its long-term credibility.

There are "good" and "bad" reasons for this. Journalism has always been subject to the limits of time and resources. It gets things wrong because the full facts have not always emerged. In the phrase of 24 Hour News channels: "Never wrong for long!" But there have been other, less acceptable pressures on Old Media journalism.

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Journalism has to make money or provide value. Even where it is supported by subsidy, it still needs ratings to justify its existence. This competitive drive means that all journalists construct their work to maximize what Tony Blair decried as “impact.”³¹ There is clearly pressure from advertisers to maximize audiences, which means that popular subjects and treatments will always be more attractive to management. Many privately owned media organizations have owners who frame the agenda of their companies. This does not mean that they bestride the newsroom like Charles Foster Kane.³² But inevitably the world view of a proprietor or major shareholder will be a factor in the editorial considerations of their staff. News organizations have political characters, as well. Until recently broadcasters tended towards centrist views or were balanced by regulation. Of course, “centrist” can mean becoming a lackey of the state. This was demonstrated by the BBC when Reith helped deceive the nation during the British General Strike of 1926.³³ There are plenty of organizations who believe that mainstream broadcasters continue to show an institutional bias. While the TV Networks in the US are accused of being corporate stooges, the BBC is seen as a liberal conspiracy.³⁴ Many media organizations are very political. They campaign on specific issues, back political parties and hold to explicit or covert ideological positions. Media organizations also have a cultural bias which means that they can get stories out of proportion or perspective. It wasn’t just the White House that was slow to realize the human disaster that Hurricane Katrina brought to New Orleans. US news organizations, dominated by middle class metropolitan managers driven by Washington or West Coast agendas were also slow to realize that this massive and iconic story was happening and what it said about contemporary America. As Pulitzer-prize winning writer David Shipler wrote, this was a structural failure in US journalism, not a one-off mistake:

There is no more telling indictment of reporters and editors than the surprise felt by most Americans in seeing the raw poverty among New Orleans residents after Hurricane Katrina. In an open society, nobody who had been watching television or reading newspapers should have been surprised by what Katrina “revealed” to use the word so widely uttered in the aftermath. The fissures of race and class should be “revealed” every day by the US’s free press. Why aren’t they? (David Shipler)³⁵

As Shipler writes, it is very often what the media fails to report that undermines its authority, as much as when it gets things wrong.

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Finally, the way that we do Old Media journalism sometimes just isn't up to the job. When issues get complex, journalism often fails. In the build-up to the war in Iraq, I do not believe that the media in any country really got to grips with what was happening, what we were being told, and the Intelligence that was provided. This is not a political point. Whatever you think about the virtues of going to war, the public were not well served by journalists who failed to give them all sides of the debate and all the facts.³⁶ Some of the reasons for this were about the media itself. The news media, and television in particular, are very suited to war because it produces a dramatic narrative and compelling imagery. There was a particular political situation post 9/11 that meant the western media especially were much less critical than it should have been about the Bush administration's policy in its so-called "War on Terror." Others would argue³⁷ that there is a more fundamental long-term problem with mainstream media in that it is too subject to "group-think." This is the herd mentality which means the news media allows itself to follow an agenda which is too easily framed by the authorities. In the chapter on Editorial Diversity I will deal with these issues in more detail, but for now I hope I have made it clear that Old Media journalism has no monopoly on authority, no unsullied reputation for telling the unvarnished truth.

We must be careful not to follow fashionable cynicism in dismissing the public's trust in journalism per se. If you look at the figures it seems clear that the numbers are on the way down. They are also medium specific. People declare a higher degree of trust in TV newsreaders but don't seem to believe what they read in the newspapers. They find public service organizations such as the BBC and American NPR more credible than their commercial rivals, although even the most respected are treated with more suspicion than in the past. Generally, they put journalists in the same snake-like category of trust as politicians and real estate agents.³⁷⁻⁴²

But before we assume that journalists are all seen as pathological liars, we have to put this in a historical and social context. First, we should recognize that despite the fashion for cynicism, the trust percentages for some mainstream media can be reasonably high. While people claim not to believe the media, they do seem to share the media's views quite closely and recycle the media's versions of events. In this respect I would say that the public are not skeptical enough. But if we do accept that there has been a relative decline in trust we have to ask who is at fault. I have already outlined some of the fundamental flaws with mainstream media but that is not the whole picture. When one looks at the loss of trust in politics, for example, I do not blame

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the media to the degree that John Lloyd⁴³ or Lanny Davis⁴⁴ do. With the increase in Higher Education and the privatization of so many functions to individuals, the public has much higher expectations of politics and much greater personal investment in the economy than before. Politicians encourage us to aspire. In contrast, the media constantly reminds us that politicians are human and that the world is not perfect. Contrasted with our desires, this is bound to lead to disappointment. When asked in a public opinion survey whether this means you have lost trust, it is easy to blame the messenger. Now if that sounds complacent, then you are right. There is no way that either politicians or the media can or should accept this even if there are “reasons” for it. But they should not blame each other; that is a zero sum game. They should both put their houses in order. Journalism has to justify itself and it must change to do so. To be sure, there must be wider social changes if we are to rebuild trust in politics, but the media can begin by acting with greater humility, self-awareness and the assertion of the more positive values it claims to uphold. Networked Journalism can help the news media address the crisis of trust in journalism as a way of re-building its relevance and authority. By sharing the process with the public it offers a new relationship of greater transparency and responsibility. Its primary function is still to chase the stories that dominate our public agendas, but stories that are more honestly told. And by involving the public it also forces the consumer to take responsibility for their part in the news media market.

2.5.2 How Networked Journalism can rebuild trust

One of the defenses of the Old Media approach to journalism was that by separating out the producer from the public you inculcate a sense of objectivity. This would be reciprocated by trust from the public. Networked Journalism does not mean sweeping away those ideals. I do not think that striving for fairness, accuracy, and thoroughness is inhibited by sharing the process with the former audience. In fact, I am sure that it can strengthen it. What is objectivity anyway? In the mainstream news media it is continually compromised by the pressures of commercialism, competition, and cultural bias, even among the most honorable and self-aware journalists. Without delving too far into philosophical theory it is clear that objectivity is relative. It depends on the prevailing political norms. It is constructed socially. So what makes journalists think that they have a unique insight in to its essential nature? Well, quite rightly, it is because journalists have the experience and skills to strive towards objectivity. They have editing ability. In other

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words they are relatively proficient at judging sources, evaluating competing arguments and representing a version of reality. But Networked Journalism can make them much better at it.

