

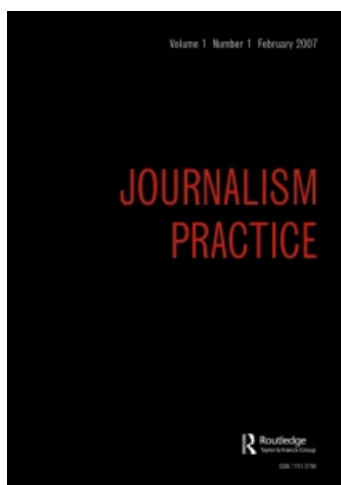
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OLD VALUES, NEW MEDIA

Journalism role perceptions in a changing world

John O'Sullivan and Ari Heinonen

More than a decade after the adoption of the Internet by news organisations and newsrooms, journalism is still coming to terms with its implications. It offers a novel platform for reaching audiences and has become a part of newsgathering and news-processing routines. But, as the Net develops in sometimes unpredictable directions, it raises an array of new questions about practices and values, some of which go to the declared defining essentials of journalism. The new media ecology, with its additional agendas of interactivity, democracy, multimediality, and with a new domain of bloggers and citizen reporters, presents a set of issues and opportunities that extend beyond familiar boundaries. European journalists in 11 countries were asked, in an informed survey, to respond to questions concerning these developments. The results elaborate some of the tensions between "traditional" journalism, rooted in "old" media, and the new perceptions, expectations and pressures of digital journalism in an increasingly inter-connected media system.

KEYWORDS blogs; citizen journalism; interactivity; new media; professional roles; reporting

Introduction

Journalists are one among many vocational groups which have needed to meet the challenge of adapting to changing premises in recent years. Many professionals have experienced increased difficulty in doing good work, in the midst of growing pressures emanating from market forces, technology and the public, all of which have been in a state of flux. Lately, it has been argued that a peculiarly narrow Anglo-American understanding of professions relating to a strictly limited set of occupational groups is no longer useful, and that the appeal and application of professionalism as a means of exerting control in the face of uncertainty and change has extended to include a wide variety of knowledge workers (Evetts, 2003).

Professionals, and journalists among them, are torn between old virtues representing apparent certainties and a rapidly shifting working environment (Gardner et al., 2001). In journalism, increased pressures for profitability, changes in media consumer behaviour and changing technology have transformed both practices and values of working life—or at least created expectations towards transformation.

To examine these changes from the perspective of journalists, it is possible to conceive of a common international understanding of journalism, based on the culture and values of modern Anglophone journalism, as practices and norms are to a large extent modelled from it in an increasing number of countries (Splichal and Sparks, 1994; Weaver, 1998). It is not within our ambit here to explore how this particular understanding has developed (for that see e.g. Chalaby, 1998; Schudson, 1978), but we can say with some

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confidence that journalism has some defining characteristics that would be recognised in most parts of late 20th- and early 21st-century Europe, partly as a result of the spread of Western values generally, but also of the permeating presence and global predominance of Western news media (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 1998; Reese, 2001, Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006, pp. 349–52). In addition, we can observe the presence of common values and concerns by reference to professional codes (Wilkins and Brennen, 2004).

Now, new media offer a prism that is useful in exploring such values, and how the ideologies and norms of the profession play out in a changing communication ecology. It is our goal here to contribute to the discussion about how journalism as an institution and as a profession responds to its encounter with the Net.

Journalists and the Internet

The volume of exploration of the profession of journalism, both generally (Zelizer, 2004, pp. 13–44) and with a particular focus on the Internet and online news, has grown apace in the past decade or so. Following Weaver and Wilhoit's (1986) seminal study of US journalists, many researchers have sought to adopt a social survey or ethnographic approach, with an increasing trend of looking into how practices and values are affected by or interact with the social and technical dimensions of the Internet (Boczkowski, 2004; Deuze and Paulussen, 2002; Heinonen, 1999; Paulussen, 2004; Quinn and Trench, 2002; Weaver, 1998). A large proportion of the questions thrown up interrogate the civic role of journalism, and whether new media either empower or compromise journalism in its self-declared mission to maintain an informed public (Coleman, 1999; Winston, 2005). Such questions can relate to the specific, for example, message boards or chat rooms (Beyers, 2004; Goss, 2007), or, sometimes, through the vehicle of such phenomena, can operate at a definitional level (Singer, 2003). Similarly, some questions focus on the routine tasks that are important in shaping journalism and news; others relate to asserted values, such as objectivity. The European-wide COST A20 content analysis of print and online newspapers which preceded this study elaborated a similar range of issues (van der Wurff and Lauf, 2005). Finally, authors such as John Pavlik (2001) and Barrie Gunter (2003) have made wide-perspective observational studies of the meeting of new media and journalism that address similar topics.

