

# Journalism 2.0

## Abstract

Much of the pessimism expressed about journalism's future and the negative impact of the internet, has emanated from western countries, where journalism often has been dominated by large, traditional, privately owned, newspaper groups. This paper focuses on the role of journalism in Asia and the impact of the internet on Asian journalism.

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## Introduction:

I was in Beijing last year when the Chinese government, without warning or reason, shut down Facebook.

It seems that the Chinese Communist party was afraid that social media could be used by dissident Uighurs to further the unrest in its western provinces.

Rather than just exchanging gossip, the Chinese authorities thought the Uighurs might follow the example of Iranian citizen journalists who had used the net to expose the arrest, torture and murder of student demonstrators. (Basij, 2009)

Even in China and Iran, freedom of speech threatens to become universal, empowering netizens to articulate, advocate, proselytise, and sometimes mis-inform, dis-inform, vilify, threaten and subvert.

China's shutdown of Facebook, followed the failure of the government's green dam project, which sought to hard wire censorship software in all new computers sold within China's borders.

China maintains the world's most extensive net censorship, where tens of thousands of websites are restricted by combining URL filtering with the censoring of keywords ranging from "Tiananmen" and "Dalai Lama" to "democracy" and "human rights." More than 40,000 members of the cyber-police are constantly scanning the Web, while cyber cafes are registered and watched. (Reporters sans Frontieres 2010)

Before the World Wide Web, Journalism was defined by mainstream news agencies, newspapers, radio and television stations. But the internet has raised questions about who journalists are, what they should do, where they can report from, why they choose particular stories, and even when they report.

The Hong Kong based accumulator blog, EastSouthWestNorth, translates a healthy and very large Chinese blog culture which flourishes around the state owned media, circumventing controls to satirise, report and criticise. (Soong 2010 a)

### China signifies the two biggest influences on journalism today:

The first wave is obvious everywhere, the digitisation of content distributed by the internet, resulting in diversification, interaction and the forging of new alliances.

The second wave is still gathering strength, empowered by the first; the of Asian Pacific information, challenging a news order which has been dominated by western countries for more than a century.

So where does this explosion of unmediated information leave journalists who previously enjoyed privileged access to mass communication?

How can mainstream media survive when they have to compete in a largely un-regulated and increasingly free market of ideas?

### Internet usage

According to Internet World Stats, there were 764 million internet users in Asia in 2009, representing 42.4% of global users. This compared to Europe with 23.6% and North America with 14.4% where markets were becoming saturated. However, penetration in Asia was only 20.1%.

Internet usage can be expected to increase in Asia as literacy rates improved, business demand rose, computer costs declined and telephonic, broadband and satellite services expanded.

China was said to already have 384 million internet users, the largest number of internet users in the world. There had been a 1,606.7% increase in Internet users in China between 2000 and 2009, with a penetration rate of 28.7%. In comparison, Australia had 17 million internet users with a penetration rate of 80%, Indonesia had a penetration of 30 million with a penetration of 12.5% and Japan had 96 million with a penetration of 75.5%. (Internet World Stats 2010)

### Western Pessimism

Much of the pessimism expressed about journalism's future and the negative impact of the internet, has emanated from western countries, where journalism often has been dominated by large, traditional, privately owned,

newspaper groups, which often created news agendas followed by less well resourced journalists in television and radio. The profitability of these groups and the viability of the journalism they supported were being directly threatened by the shift of advertising revenue to the web.

The impact of their demise may have been magnified globally by their previously dominant influence on international news.