Citizen journalists or amateurs are often able to claim the high-ground on trust. Generally, they are doing it for a good motive – they believe in what they are doing or they are enthusiasts. They are not usually in it for the money. And they are part of a community – often quite a small, self-regulating community – that polices itself. Some, like the British political blogger “Guido Fawkes,”⁴⁵ have tried to remain apart from scrutiny with limited success. But on the whole bloggers have gone a long way to try to be transparent and ethical. This is not the same as being objective or accurate, but it is a strong claim to greater accountability than mainstream media. The bloggers online currency is their trustworthiness and the other bloggers are ferocious at maintaining its values. The untrustworthy or irrelevant blogger tends to be ignored. It seems to me that bloggers don’t want to replace mainstream media, but they are an alternative. In turn, the more creative professional journalists want to use citizen journalists – almost as if they are creating embeds in the real world. There are practical and principled grounds for cooperation.

Take the case of the faked Reuters photograph of an Israeli shell hitting Beirut during the 2006 conflict with Hezbollah. A freelance photographer had enhanced a picture of the city’s skyline by adding more plumes of black smoke. It was a pretty crude *Photoshop* procedure but it wasn’t spotted by the normal Reuters editorial checks. It took a journalism watchdog website called *Little Green Footballs*⁴⁶ to highlight the mistake. Reuters responded by pulling the photo, suspending the photographer and reviewing and then publishing their policy of the processing of photographs. It was a short-term blow to their prestige but a learning experience which they embraced. Reuters made it clear that they welcome correction like this because they recognized that it can only enhance their reputation for trustworthy reportage. *Little Green Footballs* is a right-wing website with some particular political obsessions. I would always go to Reuters rather than *LGF* for my news. But networked together they make for a more objective news process. Reuters and other news media should be building in this kind of outsider oversight into their production processes.

The *Washington Post* is another media organization which is attempting to take New Media seriously. Although, like Reuters, it is not diving all the way in yet. It has now published ten commandments, or rather “principles,” for its web journalism.⁴⁷ In it they make some unexceptional assertions:

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“Accuracy, fairness and transparency are as important online as on the printed page. *Post* journalism in either medium should meet those standards.” But they also make a firm decision to put their quality journalism online: “We will publish most scoops and other exclusives when they are ready, which often will be online.” And they recognize that the online medium is different in style and substance: “We recognize and support the central role of opinion, personality and reader-generated content on the Web . . . We embrace chats, blogs and multimedia presentations as contributions to our journalism.” And they recognize that this is going to mean changing the habits of a lifetime in the practical daily routines: “The newsroom will respond to the rhythms of the Web as ably and responsibly as we do to the rhythms of the printed newspaper. Our deadline schedules, newsroom structures and forms of journalism will evolve to meet the possibilities of the Web.”

It all builds up to a rallying cry for any news organization facing up to the implications of the digital era. They appreciate that it is about more than creating a website alongside the newspaper – the two have to become one: “Publishing our journalism on the Web should make us more open to change what we publish in the printed newspaper. There is no meaningful division at *The Post* between ‘old media’ and ‘new media.’”

But as blogger Jeff Jarvis has pointed out, this doesn’t really mention the “former audience.” *The Post* is still seeing the public as an adjunct to its work rather than an integral part of it:

To me, they leave out a vital 11th principle: They should be committed to working in new and collaborative ways with the people formerly known as readers. They should be recasting their relationship – and institution’s and each journalist’s relationship – with the community. (Jeff Jarvis, *Media Commentator*)⁴⁸

To be fair to the *Post*, the memo that contained the ten principles also recognized that they are not on tablets of stone and that the paper has to keep an open mind about the future: “We must continue to evolve the content and forms of journalism that we publish in the printed newspaper, partly in response to and inspired by journalistic evolution on the Web.”⁴⁹

But when the memo then talks about how they are going to go out and search for their fragmenting audience *The Post* turns not to bloggers or wikis but to a group of internal practitioners. The ultimate irony is that rather than shout about their principles from the rooftops they were leaked – by a journalism website. In truth, the ten principles may be more about the

internal politics of the *Post* where the paper and online divisions need this kind of road map to peaceful coexistence.

All media organizations should publish codes like this. Not because they need to solidify policy, but to enhance institutional commitment and to send out a message to their audience that they are now welcome in the newsroom. This would be a significant step forward to creating a better relationship of trust.

2.5.3 Journalism and temporality

Journalism is topical. It is about telling people something as quickly as you can. Everything else is history. The temporal nature of journalism means that deadlines and physical limits impose a restriction on how journalists work and what they can produce. We have seen how New Media means that these restrictions are being relaxed. Now journalism becomes a non-linear, multi-dimensional process. Networked Journalism embraces that potential and builds it in to the whole system.

New Media allows the Networked Journalist to draw upon multiple sources. Internet search is the basic tool, but there is a whole range of links and feeds, tagging, and email alerts that can cast the net wider. Reuters has now set up a partnership with the blogging network *Global Voices*.⁵⁰ This allows Reuters to draw upon a world-wide network of bloggers who can add personal perspectives. Reuters also hope that they become an editorial resource feeding in to their own coverage. At the time of writing there were no plans to pay them, however. Reuters Foundation has also created Alertnet,⁵¹ an emergency news mapping tool which gives information on everything from storms to wars to pandemics across the globe. This is multi-dimensional sourcing in action compared to the old ticker-tape or news-feed model where periodic updates of pre-selected material were the only ingredients for news production.

The Networked Journalist can still have a deadline. The discipline of a target time remains a useful motivational tool. And consumers will still want to know what stage a piece of journalism has reached. There will continue to be newspapers and TV news shows that are “appointment to view.” But generally, the journalism will have two new temporal dimensions. First, it will become active immediately when the Networked Journalist begins work. From the moment of the commission there is no reason why the journalist should not “go public.” This is in effect what the conventional journalist does by talking to experts or contacts. Increasingly, it will be a

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blogger, for example, who contacts a “professional” journalist to activate a story process. The journalist will be the facilitator who alerts a network about the emergence of the story and begins a process of building, testing, and linking the information. This is already happening with political blogs in the UK, where journalists often run stories through the bloggers to see who reacts. And bloggers will take stories from the mainstream press and dig deeper or find alternative angles. This is an entirely positive development which gives the story process greater temporal reach.

