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Journalism as a Practice

Everyone is a witness, everyone is a journalist (Indymedia)

The suggestion that the internet offers to ordinary people wishing to write, comment and report has led to a plethora of responses. The idea that everyone is a journalist has led some to bemoan the 'end of journalism', whilst others have celebrated it.

The array of new forms of digital news production has caused consternation in some circles. In an article for the *Press Gazette* in 2006 Linda Jones argued that bloggers should not be considered journalists, for they are simply not subject to the same processes and pressures as 'real' journalists. Bloggers are not pressured by sub-editors, editors and lawyers at their place of work; they are not trained to consider content that might be libellous or contemptuous; they do not consider the value of their writings to audiences; and do not consider grammatical and stylistic issues. In other words, Jones implies that journalists are defined as such through their institutional context, which bloggers in particular lack (Jones, 2006).

On the other hand, during an address to the Heyman Centre for the Humanities at Columbia University, John Pilger noted that 'It is said the internet is an alternative; and what is wonderful about the rebellious spirits on the World Wide Web is that they often report as journalists should.' Similarly, in an article for the *Washington Post*, Jay Rosen emphasised 'how disruptive web technology is to traditional journalism'. He explains how the internet has 'busted open' the 'system of gates and gatekeepers' by allowing sources communicate direct to the public and by facilitating collaborative journalism, resulting in a 'new balance of power between producers and consumers'.

We cannot seriously consider the possibilities of online journalism, or evaluate it, without considering first what journalism is. The question of whether blogging 'is' journalism really depends on what one means by journalism and what sort of blog

one refers to. According to *Technorati* in May 2010 of the five most popular blogs, four were musings on gadgets and technology. Indeed, many bloggers dedicate their time to releasing lists of links to everything from pirated computer software to pornography sites. So, some blogs are self-consciously journalistic, but others are not. Consequently such blanket assertions as 'bloggers are…' are as unhelpful as those that tell us 'journalists are…'.

Journalism and Old New Technologies

It was perhaps inevitable that journalists would construe the early internet as a threat. As early as 1995 *The New York Times* referred to the 'lure and addiction of life on line' (18 March 1995). *The Globe and Mail* reported that 'a growing number of on-line users have become junkies' (15 October 1995). The drug metaphor would continue over the next year, with *USA Today* reporting that 'Obsessive internet users have a true addiction' (1 July 1996), and then pass across the Atlantic to *The Sunday Times* which informed us that the 'internet traps surfers in addictive Web' (9 June 1996) and the *Daily Mail* explaining the specific problem of a '"Cocaine-like rush" for users locked in a fantasy world' (4 January 1996).

More specifically as relates to journalism, print journalists muddled the medium with an institution or even the practice of journalism. For instance the *Toronto Star* contrasted the internet with more familiar media. In contrast to the internet, 'Conventional news media – newspapers, TV, radio – come equipped with editors whose job it is to cast a skeptical eye on stories' ('A media virus from internet', 13 May 1995). The *Denver Post* reiterated the theme a couple of years later: 'mainstream journalists are stuck with the facts, no matter how much they may spin them. But the internet … operates under no such restrictions and seems rather proud of it' ('Truth's values plummet on "Net",' 2 November 1997).

So whereas other media are truthful, the internet is anthropomorphised into a liar. At the same time, however, it is not just the factual nature of other media that gives them an advantage, but also their communicative capacities. Indeed an analysis in *Media Guardian* informed us that 'Newspapers offer a forum for debate and analysis which cannot be provided either by new computer services or by TV and radio. As well as breaking scoops, papers can explain the whys, whats and wherefores in a way other superficial media cannot' ('The online age and us', 24 April 1995). *The Sunday Times* took a similar position, explaining to its readers, 'The fact that consumers can now access an immense variety of unfiltered news sources raises issues of trust and credibility. Most newspapers and broadcasters are anchored in both history and accountability, and a great many websites have neither' ('Screening out the lies', 23 January 2000).