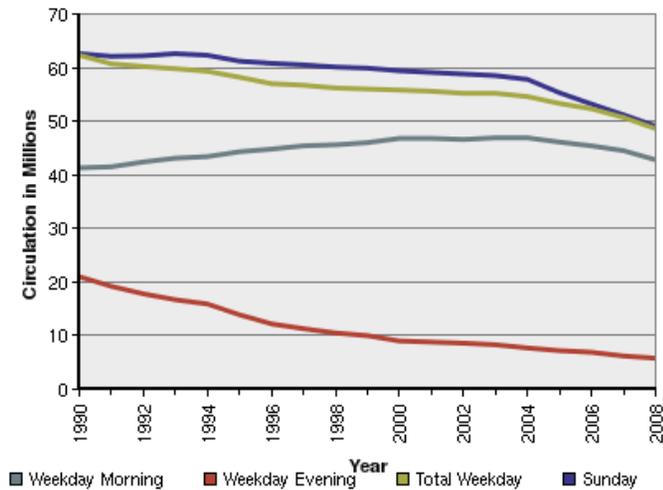
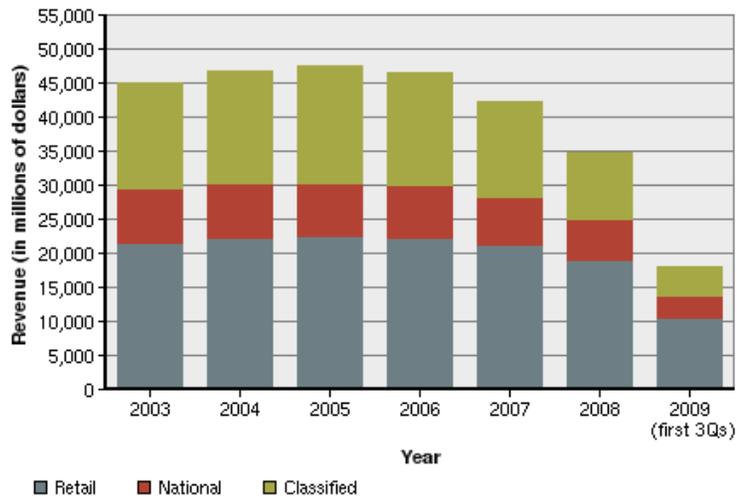
According to the Pew Center's 2010 *The State of the news media*, advertising revenues for American newspapers fell by 43% in the three years to 2009.

Roughly 13,500 jobs for full-time, newsroom professionals disappeared during that period, the total falling from 55,000 to 41,500, a count which includes some 284 new jobs at some online-only newspapers now included in the industry's tallies. That means that newsrooms have shrunk by 25% in three years, and just under 27% since the beginning of the decade.

To put it another way, newspapers headed into 2010, devoting \$1.6 billion less annually to news than they did three years earlier. (Edmonds 2010)

There were significant bankruptcies in 2009. At the top of that list was [Tribune Company](#), owner of the Los Angeles Times and Chicago Tribune, among others. Others included [Freedom Communications](#) (owner of the Orange County Register), [Star-Tribune](#) of Minneapolis, [Philadelphia Newspapers](#), [Journal Register](#), [MediaNews](#) and [Morris Publishing](#). (Edmonds 2010)

Meanwhile, online news consumption continued to grow in the US

*US Daily Newspaper Circulation:**Newspaper advertising revenue continued to decline during the period:*

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

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

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

**News Corporation**

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

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

He told the American Society of Newspaper Editors Conference in 2005 that 44% of news consumers aged between 18 and 34 used the Internet once a day for news, compared to 19% who used newspapers. 39% expected to use the Internet more, compared to eight percent who expected to use

newspapers more. (Strupp 2005) Murdoch had been commenting on a Carnegie Corporation report written by Merrill Brown. Brown said that the news industry was "seriously threatened by the seemingly irrevocable move by young people away from traditional sources of news":

Murdoch's News Corporation converged text, audio, television, and animation to become the first fully globalised, integrated media consortium. The company switched its emphasis from newspapers, which launched Rupert's journalism career half a century ago, to newer media.

The News Limited Quarterly report in March 2010, revealed that Cable networked programming was the Corporation's biggest earner, followed by filmed entertainment and then newspapers and information services as third. (News Corporation 2010)

News Corporation does not just tell stories but sell cultural packages, which included news. Movies, music, blogging and Internet dating. Its blockbuster hit movie, Avatar was previewed on television, represented in games, reported in newspapers and marketed as pop music.

Murdoch hoped to secure profits by addressing new ways in which news was created by and for younger audiences.