With Networked Journalism, stories then have life beyond the deadline, because online reaction can become part of the significance. This is, of course, rather embarrassing if you are a US Senator like George Allen who made an injudicious remark that had a prolonged life on *YouTube*.⁵² But it does mean that stories that have resonance will, indeed, reverberate for as long as the audience is interested. The more that people relate to a story the more it will be perpetuated through online interaction. The journalistic effort that may have ended up in the garbage can or disappearing into the ether can now live on through time-shifting and the Internet. I am convinced that the Networked Journalist who deliberately uses that new technology in the creation and dissemination of their material and who engages with the public most fully and directly will be the journalist whose work lives longest. Instead of a small traditional media clique deciding that a story should be pursued ad nauseum, the public will have a direct role in perpetuating particular lines of inquiry or analysis. The danger is an agenda set by the crowd but in practice it will remain a collaborative and mutually directed process.

2.5.4 Journalism and geography

The other great limitation on Old Media journalism was distance. This compromised both reporting and publication. This was and is a practical problem but it is also a philosophical issue. Distance is physical but it is also moral. How we understand and represent other people has consequences as to how we treat those who are remote from us. In the concluding chapter of this book I will examine these ethical and political aspects of Networked Journalism more deeply. But here I want to stress how Networked Journalism allows us to make contact, share information, and communicate across distance.

The world is shrinking, thanks to new technology and other factors, such as burgeoning bargain air travel and low satellite costs. Digital journalism

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allows us to make the links. Let's go back to Reuters. On its Africa website⁵³ there is now a complex range of bloggers, both Reuters staff and in-country "amateurs." This is a sharing of the news media with the mainstream giant carrying the independent voices. The bloggers add depth and value to Reuters' professional coverage. Some of the blogs are media critiques such as this acidic judgment on a *Time* magazine story implying that Guinea Bissau is the next "narco-state":

Imagine if *Time Magazine* did a story about New Jersey being the car theft capital of the USA, and then half of the pics were taken in Massachusetts. Would that make sense? No. Would people in Massachusetts have the right to be offended? Yes. *Time's* editors are just assuming there's little chance that their audience will notice or draw the distinction between the various countries in deep, dark, scary Africa. Furthermore, they print a picture of a pile of alleged cocaine cash, all in Liberian dollars, and I guess the reader is supposed to think it's a huge stash of filthy loot. But to the educated eye it looks like an amount of LD worth about US\$8. Come on! I have that much LD on my dresser after changing a ten dollar bill! ('Liberia Ledger' blogger)⁵⁴

This is just one example of how Reuters has given an African a chance to answer back to the West, not through a random blog but through one linked directly into the mainstream media network. But for this to be genuinely Networked Journalism the bloggers have to be more than online stringers. It is important that it is seen as more than a bolt-on added feature.

Distance is already being bridged by citizen journalists in unexpected ways. It is not just about blogging. We should remember that the images of Abu Ghraib were in effect user-generated content, although it took the US TV program *60 Minutes* and journalist Seymour Hersch to bring them in to the mass media public realm. *Aljazeera* then took it to an Arab audience which was able to engage through that channel's phone-ins and website. And, of course, the pictures themselves had a million further media lives on blogs around the world providing the material for further journalism. The story of Abu Ghraib and the way that it was interpreted and performed differently around the world with extensive interaction between amateurs and professionals was one of the biggest examples of Networked Journalism that we have seen so far.

This is not just about the media organizations. If governments and other bodies such as NGOs (non Governmental Organizations) want to reach out, then they must facilitate greater access for people to use New Media platforms to communicate beyond their borders. The BBC World Service

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Trust (WST), for example, is enabling Pashto and Dari speaking audiences, inside and outside Afghanistan, to listen to their favorite radio programs using the Internet.⁵⁵ A similar WST project called *Zig Zag*⁵⁶ is aimed at young people in Iran who use a secret language to communicate. It gives them a chance to hear each others' voices, and to engage online with figures such as religious leaders. I will examine the potential of Networked Journalism to cross boundaries like this in Chapter 5. But it is clear that through social media or news media the new technology is able to cross both physical as well as social barriers.

2.5.5 Journalism and the cycle of newsroom sensitivity

Networked Journalism can allow the journalist greater engagement and more reflection upon their subject. This is the paradoxical goal of any good journalism.

I describe it as the cycle of newsroom sensitivity. With Networked Journalism, we are able to take this process beyond the newsroom.

In a conventional news production process and particularly in a conventional newsroom, the journalist goes through a cycle of sensitivity. By sensitivity I mean their interest – emotional and intellectual – in their subject. At one level most professional journalists go through this in terms of the progression of their career. They go in to the job because they are curious about the world. They are often politically or personally engaged and often have an ability to see things from other people's point of view. They are interested in what other people think and they are open to understanding the thoughts and emotions of others as a way to understand the world. In this sense they are sensitive. But a journalist's experience and training turns a subjective approach in to an objective discipline.

For a newsroom to work it has to have individuals who perform generally in accordance with the norms of that organization and who strive for similar editorial goals with shared editorial values. Ideally, the journalist gets space and time and resources at points in their career to reconnect with their "sensitivity" and renew those original motivational drives. In practice that rarely happens.

A similar cycle occurs on a daily basis. The journalist enters work fresh from their real world, full of openness and interest in the world. Then the journalist has to deal with a subject and impose their journalistic discipline. They have to subjugate their personal feelings and individual intellectual

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perspective to the effort of striving for an objectified product, a communicable representation.

They must make sure that their journalism is as thorough, critical, and accurate as possible. And yet, their journalism then tries to connect the subject with the viewer. One way is through “human interest.” The journalist tries to tell the story in a way that the audience can relate to, even when the subject is remote socially or geographically. At that point in the production process the journalist is attempting to reintroduce the human element and produce an emotional reaction. On the day of the London bombings, for example, the journalists I worked with went through that cycle. We went to work as usual leaving behind our normal lives. We then had to deal professionally with a story that was an extreme example of a disturbing and emotionally engaging event. But of course, we wanted our coverage to reflect the human dimension of the day. We did this by taking extra care to allow victims to speak with great emotion about what had happened, so allowing the viewer to connect directly with the emotion of the events. After transmission the journalist is able to re-engage with the real world. They may take with them all sorts of emotional reactions of guilt or distress or compassion about the days reported events.