While quite probably it is futile ever to attempt to define every potential way in which the Net impinges on journalism, at this still early point in the development of online news principal areas of discussion have centred on multimedia, format and convergence; newsgathering and relations with sources and readers; news political economy and institutions; and definitions of journalism, with associated questions around values, ethics and professional identity.

The potential for news in video or audio is often emphasised promotionally and in how-to and practice-oriented texts (Foust, 2005; Kawamoto, 2003; Ward, 2002) but thus far, at least in Europe, it is arguable to what extent traditional news publishers have progressed in their online offerings beyond what is by now familiarly disparaged as "shovelware" (Boczkowski, 2004; Harper, 1996; van der Wurff and Lauf, 2005). Other format possibilities, such as longer-form, hyperlinked texts, to which there are no technical barriers, such as slow broadband adoption, on the whole have not been realised either (Jankowski and van Selm, 2000). Convergence, and in particular converged newsrooms, mostly in US organisations characterised by cross-media ownership, has also figured

significantly (Huang et al., 2006; Quinn, 2005; Quinn and Filak, 2005). Much of the discussion here relates to working pressures and quality, as well as the fusing of media cultures (Singer, 2004), and the phenomenon of breaking news and the accelerated news cycle (Hall, 2001).

From an early position of exotic exclusivity in newsrooms, the Net has now become embedded in newsgathering and news-processing routines, and has altered relationships with sources. At an apparently prosaic level, email has supplanted the fax as the vehicle for the press release, but the Net also has provided journalists with an array of story research tools (Callahan, 2003; Paul, 1999; Reddick and King, 1995). The newsroom has become a hub in a digital communication arena that bestows speed and efficiency advantages but with potential consequent implications for quality and independence. Meanwhile, alongside privileged sources, reporters now also share an unmediated information space, especially in relation to government and other official publications which are likely to be published online, but potentially also may find themselves researching and gathering news on the wider Net (Berkman and Shumway, 2004; Garrison, 2000a, 2000b).

The technical potential for interactivity raises fundamental questions around the role of the journalist, and it is the locus of much of the most contested and controversial discussion related to news and the Net. One of the foremost themes that emerges from studies of online news is the absence of message boards, chat rooms, editorial contacts and the rest of the gamut of facilities that would enable a dialogue between the otherwise isolated news producer and his or her audience (Deuze, 2003; O'Sullivan, 2005; Rosenberry, 2005; Zeng and Li, 2006). Newspapers have been quick to embrace the Net and to publish and develop Web editions, but within this movement online there clearly are tensions, as illustrated in no small way by the provision of free content, or by the internal political economies of news organisations that see online journalism and journalists as marginal or of lower status (Domingo, 2006; Kiss, 2002).

Personal journalism, citizen media, and open source journalism, in the shape of weblogs and networked sites such as Indymedia and Slashdot, are posited as competitors to and potential critics of mainstream media, in a new, intertextual communication ecology in which news workers, as dedicated paid labour, form but one, albeit important, constituent (Allan, 2006; Bruns, 2005; Gillmor, 2004) and in which the distinction between news producer and "consumer" becomes blurred (Haas, 2005). The perhaps inevitable professional response has been that the practice of journalism, with its declared emphasis on objectivity and facts, is even more vital than heretofore, such is the alleged poor quality and unreliable nature of much of the "amateur" blogosphere (Carlson, 2007).

Method and Sample

The findings to be discussed are based on a survey, interviews for which were conducted in 2005–6 in 11 European countries: Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In all countries, the target groups of respondents were selected by local researchers acquainted with the national media environment and journalistic culture. A total of 239 journalists in 40 news outlets were interviewed. Most of the outlets had been represented in a previous European-wide comparative study, in which the contents of print newspapers and their websites were analysed (van der Wurff and Lauf, 2005).

The respondents were seasoned professionals, since they had been working as journalists for a mean of about 14 years (see Table 1 for a general description of the respondents). For analytical purposes, respondents were split between those who had been in the profession 10 years or less, and those who had longer experience. The crucial year was thus 1995, which can be considered as a turning point in the history of journalistic use of the Internet. "The newcomers" (of 10 years or less professional age) comprised 45 per cent of the sample, "old hands" 55 per cent.