Through Internet portal sites, handheld devices, blogs and instant messaging, we are accessing and processing information in ways that challenge the historic function of the news business and raise fundamental questions about the future of the news field. Meanwhile, new forms of newsgathering and distribution, grassroots or citizen journalism and blogging sites are changing the very nature of who produces news. (Brown 2005)

Speaking at the World Media Summit in Beijing last year, Murdoch said that "Media companies know that if you do not respond intelligently and creatively to the digital challenge, your future will be bleak indeed".

The presses are now silent at some of the world's most famous newspapers - they were supposed to report on their societies, but somehow failed to notice that those societies were changing fundamentally. But that very same threat is a remarkable opportunity for others – The Wall Street Journal

now has a monthly digital audience of 25 million, plus another two or so million in the Chinese language. (Murdoch 2009)

Murdoch said the "digital platform is a mere mechanism, a canvas for the talents and aspirations and potential of a person and a place". He added that quality content was valuable and should be sold rather than offered free on the net".<sup>1</sup>

In April 2010, Murdoch's Sky Television announced a deal to exchange of business and trade news reports with China's international state television, CCTV9.

This is the first time anywhere in the world that "Dialogue" has been broadcast outside of China other than on a CCTV station, SKY NEWS said. "Dialogue" is a current affairs and interview program broadcast from Beijing in English-language, exploring world issues from a Chinese perspective. (CCTV 2010)

Sky Television was a result of Rupert Murdoch's systematic expansion of News Corporation to allow company content to be re-cycled and cross promoted through other media, including newspapers, television, cinema and music and more recently the internet (Knight 2006).

CCTV News in contrast, remained the worldview of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, sweetened by light entertainment and delivered in high definition.

Sky and CCTV shared a recognition that management of news generated political power helped drive business profits. (Knight 2005).

### International Television

International television is rapidly evolving from satellite delivered systems to an Internet distributed multimedia exchange. Satellites allowed television to jump borders, but now its increasingly globalised, with participants able to contribute to as well as consume television production. Some academics see this rapid shift from mass communication to what they describe as "mass-self communication".

For broadcasters, this has resulted in:

- A proliferation of competition
- Demand for increased interaction with audiences
- Lower cost distribution and reception
- Globalised, as opposed to internationalized flows of information
- The eclipse of short wave radio
- Increasing use of Mobile phones for entertainment and education as well as personal interaction
- Increased demand for personalized content

The emphasis will be on immediacy and accessibility.

These broadcasters will have to compete with newer players who will be seeking to manufacture credibility, while self-seeking national and business interests.

### Broadcasters and audiences

The BBC, which was established as an Empire Broadcasting Service, set the intellectual and professional model by which all else was measured. The success of CNN in reporting first Gulf War, and its resulting dominance of the global conversation sparked a series of counter broadcasters, which include Al Jazeera, France 24, Press TV, and Euronews. These channels have been joined by networks explicitly established to propagate national voices such RT (Russia TV), NHK, Deutsche Welle, and CCTV9 (now CCTV-News).

On the Indian sub-continent, de-regulation contributed to an avalanche of networks targeting regional elites and the business audience. The existence of more than fifty Indo-Pakistani twenty-four hour news broadcasters indicates a significant potential for broader international influence, including on their own diaspora.

The first broadcasters espoused high ideals and argued the need to transmit what they saw their superior values to a less informed world. The BBC promulgated Reith's notion that it should educate, inform and perhaps entertain in terms defined by a British educated elite. In practical terms this might mean probity, apparent balance and a commitment to public service.

Voice of America was created during the Second World War as a response to Nazi propaganda. It retains the slogan, "A Trusted Source of News and

Information Since 1942". After the war, Deutsche Welle was transformed to reflect liberal German values.

Ted Turner, the founder of CNN, established the first live global television network producing news, which he believed would replace newspapers, which he saw as "an obsolete way of distributing information". In doing so, he prompted others to build alternatives. Al Jazeera, the Dohar centred Arabic broadcaster sought to provide a "voice for the voiceless" by deploying western style techniques through Arab eyes.