The negative aspect of this cycle is that it can produce a kind of false consciousness in the way the journalist works through stories. In its most sterile manifestation it leads to formulaic journalism. It creates the tired clichés where presenters ask victims “how they feel,” or reporters show starving African children with fly-blown eyes. It can open up a distance between the journalist and the subject that is never closed. I believe that this makes for less fulfilling journalism for all concerned.

These cycles of sensitivity are not exclusive to journalism. One could argue that doctors have to perform a similar cycle. But Networked Journalism allows the possibility of turning this in to a much more virtuous cycle. Beyond that, it gives the opportunity to turn the circle in to a network. Networked Journalism, where the “amateur” and the subject are allowed into the whole process, allows the journalist to maintain the connection without resorting to formula. Journalism will still be about representation – how else can it perform the core functions of filtering, editing, and packaging? But the whole multi-dimensional process will be less hierarchical and non-linear. Some of this happened on 7/7 in London as citizen journalism made an impact with people sending in phone images and creating weblogs to relate the day’s events. A lot of media organizations learnt lessons about how to harness user-generated content on that day. They learned to share their journalistic

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space with the public. However, this was still a long way from the kind of proactive Networked Journalism that could have informed the cycle of sensitivity with greater meaning. In a truly connected news media world this would recycle back in a renewed sense of the possibilities of journalism. We will look at this in greater detail in the chapter on Editorial Diversity.

2.5.6 Journalism and the audience

We have already seen how the audience is both deserting mainstream news media and fragmenting. Here are two groups that Dan Gillmor identifies that New Media can help attract back:

First are the people who have been active, in their own way, even before grassroots journalism was so available to all. They are the traditional writers of letters to the editor: engaged and active, usually on a local level. Now they can write weblogs, organize meetups, and generally agitate for the issues, political or otherwise, that matter to them . . . The second, and I hope larger, group from the former audience, [are] the ones who take it to the next level. We're seeing the rise of the heavy-duty blogger, website creator, mailing list owner, or SMS gadfly – the medium is less important than the intent and talent – who is becoming a key source of news for others, including professional journalists. In some cases, these people are becoming professional journalists themselves and are finding ways to make a business of their avocation. (Dan Gillmor)⁵⁷

I would add two more groups. These are the people who are not the kind of activists that Gillmor describes. The third group are the Virtually Passive. Many people will still want the old relationship they had with the news media. They will want packaged news delivered to them. I believe that many people will continue to consume most of their journalism in this way. The fourth group are the Social Users who will consume news and take part in what Gillmor calls the “conversation” as part of social networking. They are not activists in the ways that he describes but will still provide content and interaction with the news flow. Some of their social news flow is so local and so personal that it is of no interest to Networked Journalism. But the structures that it creates will be a remarkable resource for wider engagement. This is not just a question of researching a young politician's character by checking out compromising photos on *Facebook* from their youthful hedonistic past. It is about Networked Journalism tracking and initiating conversations on these sites that engages the users with the stories and issues that the news media is communicating.

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Of course, these are not mutually exclusive groups – we can all be members of different groups at different times. But journalism has to connect with these groups if it is to thrive. Engaging the “former audience” through Networked Journalism has three benefits:

- 1 it brings the audience back to the process;
- 2 it brings content to the process; and
- 3 it brings moral and political value to the process.

The news media needs the numbers. It needs to travel way down the long tail and in to every niche to sustain its business. It can go some way to do this by clever marketing and research. It can go further by tailoring its product to these difficult-to-reach audiences. But it would be much easier if it made the audience part of the process and allowed them to help shape the news media we expect them to consume. Networked Journalism is a strategic as well as tactical concept. It is about more than focus groups. By incorporating bloggers, for example, mainstream media are creating a network that is effectively self-selecting, which is surely a marketing person’s dream. The Networked Audience is offering content in an incredibly efficient way. Most user-generated content (UGC) is not paid for and even where it is the rates are usually low because the public values the participation as much as the pay. Networked Journalism is a social good.⁵⁸

Managing the engagement with the former audience is not always efficient. Transaction costs must be kept under control. That is partly because most media organizations are still operating in a way that separates out “professional” and “amateur” content. It is also because they have not yet developed the techniques to process the volume of UGC or interactivity they sometimes get. Steve Herrmann from BBC Online says they were swamped by UGC on the day of the London Bombings. Now they have a systemized UGC Hub and special software that crunches audience emails, extracts images and puts them up for viewing as thumbnails for BBC journalists. But this can go much further. The BBC hub, for example, still only skims the surface because it continues to separate the public from the publishing process. It also insists on strict verification procedures rather than allow content with caveats.

Networked Journalism brings a moral and political value to the process for the audience because it effectively dilutes or shares the power of the media with the public. It encourages the audience to share responsibility for reporting and promotes greater media literacy. If you are part of a process

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you will inevitably feel ownership. The news media has to create systems that allow much less mediated interaction with the audience. There has to be much more openness to input, greater facilities for access to flows of information and raw material, and much greater transparency. The media has to show trust to expect it in return.

2.6 The Business of Networked Journalism

We are the independent observers of the world, who go places our audience can't go, dig where our audiences can't dig, study and interpret what our audiences do not have time to study and interpret, so that our audiences can better understand the world. (Michael Oreskes, *International Herald Tribune*)⁵⁹

Michael Oreskes' description of journalism is still the core component of its business offering for a Web 2.0 or even Web 3.0 world. Networked Journalism is about amateur and professional as complementary and increasingly interchangeable parts of a process. The new dynamics that I outlined above liberate journalism to do things it could not do in the past. Surely that is the very definition of an opportunity? And it is an opportunity for the commercial news media as much as the public sector. As someone who has worked in both public and private news media, I understand the importance of both to each other.

It is vital for the survival of journalism that what people value in mainstream news is taken into online journalism. All the surveys tell us that young people are not getting in to the news habit. However, one interesting study^{60, 61} showed that the early adopting, social networking generation still *trust* old media more, they just don't use it. So one of the key tasks is to find ways to bring its values and its product to them, to make it part of their lives again.

In the digital era anyone thinking about sustaining or starting a news media enterprise has to ask themselves some very basic questions:

- What business am I in?
- What do I mean by journalism?
- What content do I have?
- How will I deliver it?
- Who wants it?
- Why do they want it?
- What will they do with it?