More recently, *The Australian* complained:

all were going to be democratised by Web 2.0. But democratisation, despite its lofty idealisation, is undermining truth, souring civic discourse and belittling expertise, experience and talent. It is threatening the future of our cultural institutions.… [Web 2.0 is] the great seduction…[peddling] the promise of bringing more truth to more people: more depth of information, more global perspective, more unbiased opinion from dispassionate observers. But this is all a smokescreen… [Instead, all] the Web 2.0 revolution is really delivering is superficial observations of the world around us rather than deep analysis, shrill opinion rather than considered judgment. The information business is being transformed by the internet into the sheer noise of one hundred million bloggers all simultaneously talking about themselves. ('Disentangle it now, this web of deceit', *The Australian*, 4 August 2007)

A year later *The Independent* railed against the BBC's use of Twitter in its reporting of the Mumbai massacre. The commentary informed us that 'whereas in the old days only professional journalists (weathered men with Press Cards tucked into their hat bands) would have been able to contribute to that news feed, now it appeared that anybody with a Twitter subscription could have a crack', adding, 'Twittering is not the way to provide news' (2 December 2008). Of course today *The Independent*'s website utilises many of the technologies seen to debase journalism, including Twitter.

We see here a number of concerns about digital journalism based on varieties of technological determinism. This is to say that much of the discourse abstracts technologies from their use and suggests determinate, usually deleterious effects on journalism.

In fact, journalists and news organisations have a tradition of scepticism towards new technologies, yet this scepticism masks the intimate relations journalists and news organisations have with the technologies they use as well as the way in which uses are developed.

In the first instance, from the telegraph to the satellite, journalists have always utilised technologies in news gathering. Postal systems, phone networks, vox pops, and 'wire' services have uncontentiously helped journalists collect information.

For example, the method of writing news for newspapers takes the form of the inverted pyramid, which Stuart Allan (2004) shows emerged from an interaction with technology. He suggests that the use of the telegraph, especially by the Associated Press (AP) led to a training system in which the 'inverted pyramid' was taught because 'unreliable telegraph lines made it necessary to compress the most significant facts' into the lead paragraph. There was also an economic dimension to the conventionalisation of newspaper discourses. The expense of using the telegraph also meant that 'Each word of a news account had to be justified in terms

of cost', leading to a more efficient, straightforward use of language (Allan, 2004: 16–18). Chapman (2005: 93) adds that the use of the telephone had the impact of concretising the division between field journalists who 'became entirely responsible for the gathering and initial drafting of news' and desk journalists who 'stayed in the office and fine-tuned this output to the house style'.

In order to better understand the capacity journalism has for adaptation to new technologies, and to recognise the continual need to adapt, we need this historical perspective. This enables us to see that, against technological determinism, the approaches of the social shaping of technology in fact demonstrate that human influence is much greater than understood by technological determinists and that possible uses are far more flexible than might be thought. Indeed, a technology has no impact outside the context of its institutionalised forms of use (Salter, 2004). For example, 'the internet' should not be compared with newspapers at all – the proper comparator would be paper, of which the newspaper is an institutionalised form of use. Uses become conventionalised in practices, such as journalism. Indeed, paper may be used for money, pornography or newspapers. Television may be used for closed circuit television, shopping or comedy sketch shows. None of these uses are inherent in the medium and they are certainly not necessarily exclusive.

Television as New Media

New technologies only prescribe uses in a very minimal sense. Television news, for example, was not preformed for news. Rather, its use for journalism was first constrained by pre-existing conventions for other media, alongside entrenched interests that profited from those conventionalised forms of use. Specific television news conventions – initially borrowed from radio – were developed over a number of years, and continue to develop today, as do the technologies used.