In the newcomers' group, a fifth (20 per cent) identified themselves as online journalists, and a third (30 per cent) said that they worked both as print and online journalists. The more experienced journalists were overwhelmingly print journalists (76 per cent), and only 5 per cent of them were online journalism workers. Although the majority of respondents were male, the majority (54 per cent) of online journalists were female. However, women did not seem to be more frequent Net users than men.

We consider that our approach in sketching a "portrait of a European journalist" is a valid one for the purposes of the study. Much of the European role model of the professional journalist has its shared origin in a globalised Anglo-American professional culture that has spread via education, business practices and, latterly, new media practices. Secondly, the scope and spectrum of our sample is illustrative, although not representative, in that the respondents come from many corners of Europe, and as a whole contribute to a sound enough body of data for us to draw tentative deductions of the attitudes existing among journalism professionals on our continent.

Observations

Using the Net

It appears that our European journalist has made a smooth transition to the Age of the Internet. Our respondents were asked about difficulties which they had encountered associated with the introduction of the Net into newsrooms, and the overwhelming majority said that there were hardly any problematic issues. Neither the costs associated with the Net nor the availability or otherwise of technical support staff or training were seen by most journalists as significant obstacles, although there was some minority sentiment indicating problems with attitudes of both journalists and management.

The Net, it seems, has become an indispensable part of journalists' everyday toolbox. On a scale of 1 to 5, it is considered very useful, with a median of 5 in replies, in searching for what can be called utility information, such as phone numbers, addresses and other service details (see Figure 1). As a tool for accessing national and local government

TABLE 1
Respondents' background information

Total N	239
Age	Mean 38 years
Gender	61% male, 39% female
Work profile	64% print, 12% online, 24% both print and online
Professional age (worked as journalist)	Mean 14 years
Internet age (used the Internet)	Mean 8 years
Internet use	75% access the Net >10 times a day

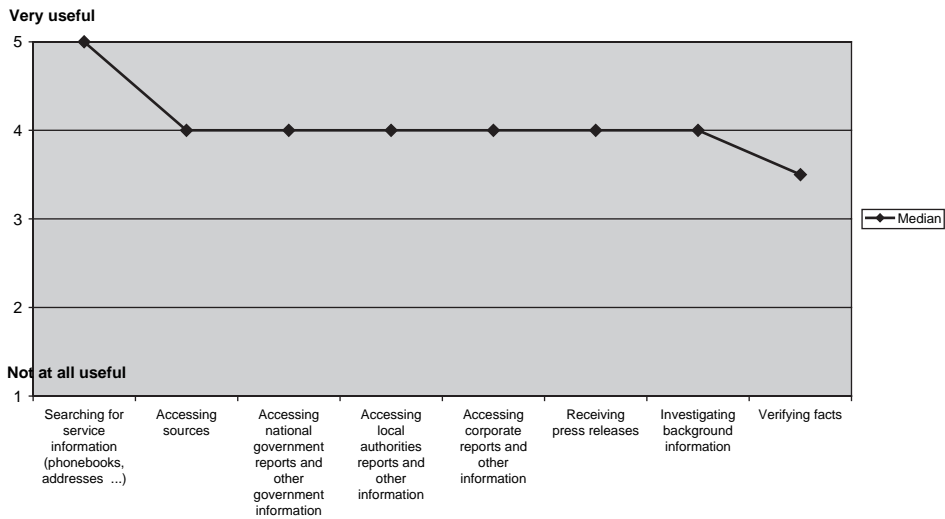


FIGURE 1
Usefulness of the Internet

information, the Net was considered slightly less useful, with a median of 4; usefulness in accessing corporate information, receiving press releases and investigating background information received a similar rating.

Perhaps it reflects widespread suspicion of the Net (not solely among journalists) that it is not considered quite as useful in verifying facts, with a median of 3.5. However, of all respondents, 50 per cent considered that the Net is useful in this regard. The Net is more valued in accessing sources, with a median of 4, and almost three-quarters of respondents (72 per cent) endorsing this view. This opinion was held equally strongly regardless of length of experience, but online journalists and those of mixed profile were more enthusiastic (86 per cent) than their print colleagues (64 per cent). This may indicate that print journalists are not that familiar with finding and accessing sources online; that they are able to use more “live” sources; or that they are less willing to rely on online sources. However, the generally positive stance on the Net is further reinforced by 75 per cent agreement that the Net allows journalists to get more information into their stories, with little to separate journalists by work profile or length of service.