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These were all questions which were often taken for granted by Old Media, but they are vital for anyone seeking to make progress in the new media landscape. So far, much of new media business has been hit and miss. A thousand flowers have bloomed but very few have taken root. There has been very little analysis of what works and what doesn't, although there are many people who claim to be able to offer expensive advice. The market will help to sort out the wheat and chaff. But I think that media academic Adrian Monck from City University in London is right to identify the problem of "connoisseurship." Too many online entrepreneurs are indulging in the production of journalism that they find delectable rather than giving the public what they want or need. Networked Journalists are producing Pinot Noir when the people prefer Chardonnay.

My "advice" to those seeking to sustain good journalism boils down to three core principles:

- 1 Concentrate on creating good Networked Journalism. Any product that is created by public investment has to have a future.
- 2 Think much harder about what is going on in the new media landscape and think conceptually. Ignorance is not bliss, imagination is required.
- 3 You are here now, well done. But you are not necessarily the person who knows how you will be here tomorrow.

2.6.1 Market freedom, freedom of expression

There are various *models* on offer, but more important are the key *concepts* in play. Some of the business models are familiar, defensive, financially driven tactics such as conglomeration. It makes sense for shareholders in the short term but it is hardly an answer for those who value diversity or growth. Mergers can be healthy in a rapidly growing market where there is a duplication of production methods and a surplus of competitors. In a declining market they can also rescue businesses that are not sustainable independently.

But journalism is different. A single organization, like News International in the UK, has a variety of products, ranging from *Sky News* to *The Sun* to the *Times Literary Supplement*. I see no grave danger in the fact that all these outlets are linked. But there is a danger when one organization goes on to have a substantial market share, especially when it replicates that dominance across other platforms. This applies as much to the BBC as it does to Rupert Murdoch. So far what we are seeing is both taking their market power online.

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It is political and economic variety which underlies real editorial diversity. In the marketplace of ideas you need a plethora of people setting out their stalls. But you do have to accept that we are living in an age when media companies will be born and die much more quickly. The early twentieth century saw a brutal decimation of Victorian institutions, replaced by an army of new media companies, including the creation of a public sector. We wait to see the longevity of *Facebook* or even *Google* compared to the century old life of *Reuters*, but no business has an inalienable right to exist.

2.6.2 Market freedom – Net neutrality

As the big Old Media players go online they meet companies like *Google* which exercise such power over the Internet. We are already seeing how *Google* has intervened in news directly through *Google News*. But it will be as important a market driver and influence on journalism through the way it constructs its search facilities.

The idea of Net Neutrality^{62–64} is, therefore, vital in preserving a free market in the media – both commercially and in terms of freedom of expression. This is the idea that links should be determined by their popularity and relevance rather than through payments made to the search engines. The counter argument is that search is the only way to make money online and that revenue has to come from somewhere to fund more services and future development of broadband.

In terms of Networked Journalism it is an especially acute dilemma. We value the transparency of Net Neutrality. That will be vital to sustain the process of universal access for the public. It is also essential as a way of guaranteeing trust and accountability. So you either try to retain net neutrality or you embark on the construction of a series of checks, balances, and oversight that looks dangerously like over-regulation of the Internet. Or you allow the big corporations to set a pricing structure that restricts access to markets and denies the public choice and information.

2.6.3 Networked Journalism fills the gap

For at least 10 years we are going to have to have an act of faith and pump money into digital markets without significant return . . . and we will do it with the expectation that things will change. (Alan Rusbridger, Editor, *The Guardian*)⁶⁵

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There are some practical implications of what I have set out. What is hard for converting media organizations is to reprioritize without losing core value. For new media organizations the challenge it is to develop that public or political culture that will give them longer-term value. As Rusbridger points out, that costs. New Media companies are not exempt from the need to change and evolve either. *Google* is going through this process. It has had to realize that it is no longer an “optimism” company, it is now a “realism” business. It has had to acknowledge that it is in the world of politics. And when that means China that means compromise.^{66,67} What I am interested in is not just the moral balance of the compromise that was made but where *Google* will take the lessons learned. How relevant are its founding principle of “do no harm” and its guiding idealistic lights? Because, as far as journalism is concerned – and *Google* is now very much part of journalism – this is a moral market about trust, authenticity and, in the case of Networked Journalism, transparency and collaboration.

Networked Journalism can bridge the gaps. Through its transparency and accountability it can rebuild trust. But this means sharing responsibility between the “professional” and the “amateur.” This is also a way of reducing the need for external regulation.

Networked Journalism can also bridge the funding gap. For the next five years or so there will be a cash flow crisis as media organizations retool for the digital age. They are investing more in news processes as well as new technology and business experimentation. At the same time many are facing catastrophic collapses in revenue. Blogs or User Generated Content and collaboration help to fill that gap. But more importantly than that for the medium term, it builds the online communities that will feel disposed to invest in a product in which they play a role. Involve the public and they are more likely to buy into the business. That investment may literally be shareholding, but is more likely to be forms of subscription. And that community is a resource that in turn can be monetized as a network rather than as individual purchasers.

2.6.4 Networked Journalism – a different business

Corporate America is scared. Things are changing too fast, consumers are too powerful and marketing is too fragmented. The One Corporate Voice now has to speak with multiple messages for infinite desires stretched across psychographic lines on varied platforms. Marketing today is better because of the ability to have real conversations and relationships with consumers.

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It's also a lot easier to find the people you want to reach. But marketing today is also harder. It requires patience, some prescience and lots of participation. It demands new metrics of measurement. And yes, it calls for risk and a long-term view. (Gary Goldhammer, Media Commentator)⁶⁸

Networked Journalism is a way of building that “long-term” view for a business, but it is not a short-cut. When we look at some of the imperatives it offers we must also realize that they are based on what serves the public and thus shareholders, not the other way around. Of course, there is no reason why Networked Journalism enterprises can't be originated from scratch. They don't have to begin with a mainstream media organization that changes and they don't have to start with a New Media blog or online site. Jay Rosen's *NewAssignment.net*⁶⁹ is an experimental attempt to create Networked Journalism projects. It will attempt to combine professional and “amateur” input. Rosen wants citizens to come up with story ideas and to make donations to fund stories that they think should be covered. *NewsAssignment.Net*'s editors will still act as gatekeepers who will select the correspondents to carry out the assignment, but the citizen journalists will stay involved:

If I can improve it, get the funding, find people who know how to operate in the more open style, *NewAssignment.Net* would be a case of journalism without the media. That's the beauty part. Reporter + smart mob + editor with a fund get the story the press pack wouldn't, couldn't, or didn't. (Jay Rosen, *NewAssignment Net*)⁷⁰

Rosen does not expect his project to challenge the major media outlets. He says it is a “boutique” attempt to see which forms of crowd-sourcing and alternative fund-raising might work. But however it originates, the following are some of the principles or business models that Networked Journalism will use.