State funded France 24 sought "diversity of opinions, debate and confrontation of viewpoints". France24, conceived as an Internet praxis sought to divest itself of "old" media practices. It enlisted citizen journalists to create *The Observers*, a unique, networked journalism site where mainstream journalists organized and fact-checked citizen journalists' stories.

### Delivery Platforms

International broadcasting is in transition from a system where national broadcasters distributed analogue material via terrestrial means. De-regulation allowed new technologies to reach previously controlled and contained audiences. Transmitters were complimented by cable and optic fibre services.

Digitisation unlocked cheap and accessible production.

In the nineties, systems began to shift towards transnational satellite delivered programming. According to Comparative Media Systems analyst, Professor Jean Chalaby, this convergence accelerated change;

"The first satellite in the 1980s, the European Communications Satellite – the ECS1, could carry 16 channels but in practice could carry 10 – 12 channels. Then you fast-forward twenty years, by the late 1990s you have an ASTRA satellite that could carry a few hundred channels. They have thirty to fifty six transponders. (Chalaby Interview 2010)

This in turn is being superseded by Internet delivered globalised information that is dissolving national intellectual boundaries, and incidentally overwhelming attempts at state censorship. This has resulted in evolving globalised communities of ideas. Chalaby called the these global flows of ideas as "deterritorialisation"

Delivery systems currently gaining usage include:

- Video on Demand (VOD), which allows consumers to control what and when they watch and to remove advertisements. This has resulted in the embedding of advertisements and the creation of whole programs dedicated to promote consumer-oriented content.
- Wifi, Wi-max connected mobile phones and iPads will allow programs be received and transmitted from mobile locations. Some Journalists are already using iPhone applications to record, edit, package and transmit news reports. Al Jazeera's 24/7 English language news can be received on a similar device.
- Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) uses broadband and ADSL2 to deliver high definition programs from all over the world. This effectively broadens control of program distribution from the networks to the telecommunications corporations. The latter can then offer "quadruple play": landline phone, TV, Internet and wireless phone.

## Drivers

Technology has enabled the changes by making distribution universal and inexpensive. De-regulation in the emerging economic super powers, India and China, has allowed massive diversification and capitalization.

Regionalism, an expression of growing cultural confidence, has created huge new domestic and expatriate markets. The growing popularity of Bollywood might be seen as an example of this.

Anglo-American coverage of the Gulf Wars fractured what was perceived as the western view of the world. Al Jazeera, Euronews and France 24, all of which were framed in western notions of news, emerged as a counter to what was seen as an Anglo American dominance of the global discourse.

The conflict of ideas between western broadcasters and their political and ideological opponents has encouraged networks, which promote oppositional regimes. It has also prompted governments to fund soft diplomacy promulgated in perceived national cultural expressions including lifestyle programs, soaps, fashion and other entertainment forms.

Meanwhile, the desire to profit from globalization, accompanied by the growing number of Free Trade agreements, has driven content producers to penetrate new markets.

## ABC

Australia's public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Is preparing to launch its own 24/7 news service which should be available from terrestrial stations, satellite broadcast and like al Jazeera, be available as an iPhone App

The ABC launched its national radio network in 1932. (ABC, 2006) It's organisation reflected the telephone network, which carried its information; centred in Sydney and radiating out to state capitals and eventually regional centres. It operated five major radio networks, and three television networks, presenting 12,196 hours of news and current affairs a year on radio and 2479 hours on television.

In 2007, digital media, in particular digital journalism moved from the periphery to the centre of ABC operations. Announcing a corporate restructure ABC Managing Director, Mark Scott. said that "Digital media is now integral to everything we do." Scott said the corporate changes reflected " the shift of digital and new media from the fringe of ... operations ten years ago to the very centre of ... Television, Radio and News and Current Affairs output". (Scott, 2007)

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

Speaking at the Melbourne press club in February 2010, Mark Scott said that while the ABC News appeared on different platforms, the same editorial values would apply.