To reveal further the relative significance of the Internet in journalistic work, respondents were asked to assess the importance of Net-based methods in news-gathering, alongside more traditional means (see Figure 2). Respondents assessed the relative importance of methods, online and other, on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important), and the three most valued, each with a median outcome of 5 are, on the one hand, face-to-face conversation and telephone conversation, and, on the other hand, Web search engines. The next most valued group (median value 4) of news-gathering methods also comprises a mixture of traditional and the Internet Age: personal emails, Web news sites, newsroom colleagues, and personal archives, to name a few examples.

Looking more closely, for illustrative purposes, at two journalistic research methods, we find that face-to-face conversation, perhaps the most traditional mode of news-gathering, is the most widely valued. Of print journalists, 93 per cent said that face-to-face

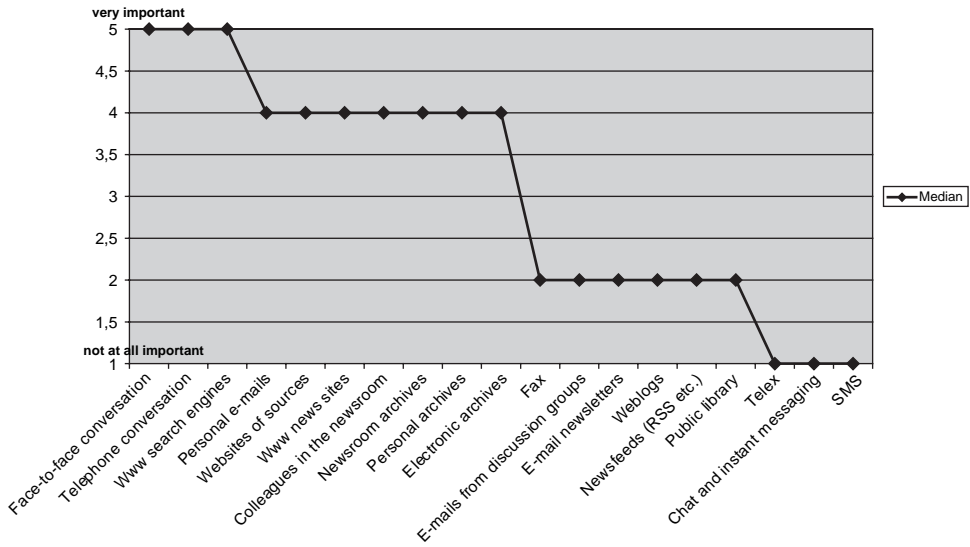


FIGURE 2
Importance of information-gathering methods

conversation is important, whereas this view was held by much fewer online journalists, at 63 per cent. Mixed-profile journalists fall in the middle, with 75 per cent saying that such conversation is important.

Clearer differences are observed in attitudes towards weblogs as research tools, on the basis of work profile. Print journalists said quite widely (84 per cent) that weblogs are not important: this opinion was expressed by substantially fewer online journalists (59 per cent), whereas mixed-profile journalists held the middle ground (67 per cent).

Given that, as shown above, it seems that European journalists indeed have taken the Net quite unproblematically into their everyday professional life, it might be interesting to know, as a measure of their perception of its centrality to their work, how they would feel the effects of ceasing to use it. We tested opinions on taking away the Internet with respect to various aspects of journalistic work (see Figure 3).

In general, respondents seem to consider the effects of ceasing to use the Net as negative or, at best, neutral. When looking at the medians of the responses, there is not a single aspect of journalistic work mentioned which it is considered would benefit in such circumstances. Medians vary from 1 (very negative effect) to 3, which can be regarded as not having much effect in either direction. No values were recorded at 4 or, the extreme, 5 (very positive effect).

It appears that the Net would be missed most by journalists in relation to news currency. Firstly, they felt that, without the Internet, it would be difficult to keep up to date with news, and there would be negative effects on the speed of information gathering as well as on access to digital archives. In addition, journalists indicated that there would be negative effects on real-time publishing of breaking news. All of these aspects of journalistic work scored a median of 1, i.e. a very negative effect would be felt.