2.6.4.1 *Accept obsolescence*

There is no reason why we *need* so many newspapers or TV strands. There are only so many hours in the day for so many people. Digital platforms bring an explosion of choice, but there will be a reckoning. I have cited many reasons why the demand for journalism will rise but there are good reasons why people find better things to do. The consumer was always King but now they can choose their kingdom, too.

2.6.4.2 *Capture the community*

Nowhere is safe from Networked Journalism. A short walk from my offices in London, Fleet Street is now devoid of newspapers. They went elsewhere to capitalize on new technology. If I walk five minutes in the other direction to Covent Garden I come upon the genteel offices of *The Lady*, unmoved since its foundation in 1885.⁷¹ It is a relic of a bygone era, with classified ads for nannies sustaining editorial featuring Royal gardeners. It has a readership of high income, older middle aged women in the south-east of England. It is a classic offline demographic that looks like it is about to disappear off the edge of the digital world. Its editor Arline Usden says that the pace of change is slow:

The magazine's management is conservative in attitude, so we were also probably the last magazine in Britain to use computers for production. When I first joined the magazine as Editor, 16 years ago, the editorial department did not even have a fax machine. The magazine has only recently accepted credit cards for its advertisements. (Arline Usden, Editor, *The Lady*)⁷²

But *The Lady* is now online and it even has original video of its last reader's event at the Waldorf Hilton. Despite its conservative approach and old-fashioned culture, it seems to me that *The Lady* is ripe for Networked Journalism. It already brings its readers together for literary lunches and provides a vital nanny-finding service through its classified adverts. It has a community of 40,000 dedicated people who share its values. These are people who spend their life networking and are articulate and literate enough to produce content. After all, today's early adopters are tomorrow's silver surfers.

2.6.4.3 *Diversify*

Networked Journalism allows media businesses to go into other Internet activities like travel and retail. Trusted media organizations have always done this to a degree, such as the travel clubs at regional papers. I see no reason why online media should not exploit its consumer/contributor base. I see this as analogous to a Department Store. One floor can be selling journalism without having to compromise its core values just because you are selling other products to the same people in other parts of the store. The community that journalism builds seems terribly wasted if it is only given one service.

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2.6.4.4 *Specialize*

The long tail does offer hope for minority news businesses. Rick Waghorn⁷³ is my favorite example of this. The former local sports writer went online when his paper starting laying off journalists. He has created a website dedicated to Norwich City, a second string regional soccer club, but with a fan-base of tens of thousands. With the help of a former advertising salesman from the newspaper, Rick created a business through banner ads. Now he's revamped the website and is franchising the format across the region. He's not a millionaire, but he has created a terrific website, and he is starting to pay his bills. He is an outsider who exploits his online status to beat mainstream media deadlines and to engage with his readers. But he is also a professional who pays for a press pass to the club:

At this stage in my fledgling online life, I'd hesitate to describe myself as the goose that laid any sort of golden, journalistic egg financially – albeit, month on month, we nudge in the right direction. And it helps that I don't have a print press team, a van driver and a paper boy on the pay-roll. But two definites have emerged. Readers still have a huge appetite for good, well-sourced and trusted comment on any subject that plays on a passion; and a journalist's best pal in a media office is an ad rep. (*Rick Waghorn*)⁷⁴

Waghorn's intimate knowledge of a particular field, his superb website-cum-blog and his committed community makes him a Networked Journalist.

2.6.4.5 *Hyperlocal*

While the Internet may be global in its reach, it can also be "hyperlocal." But experiments in Internet news focused down to a very local level have not been entirely successful. In the US the *Backfence*⁷⁵ franchise of local Internet community sites folded despite \$3 million investment. There is an obvious problem that if you target a few streets, or even part of a city, then you are restricting yourself to a tiny audience which may not be able to support even a website. But there is also the problem that people may not see themselves as part of an easily defined *geographical* community. As blogger and lecturer Jeff Jarvis suggests:

After trying one of everything in hyperlocal, I've come to believe that this will happen only by combining those various models – so people can join in however they want to – and by answering the questions: How much news

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will members of the community create and share? What do they need to do that? What motivates them? How can local news organizations enable and encourage them? . . . Local is people. Our job is not to deliver content or a product. Our job is to help them make connections with information and each other. (Jeff Jarvis)⁷⁶

One attempt being made in London is *The Southwark News* which combines a paid-for local weekly newspaper and a website. Founder and editor Chris Mullany told me that they are struggling in one of the world's most competitive media markets, but what surprised him was where the competition is coming from:

We are a local with a 10,000 circulation in one of London's boroughs with a variety of people in different areas, from London Bridge and Borough to Bermondsey, Peckham and Dulwich, and I thought that we were hyperlocal. But you get even more hyper local than that through the community message forums and blogs. These are a real threat and surprise to me. It is in these community message boards and forums that many people like to read about and participate in the news in their community. (Chris Mullany, Editor, *Southwark News*)⁷⁷

That seems to suggest that with all the competition from city free newspapers, the local or hyperlocal market is going to be just as crowded as the national scene. If journalism is going to survive at that level than it needs to be multi-platform and 360 degree connected. It needs to be Networked.