The initial confusion over how to do television news in the UK is described by BBC journalist Andrew Marr:

> The BBC's first answer was to ignore the pictures almost entirely, in the cause of pure news. The newsreels were still being brought in, often out of date and lacking real sound… By the early 1950s the BBC had its own newsreel department… But [the newsreels] were really short feature films… For the BBC News people, who had grown up in the culture of words, this was fine. Moving pictures could never be serious. They conceded that news bulletins should be aired on television too. But how to marry the raw visual power of film with the sacred duty of news reporting? No one could figure that out. (Marr, 2004: 270)

Part of the problem, according to Marr, was that the audio and visual provisions at the time were located in different departments (it is worth remembering that the introduction of sound into film at the time was by no means natural. Technologies for playing sound to match images were available long before they were widely used). Consequently, a compromise was reached wherein 'radio would provide the words, TV the pictures'. Marr describes the early television news service thus:

> The news was … dealt with in words alone, with carefully printed captions, like paragraph headings in a newspaper, held up in front of the camera while an unseen announcer read the appropriate item of news. There then might be a series of still pictures or … hand drawn maps. Sometimes a hand would appear from off screen … helpfully pointing to something. (Marr, 2004: 270–1)

In addition to the internal wrangling between departments within the BBC, Stuart Allan has noted the impact of institutional constraints on the early conventions of television news. He explains that the:

> ten minutes of news was read by an off-screen voice in an 'impersonal, sober and quiet manner', the identity of the [always male] newsreader being kept secret to preserve the institutional authority of the BBC. (Allan, 2004: 36)

Things fared little better in the US. The 28 January 1952 edition of *Time Magazine* reported the perceived debacle of television broadcasting there:

> In the first years of television, US newspaper editors worried that the new medium would capture many of their readers by covering news as it happened. So far, the worries have been groundless; TV news programs have added little to the technique of reporting, have often been no better than radio newscasts – and sometimes not as good.

It then went on to report on a new innovation in television news reporting at NBC, 'an ambitious two-hour global news roundup' called *Today*, recounting two significant incidents:

> the ranging TV eye fixed on Admiral William M. Fechteler, Chief of Naval Operations, on the steps of the Pentagon on his way to work. 'Can you give us a pronouncement on the state of the Navy?' asked NBC's reporter. 'Well, I don't know,' said Admiral Fechteler. 'When I left it yesterday, it was in great shape.' 'Thank you, Admiral Fechteler,' cried the reporter triumphantly. Said critic Crosby: 'The fact is Admiral Fechteler hadn't opened his mail yet.'

Communicator Garroway went on with his program: 'Hello, Ed Haaker in Frankfurt. Tell me the news in your part of the world.' Replied Haaker: 'The big news is the weather. We had our first big storm of the year. We're really chilly.' Said Garroway: 'You're not alone. Goodbye, Ed.' (*Time Magazine*, 28 January, 1952).

We can see then, that in each case, there were no pre-existing conventions for using these new media, and a period of adjustment emerged. Debates raged about whether it was even possible to 'do' news on television, and even whether television itself would last – Andrew Marr cites a BBC executive opining that 'Television won't last. It's a flash in the pan'! (Marr, 2004: 268). Once it was recognised that television would not go away, newspaper people expressed anxiety over the future of newspaper publishing – would newspapers survive the television age? Similarly, radio people questioned whether there was a future for radio.

Binds and Opportunities

Despite the initial scepticism towards television, it would appear very strange today to question its value to journalists. The attempt to shoehorn the practices of newspaper journalism into television seem misguided now that we regard television as a form of journalism in its own right. The same is proving to be the case with the internet and associated technologies today as new forms of journalism and new journalistic conventions are being established.