Slightly less severe but still negative effects register in relation to some other routine chores. Tracking story topics, finding sources, data checking and simply keeping in touch with the newsroom from the field would be somewhat hampered by the removal of the

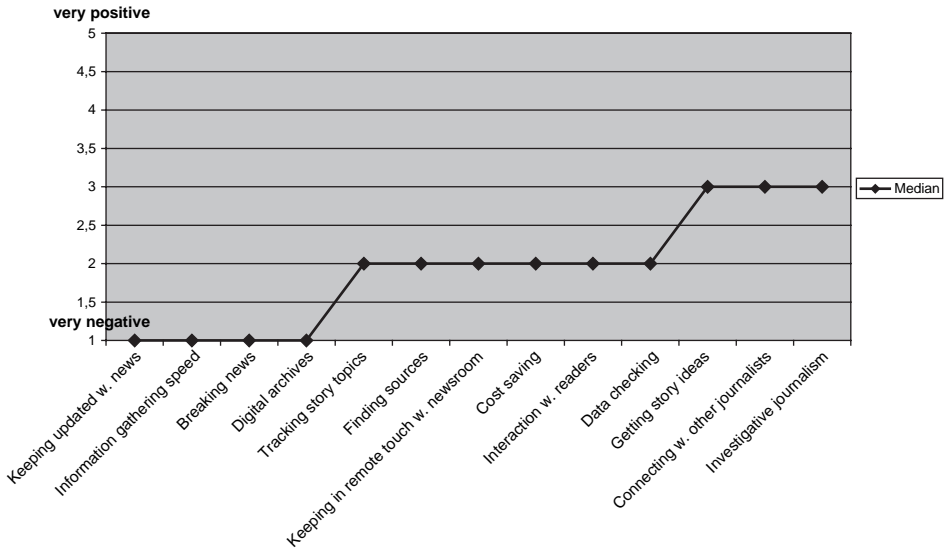


FIGURE 3
Effects of ceasing to use the Internet

Net. Medians here were 2. It is interesting that interaction with readers falls also into this slightly less negatively affected category. It may be tenuous to conclude that journalists generally consider the Net more important for keeping up to date than interacting with the audience, but we can say that, of the two, they present more anxiety in relation to news currency.

Ceasing to use the Net would seem to have the least negative effect (median 3) on getting story ideas and keeping in touch with other journalists—and, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, on investigative journalism. It would appear that the Net is not considered critical in working imaginatively or in digging up difficult material. In relation to interaction with readers, respondents in general felt that there would be some loss in the absence of the Internet, with a median of 2 on the scale of 5.

Some variation appears between respondents on the basis of whether they consider themselves creatures of print, online media, or both. For instance, while a clear majority of print journalists (74 per cent) consider that ceasing to use the Net would have negative effect on breaking news, this opinion was even more emphatically held by online journalists (97 per cent). Those with a mixed profile, i.e. identifying themselves as “both print and online journalists”, took the middle ground, at 79 per cent. Similar differences between print and online journalist were found relating to interaction with readers. Although more than half (54 per cent) of print journalists said that interaction would be negatively affected by ceasing to use the Net, this stance was taken much more widely among online journalists, at 82 per cent. Again, those describing themselves as both print and online journalists were in the middle: 63 per cent said the effects would be negative.

Journalism and the Public

In theory, and technically, the Internet can bring journalists into closer contact with those outside the confines of the news organisation, whether the audience, the public at

large, or the emerging and perhaps critical or competing practitioners of citizen journalism. With a series of questions, it was hoped to elicit some insight into how journalists actually see such relationships in the contexts of traditional and new media.

Given that the Web affords an opportunity for virtually perfect knowledge of which editorial output is read, it is interesting to note that only a quarter (26 per cent) of all journalists said they receive detailed information on reader behaviour, while a larger share (38 per cent) said they are confined to receiving outline information and more than a third (36 per cent) reported having no access to such information. Strikingly, no online journalist reported ignorance of such information, while almost half (48 per cent) of print journalists did.

Working journalists are relatively sanguine about the perceived challenge to the role of newspapers of DIY journalism (citizen journalism, blogs etc.). Over 64 per cent rejected the notion that there is such a threat, with a median outcome of 2 on the scale of 5 (1 = strongly disagree). There was little variation according to the work profile or professional age of respondents, apart from the tendency of newer journalists to hold this view more widely.