2.6.4.6 Socialize

Advertisers have already realized that they have to insert themselves in to people's online conversations and relationships. It's what Tariq Karim from *Netvibes*⁷⁸ calls "attention mining." Viral adverts are far more successful than banners because they engage the consumer in an activity that they can share, and that feels like all the other good stuff online. News has always worked hard to put up invisible barriers between itself and the rest of the media. But that is just not sustainable online because, apart from the mega brands such as the BBC or *New York Times*, they just don't have the presence to attract enough passing traffic. I see no conflict here editorially. Most news media organizations have already expanded into arts, sport, and lifestyle journalism. It is a question of linking the lifestyle to the journalism. All the time there are new Online technologies such as "widgets"⁷⁹ which promote this

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kind of connectivity, allowing journalism to insert itself as a kind of hyper-link in to all sorts of other Internet dialogues. Local newspapers, for example, could offer widgets featuring photos covering neighborhood events. Then if people go to the event and write about it on their blog, *MySpace* page or in *Facebook*, they could feature a collection of photos from the newspaper that simply links back to the paper's site so people can buy hard copies or download files of the pictures.⁸⁰ *Facebook* already has a "Causes" team which helps facilitate people running campaigns, so why shouldn't it have a "Journalism" team which facilitates Networked Journalism?

2.7 Networked Journalism and Public Service

So does the media have a responsibility to inform the electorate in an age of information overload? Of course, just as schools, and unions, and churches and political parties and every other institution in society has such a responsibility . . . just as every citizen has such a responsibility to both himself and his fellow citizens. But the media has a much more immediate and urgent task . . . That task is to reinvent the media business so it can continue to sustain the quality journalism that is so vital to informing the electorate. Everyone has a stake in that task . . . because if we fail at it, any discussion of the media's responsibility to inform anyone will be a mere academic debate. (Michael Oreskes, Editor, *International Herald Tribune*)⁸¹

We have already seen how public service journalism is threatened by digital developments. Networked Journalism is a way of justifying it in the new era. Oreskes is right to identify the political rationale. Ultimately, people have choices about the way society is run, and they can choose a better news media if they want. Journalism has not been good enough at making that case in the past and must do more to sell its role in society to the public.

But he is also correct to say that the media business has to reinvent itself. There are two types of public service journalism. First there are the straightforward public subsidy organizations such as the US National Public Radio or the BBC. Second, there are the private organizations, which deliver public service content. Both need to embrace the networked paradigm if they are to claim the kind of moral responsibility that Oreskes sees as a core function of media in a civilized society.

The BBC is the biggest example of publicly funded journalism in the world and it is the most secure. It has gone online with great aplomb and has achieved

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even greater global reach for its content. Its news services have a healthy medium-term future thanks to the funding deal with the British government that is the envy of commercial media companies all around the world. It means it has to make efficiency savings but that is a question of management having to prioritize.

The BBC already has one of the most highly developed and successful Networked Journalism operations in the heart of its massive newsroom in West London. Tucked away behind the vast open plan offices and studios that house the main broadcast operation is the User Generated Content (UGC) Hub. Here a team of about 15 journalists process the vast amount of material sent in by the public to the BBC. Most of it is filtered through the BBC *Have Your Say* website. It all started with the Asian Tsunami back in December 2004 with emails and photos being sent in by people who witnessed the disaster. More recently BBC news has used UGC in its bulletins about the Virginia Tech shootings, the Heathrow and Glasgow attempted bombings and recent flooding across much of England. They even teamed up with *Google* to offer an interactive map which allowed readers to click through to photos and videos sent in by flood-struck citizens.

The Hub gathers the information and verifies it through the normal journalistic practice of phoning and fact-checking. This produces witnesses who are sometimes used in the rest of the BBC's coverage. It also turns up new stories. In 2006 in the UK there was a story about faulty petrol which emerged through the UGC hub. Petrol retailers denied any problem, but the UGC hub was able to find enough motorists with misfiring engines to stand the accusations up. The UGC hub allows the BBC to make contact with hard-to-reach groups such as ex-armed forces personnel. An item on former soldiers suffering mental illness was supplemented by some stirring testimony gathered through the *Have Your Say* portal. And the public are taking the initiative, as BBC Interactive Editor Vicky Taylor explains:

when the terrorist attack happened at Glasgow airport, the pictures from bystanders arrived in the BBC central UGC hub area 30 minutes after it first happened and were on air or on BBC sites shortly afterwards. We receive around 200,000 messages a month and get around 12 million page impressions to the debates monthly. (Vicky Taylor, Editor, BBC Interactive)⁸²

This has meant adopting new technology, such as software, which brings all content into one area where thumbnails are displayed and audio video

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and pictures are separated into two areas. This is then put into folders and tagged for future use. But Assistant Editor at the Hub, Matthew Eltringham, is clear that the BBC is a trusted journalistic brand and that putting UGC on air does not mean they are surrendering editorial control.

We still have to check everything that we use in the same way that journalists have to verify conventional witnesses or material. We speak to people who contact us and we check out what they say. People come to us because we are the BBC and we are trusted so we are not going to compromise on our standards. (Matthew Eltringham, Assistant Editor, BBC Interactive)⁸³

Some Net radicals will criticize them for this desire to retain control, but it is clear that they are opening up vast possibilities for the public to be part of broadcasting and adding great value to the BBC's journalistic operation. Very soon they will have to reconsider whether they do separate the citizen from the journalist.

The BBC News has already embraced interactivity and networked news processes. However, it can go much further to challenge its own culture without losing its values. Historically, the BBC has fostered an institutional Reithianism that reifies public service broadcasting while resisting any attempt to share it. Despite the best efforts of well-intentioned managers, it is still a closed system. Networked Journalism allows the BBC an opportunity to share its resources in a more open way. It should become a facilitator and a commissioner of citizen journalism and of community media. This will mean that it loses some of its power. But there is no reason why it cannot sustain its core functions of filtering, editing, and packaging, while surrendering some managerial oversight over all the activities that it supports. Letting go may also involve BBC funds being devolved to local or specialist communities. The model would be similar to the production of party political broadcasts now, but on a bigger more systematic scale. Another model would be the BBC World Service Trust, which draws upon the corporation's media skills to support media development throughout the world. The BBC provides the technical resource but the producer or client helps determine content. Any price paid in terms of a dilution of editorial control at the margins will be more than compensated for by the long-term value of engagement. The BBC has always been superb at relating to its audience as an audience, but now it must bring them into the newsroom. The BBC is fortunate in that it has vast resources to make this happen. But other public service broadcasters have even more reason to do so, because they do

not enjoy the financial backing of a license fee. They have an economic as well as moral motive to retain their social role.