I wonder sometimes if the instant metrics generated in the online world are increasing the temptation to be tabloid in choosing news, pictures and headlines – to draw the eyeballs and the click-through – just as a tabloid designs page one to drive response from the newsstand...In the online space, ... - tabloids and broadsheets tend to behave the same way, as if the online audience's primary need is to be entertained. The result is the kind of editorial thinking that means we get far more coverage - as has been noted - of Paris Hilton than Paris,

France. More Angelina and Brad than Angola and Chad. (Scott 2010)

However Scott also said even in an era of unprecedented media plenty there would be a prized place for news organisations – *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, the BBC, who can be trusted and believed and who thought in terms of *news* values.

Scott said that new technologies helped break down divisions within the ABC, allowing all journalists to contribute to investigative journalism.

Technologies mostly affect the telling, the way our stories reach people. True, technologies also affect newsgathering... And nowadays technology of social media multiplies the ways the people can react, making journalism more 'two-way' – to everyone's benefit.

But in the heart of the gathering - in the thinking through of story ideas, angles, patterns, leads; in the cultivation of sources; the sorting towards an essentially accurate draft of truth - in all that, journalism is people not technology. (Scott 2010)

### **Discussion: Journalism is in transition.**

Private media's financial base, which underpins journalism will continue to shift ground. The advertising revenue which supports sites such as *Nytimes.com*, may be diminished, with some industry commentators claiming that revenues will cross over within two decades.

This process has already begun as corporations investing in newspapers cut costs (eg. *LA Times*), or seek to package news and opinion as fiction entertainment, *Fox News*.

Commercial Network television revenues can also be expected to reduce as broadband use expands and new services such as Internet Protocol Television offer live global news. Why wait until the six pm news on local free to air station to deliver a packaged news story when you see the event as it happens on al Jazeera or other services.

The old style exclusive, international news order is already dead, even in mainland China where the government strenuously and unsuccessfully

attempts to enforce official accounts of international events. It has been effectively replaced by blended and multi sourced information, which collectively contributes to the new global media environment.

The Internet allows the creation of multi-layered reports, which are embedded with images, video, and animation. Accuracy will become a key issue as diligent consumers compare journalists' analysis with their sources original words. Authenticated websites which aggregate these reports, such as the BBC, *New York Times* and the ABC (Australia) are recording rapidly rising page views.

As a result, public funded broadcasters which have been under pressure for a decade may have a new lease on life, if they are able to adapt. High content programs which may have a low audience on radio or television can accumulate huge global audiences.

It may be that governments will re-consider the worth of such broadcasters delivering information and therefore influence to wider audiences. This in turn may mitigate politicians past claims of public sector broadcasting elitism.

These broadcasters will still have to compete for audience with blogs, citizen journalism sites and for indiscriminating news consumers, Facebook.

They will seek to do so by offering branded packages of quality information. To retain credibility such mainstream packages would promise, if not always deliver fairness, accuracy and identifiable sources.

Journalists were once defined by where they worked; in newspapers, or radio and television stations. The internet promises everyone can be a publisher.

But not everyone has the skills or training to be a journalist; defined by their professional practices and codes of ethics. Such journalists will continue to authorise information, providing signposts for discerning audiences.

The International Federation of Journalists said in its code of ethics that media must respect the professional and ethical principles upon which the freedom of expression and opinion relies. In doing so, journalists advance the public interest by publishing, broadcasting or circulating facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgments. (IFJ 2004)

Professional journalists, as opposed to citizen journalists or bloggers, are trained to synthesize and present ideas. By publication through recognized

channels, they become part of identifiable information brands and can be judged accordingly. Anonymous web postings would, and on reflection, should not be granted similar credibility. Mainstream media framed this certified news in ways, which news consumers should be able to comprehend integrate and apply. This demand for authenticated information should continue to create a need for mediation by journalists.

Journalists will still need to bear witness to events. Foreign Correspondents, as imagined by Hollywood, have already become something of an anachronism. The Internet allowed anyone with a computer and a camera not only to file stories, but more importantly fact check and feedback. The World Wide Web empowered this hive intelligence to expose individual journalists' intellectual frauds, thereby destroying their credibility and often their careers.

Perhaps for the first time, journalists' opinions, assumptions and self-censorship are subject to intense and pervasive public scrutiny. The challenge for those who describe themselves, as journalists will be to produce accounts, which can survive these, sustained analyses.

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