If we are tempted to interpret this low level of misgiving as meaning that journalists take an apparently progressive or inclusive view of developments, their attitude towards the value of citizen journalism and blogs complicates matters. An overall median of 4 represents a relatively strong endorsement of the rather provocative statement that these forms of activity do not comprise real journalism. Over half (51 per cent) of respondents held this view, and less than a quarter (23 per cent) actively disputed it. One might anticipate some strong argument against this sentiment, which could be interpreted as dismissive. Print journalists displayed strongest hostility; online and mixed-profile combined tended more towards a neutral position, as did the newer professional group.

Traditional values seem to win out when respondents considered the relative advantages of print and online mediums (see Figure 4). For example, there was overall active disagreement (56 per cent) with the statement that online journalists are closer to

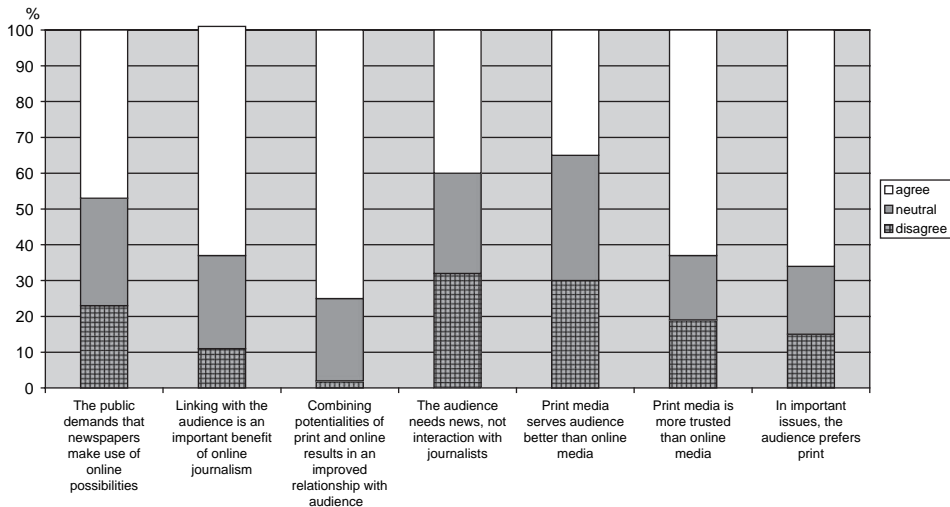


FIGURE 4
The Internet, journalism and the public

their audience, with a median of 2. The sentiment is most marked, at 63 per cent, among print journalists. Mixed-profile journalists score 46 per cent agreement with the statement, compared with only 16 per cent for their newsprint counterparts. Almost 30 per cent of all respondents preferred to take no view, or expressed ambivalence or lack of knowledge in relation to the assertion that there is a public demand that their publications exploit online possibilities. But almost half (47 per cent) agreed to some extent, with less than half that proportion disagreeing. Online (67 per cent) and mixed-profile journalists (49 per cent) show much more enthusiasm here than print journalists. Although they voiced little active opposition to exploring new possibilities, well over half of print journalists, at 58 per cent, were little exercised about them. Those fresher to the job were only slightly more likely to agree with the statement.

More than two-thirds (64 per cent) of respondents expressed an appreciation of connecting with the audience as an important benefit of online journalism. A significant proportion (26 per cent) preferred to inhabit the neutral zone here, but relatively few (11 per cent) expressed active disagreement. In spite of the median outcome of 4 (qualified agreement) a tiny 2 per cent registered opposition to the notion that combining potentialities of print and online would result in an improved audience relationship, with 75 per cent in support. Perhaps support for complementarity is the sort of apparently progressive position with which it is relatively easy to agree, without invoking difficult questions for rooted professional norms. But the seemingly pointed statement that the audience needs news, and not dialogue with news producers, evinces a muted response, with a median value of 3. This outcome reflects a relatively substantial (28 per cent) group of neutrals, but also a balancing of opinions on either side of that option, with 40 per cent agreeing, and 32 per cent disagreeing. Print newspaper journalists were most likely to agree strongly (23 per cent) with the statement, with online and mixed-profile journalists registering significantly lower enthusiasm. Nevertheless, a strong contingent, at 33 per cent, of online journalists agreed somewhat with the statement, recording opinions at 4 in the scale. Longer-serving journalists are more sceptical about audience interactivity, with around 25 per cent agreeing fully with the statement, compared with just 12 per cent of those whose careers have begun within the Internet era.