2.7.1 Public service/private sector

In Britain a debate is now raging about the very nature of public service journalism. With the analogue switch off in 2012 the broadcasting regulator Ofcom will have to propose a different way to subsidize the news media. It is a debate that has ramifications across the media world. Ofcom gives three main reasons for considering a revolution in the financing of public service broadcasting:

- The rapid take-up of digital television is reducing the viewing share of the traditional public service broadcasters, and hence the value of the analogue spectrum.
- Viewers – especially younger audiences – are increasingly watching content on Internet and mobile platforms, and are starting to move away from traditional TV.
- Changes in spectrum policy will affect the way in which public service aims need to be financed in the future. (Ofcom PSB Report)⁸⁴

Certainly the first two reasons apply globally. And I would suggest that this debate affects all news media organizations for two reasons. First, with convergence we will all soon be broadcasters of some sort. Second, in the new media landscape the value of public service journalism should be recognized by society throughout the media. In a Web 2.0 world what we read and listen to is just as important as what we watch.

In the UK, Ofcom's answer is a Public Service Provider. It is currently consulting on what form that should take and it promises to be anything but a genteel discussion. Everyone in the private sector from *Discovery* to the *Daily Telegraph* will be able to make the argument that they are contributing to public service broadcasting. If you define public service as diversity and authority in news then surely *Sky News* has a case? If you define it as fostering community arts, then surely the excellent local newspaper website for *Newbury Today*⁸⁵ with its video reports on village rock festivals should qualify? Does it have to be news media at all?

Some of the PSP's services would not resemble linear programming at all. For example, the PSP could harness the lessons of gaming to develop models for the successful engagement of audiences – for instance considering issues

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of health, social welfare, political engagement and economic policy. (Ofcom PSB Report)⁸⁶

I think that in an age of Networked Journalism we have to think this broadly about public service. The fundamental definition was always that public service was what filled in the gaps of market failure. But that is an essentially negative distinction that looks over-simplistic in a digital democracy. The Internet is, in itself, a public service because it is, in principle, a free structure for communication. We have to decide what kind of journalism we want. Most will still be provided by the market. But where it is not, the case to be made for public service must be based on services and not institutions.

2.7.2 Public service, networked democracy

We are beginning to see the potential for a genuine revolution in the delivery of public services through harnessing interactive media. Many government services are migrating online and, in the process, are taking on some of characteristics which would once have been the preserve of public service broadcasting. This applies even more to cultural activities such as the arts, museums and galleries sector which – in many cases – are moving beyond simply providing access to cultural artefacts, into a mode where many institutions are finding that the facilitation of learning, understanding and participation are more central to their missions than ever before. These and others present compelling reasons why we might want to extend the case for public service broadcasting and re-evaluate it in the light of changing circumstances by looking at it in the wider context of public service delivery as a whole and diminishing the special status which we have previously given to mass media. (Anthony Lilley, *Magic Lantern*)⁸⁷

The new public service journalism has to be part of a new democratic compact between state and citizen. This includes recognizing that journalism or the news media is about realizing the potential of greater media literacy. I will deal with that in a later chapter. But as Lilley says, the very nature of public service media is changing. Governance itself is going online. Public culture and education is going online. Much of this is happening at a low level in the media food chain. And it is being driven from the grass-roots upwards. Networked Journalism is by its nature more democratic. It is both a way of measuring and delivering public service where a need is identified. Instead of handing subsidy over to the professionals and the media organizations, society can insist upon the public sharing the process.

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There are other benefits from Networked Public Service Journalism:

- It allows the former audience to become participants in the process. They have part ownership so they will take responsibility.
- The public service journalism can be delivered more cheaply. The public will provide content but it will also be easier to target content at specific communities of need.
- It will be more open to funding from other sources such as Foundations, Corporate Social Responsibility Schemes, and local government because there is a direct public involvement.

Public Service Journalism is already migrating away from its traditional homes. Serious long-form journalism is actually expanding, if you take into account the burgeoning market for topical non-fiction books. In the past a serious journalist might spend months researching and writing an article that would fill part of a magazine or a half hour documentary. Now she writes a book. In the past charities spent money on PR. Now Foundations are increasingly looking to fund journalism directly to promote knowledge about a cause or in general. The semi-academic journalism website *Opendemocracy.net* is supported in this way. Its CEO Tony Curzon Prize told me that they are a public service business:

We have 3 million unique users a year and what they are after is authenticity. One of the most exciting things is that when people give us money they say that “the media is manipulated so we need to give you money.” My favorite was when someone who sent \$50, said we were “the only free website worth paying for.” We have insiders all over the place who have ideas and things to say. And we’ve got 3 million minds who are interested. The business model is that we broker ideas to minds. Those 3 million people are the equivalent of advertisers and they will pay a premium. 10 “people” cover 90 percent of our costs – they are mainly US foundations. It’s a commercial model because it pays my salary and many others. It is extremely commercial; we are selling minds to foundations. (Tony Curzon Prize, CEO, *Opendemocracy.net*)⁸⁸

This is just one way forward for redefining public service media through the model of Networked Journalism. But I would argue that journalism as a whole is a public service. Networked Journalism allows all the news media to make a social claim, even when its product is not overtly solving a market failure. But there is much more that Networked Journalism can do.

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We have seen that Networked Journalism is a way of defining the latest historic manifestation of the news media. We have seen how different it is from what has gone before. I have made the case that it can be profitable and that it can produce public value. This is why I think that we can be optimistic and claim that we are on the verge of something like a Super Media. This is why journalism is worth saving. In the next sections of the book I want to look at how journalism can save the world. What can it do for our politics in an age when terror and community are so important? And I also want to explore how our understanding of journalistic diversity and literacy must change to realize the progressive ideal of a more connected, cosmopolitan global journalism.

Chapter Summary

- Networked Journalism is a hybrid of Citizen Journalism and Mainstream “professional” journalism.
 - Networked Journalism uses New Media technology alone or in combination with traditional practices.
 - It is about a more open, shared process rather than the end product.
 - It retains the core journalistic functions of filtering, editing, and packaging and performs the key journalistic roles of reporting, analysis, and comment.
 - It replaces hierarchical and linear modes of production and consumption with multi-dimensional interaction.
 - It uses multiple areas of communication such as wikis, blogs, and social networking.
 - It enables journalism to cross the old limits of time and distance.
 - It allows the journalist to engage more fully with both the audience and the subject.
 - It increases trust and transparency.
 - It allows the free market to develop different ways of doing media business.
 - It allows for a new form of public service journalism that is more broadly defined and more widely applied that produces a new compact between society and journalism.
-