As we have seen, asking simply whether print media serve the audience better than online media draws a non-committal response from the group as a whole, with a median of 3, with this outcome strongly determined by the fact that 35 per cent of respondents have plumped for this option. However, looking more closely at responses from within particular work profiles, the assertion gets an emphatic rejection from online journalists at 68 per cent, while only 13 per cent of print journalists disagreed, with 38 per cent of them preferring to stay diplomatically neutral, and 48 per cent agreeing. Of mixed-profile journalists, 56 per cent disagreed with the statement. So, in spite of a hesitant overall response, there are some very firm views held on this admittedly bluntly put question, with a clear split between print and online or mixed-profile factions. There is little to separate journalists on the basis of professional age: both groups gravitate towards the median on this question, although the "old hands" show a little more print chauvinism.

There is less balance, or ambiguity, when it comes to trust, with a median of 4 and relatively few (18 per cent) occupying the middle ground. Overall, 63 per cent of respondents agree that print media are more trusted than online, compared with only 19 per cent who demur. All three work groups show substantial agreement with the statement, but to varying extents—print, 73 per cent (though with 42 per cent agreeing

fully); mixed profile 47 per cent; and online 46 per cent. Among print journalists, only 10 per cent disagreed, compared with 35 per cent among their online counterparts. Of course, these data need to be interpreted carefully, especially as it is not clear if respondents answered the question on audience preference in literal terms, as to whether print actually is trusted or preferred more, or interpreted it to mean that print is more trustworthy. But we can see that, overall, there is a movement towards the older media form when it comes to an essential value.

Ethics and the Net

It seems that the European journalist is quite confident concerning the Internet's consequences for quality. For example, an overwhelming majority (79 per cent) agreed that the Net prompts journalists' wider use of sources (see Figure 5). And, although most (56 per cent) agreed that journalists must deal with unreliable information more often online, and a majority disagreed with the statement that separating fact from falsehood would be as easy on the Net as elsewhere, most of the respondents (58 per cent) suggested that it is easier to double-check information thanks to the Net.

A slightly larger share of journalists agreed with the statement that online journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed than disagreed with it (41 and 35 per cent, respectively). Among those with more professional experience there was a clearer tendency to agree with this statement than among post-1995 entrants (47 and 35 per cent, respectively). It may not be surprising that almost every other print journalist (49 per cent) agreed with the statement, whereas only a third of online journalist (32 per cent) did so. But it is interesting that those working both as print and online journalists were least worried about sacrificing accuracy in the rush to publish; only a fraction of them (16 per cent) agreed with the statement.

The question of accountability has always been a crucial issue in the debate about journalistic quality and ethics, and in this regard the respondents do not seem to think

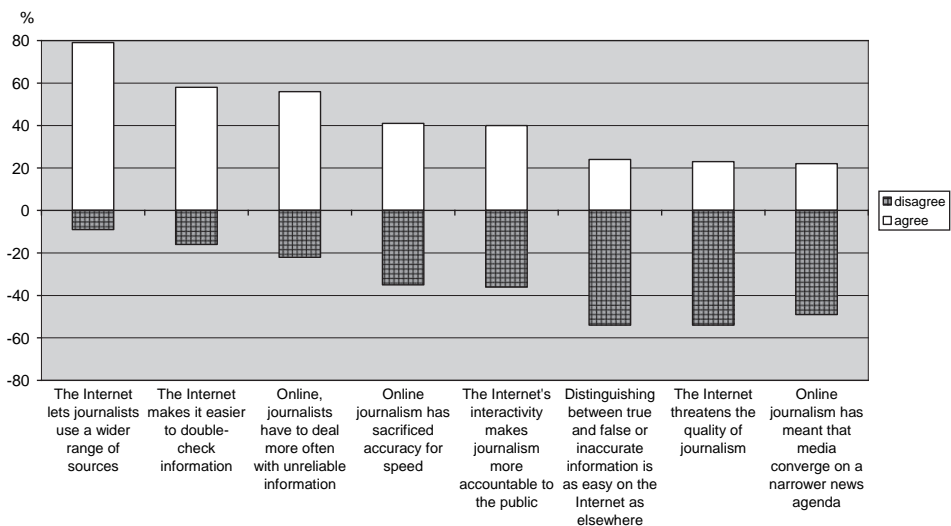


FIGURE 5
The Internet, ethics and quality

that Net-based interactivity would bring about much change. While many respondents (40 per cent) agreed with the statement that the Net's interactivity makes journalism more accountable to the public, more than a third (36 per cent) disagreed. Again, those with a longer career were more sceptical than relative late-comers (45 and 35 per cent, respectively). About a third of print journalists agreed (35 per cent) with the statement, while among online and mixed-medium journalists almost half supported the statement (46 and 49 per cent).

All in all, respondents seem to think that there is not a threat, or at least not an imminent one, to the quality of journalism. Over half (54 per cent) disputed this assertion. However, it is worth noting here that almost a quarter (23 per cent) agreed. Between older and younger professionals, the former were more worried, with more than a quarter (26 per cent) in accord with the statement, while among younger professionals less than a fifth (19 per cent) agreed. In addition, almost a third of more experienced journalists (28 per cent) were unable to comment either way. About a third of print journalists agreed with the statement (28 per cent) while only 7 per cent of online journalists did so. Male journalists were more sceptical; over a quarter of them (27 per cent) agreed with the statement, considerably more than females, at 16 per cent.

Discussion

As we progress into the second decade of news' encounter with the Net, publishers, journalists and observers are still grappling with ideas of change, and the role of journalism as a profession is central to the discussion. As print circulations continue to fall in most markets, and Net adoption strengthens, there is a degree of inevitability in the belief that, at some point, newspapers will need to unshackle themselves from their print origins and redefine themselves as online entities, potentially with attendant fundamental changes in practice, culture and content.

We have seen in this study that journalists as a group are not only more than comfortable with the Internet, having adopted it with relatively little difficulty, but now view it as essential. There is little technophobia in evidence. Far from being intimidated by the Net, they rank Net-related story research techniques as being among some of the most important in their toolbox. Overall, they do not perceive a threat from the Internet to the quality of journalism. Within that assessment, they apparently are also unperturbed at the arrival on the scene of new cohorts of online content producers. And they express warm feelings towards using the Net to connect to audiences and towards new possibilities in multimedia.

On this level, at least, it seems that journalists are happy to place themselves among Net-progressives. However, this apparent optimism comes with certain caveats that emerge when we probe a little more deeply and, perhaps, sensitively, or otherwise is tempered by remaining preferences for "old" ways. It is a trivial assertion that the Net is immensely useful to journalists: what may be more telling is that face-to-face and telephone conversation still are most highly prized as reporting methods. And, where the Net is rated as very useful, it is frequently in the pursuit of distinctly traditional news values, such as currency, where its absence would be most lamented, and less so in relation to interactivity. The significance of more inclusive online media, such as weblogs or discussion boards, as research sources in the new news ecology is given short shrift. Overall, personal, or DIY, journalism is rather strongly rejected as a form of "real"

journalism. Scepticism about convergence emerges when the issue of recycling, or "shovelware" is raised, and the survey registers a note of caution when it comes to the demands of working with multimedia. Journalists also raise fears concerning the quality of information available online, and many dispute the contention that online interactivity engenders more accountability. Trust is seen to reside more in print media than online.

Two other features are salient. Firstly, it is striking that many of the questions put to our respondents, selected as expert informants, elicited neutral responses. It is difficult to interpret whether this reflects ambivalence or ignorance or confusion, but we can say that a large proportion of news workers opt for safer ground. Against that, the frequent polarisation of responses fits our expectations that print journalists would endorse more traditional values, while online and mixed-profile journalists would offer a more Net-friendly perspective.

This survey confirms that the social institution called journalism is hesitant in abandoning its conventions, both at organisational and professional levels, even in the "Age of the Net", when overall communication patterns in society are being re-shaped. There seems to be a prevailing "principle of continuity" in journalism. The profession has striven for its status among other professions in society since the 1800s. Even now, there seems to be an internal need to adhere to practices which ensure that status, and to maintain the particular values that both generate and legitimise those practices. Newspaper journalists appear to want to stay newspaper journalists. This is not to say that they are recalcitrant technophobes, but they welcome the Net when it suits their existing professional ends, and are much less enthusiastic about, and unlikely to promote, radical change in news work.

Journalists mostly continue to behave like journalists in the conventional sense, with conventional ethics and values at least evident in their professional rhetoric (Evans, 1999) and in the various texts and classrooms of journalism educators. At this point, it remains far from clear whether the profession can maintain its status quo, move towards normalisation of new potentialities (Matheson, 2004, Robinson, 2006, Singer, 2005), or is willing or able to adapt radically to new conditions (Bromley and Purdey, 1998) and to shift from its traditional role towards a more democratic community and public debate-oriented ideal heralded since the earliest days of Internet news (Bardoel, 1996).

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