Indeed, despite the misgivings outlined above, we see that there have always been more sober voices within the industry. Some commentators recognised early on that the core elements of the practice of journalism are maintained despite the medium. *Editor and Publisher* reported on the head of Associated Press' take on the impact of the internet on journalism: Lou Boccardi was reported as suggesting, 'Whether it appears on a printed page, or a series of pixels on a computer screen, journalism must be accurate, objective and fair … As we look excitedly at the interactive world and its promise, with its changing tools of communication, it is important to remember that the principles of the news piece do not change' ('AP chief: Beware of yellow journalism in cyberspace' *Editor and Publisher Magazine*, 11 February 1995.). Perhaps Boccardi overstates the continuity, for the principles of a news piece surely do change, but the principles behind good journalism do not.

Indeed, concerns over the veracity and quality of information on the internet may go some way to explaining the conservatism of early internet news ventures. When the big news corporations moved onto the internet, they did much the same as the newspapers companies that first went on to television – they simply transferred the data to the new medium, in the main without considering the potential of the internet.

For example, in September 1994, *The Times* trumpeted its new 'internet computer network', wherein 'From today, readers in any country will be able to call up articles from these pages on their personal computers, using a modem. They will also be able to communicate their ideas and questions directly to our specialist media writers and to other readers, using the same basic tools'. *The Times* network would offer a 'daily summary of the main items in *The Times*, other specialist content and, eventually, an archive'. It would provide access to databases in academic institutions, associations and corporations 'on every continent', and access to a variety of other sites from the CIA World Factbook to humorous and entertainment sites ('Welcome to *The Times* internet computer network', 21 September 1994). Almost a year later, the parent company of *The Times*, News Corporation, aimed to launch a 'global online newspaper' that would 'draw on all the News Corporation titles worldwide' (*The Times*, 3 June 1995). Similarly the 1996 launch of *The Sunday Times* boasted the transferral of the newspaper online, though by now it had added a frequently updated 'rolling news' service as well as games, classified advertising, television guide and weather (*The Sunday Times*, 7 January 1996).

Tellingly, by 1996, *The Times* boasted that '98 per cent of the text which appears in the printed edition can now be accessed online. Unlike other electronic newspapers, which edit their stories before they appear, the internet editions are exactly the same as the published versions' ('Internet *Times* goes from strength to strength', *The Times*, 3 April 1996). This is to say that *The Times* made a virtue of shovelware – the reproduction of offline material online. There was no real attempt to consider the development of specifically online journalism.

The main concern of many news executives was merely how to make money from what was perceived as just a new platform of delivery. Such an approach was common across the globe. *USA Today* explained that its online service would offer access to the worldwide web, bulletin boards and email. It would draw on its newspaper content – though it 'would not be a clone' – but it would cost $14.95 monthly for three hours online; additional hours were $3.95 each ('*USA Today* nabs place in cyberspace', *USA Today*, 22 March 1995). The *Financial Times* summarised the limited scope of early business models thus, 'Several business models have emerged as publishers attempt to tap into this potentially important new market. These range from offering "teasers" to on-line readers in the hopes of persuading them to subscribe to magazines and newsletters, to experiments with electronic distribution of book manuscripts' (4 October 1994: 5).

It must be borne in mind that the limited scope of early forays into 'online journalism' reflected the context in which it was situated. At the time, the 'internet' actually consisted of discrete networks, such as Compuserve and AOL, which controlled access to other networks. It was also the case that these restricted networks provided the infrastructure for online presence, so newspapers had to work

within that infrastructure. Business models attempted to use the online newspaper to connect people to an isolated and controlled computer network rather than encourage them to embrace a borderless, global, hyperlinked internet.

However, as the internet developed, the tide turned against shovelware. By 1999 *The Independent* had recognised the potential of online journalism was being stymied by conservative business and journalistic models. In November 1999, it reported its launch of 'a completely new website that broke with the conventions of online newspapers'. It went on to explain its approach to online journalism:

> Indeed, we went out of our way to ensure that it looked nothing like a newspaper. This is a website with no deadlines, constantly refreshed (although we do sleep between 1am and 7am) and organised into a series of channels, with the latest DHTML (dynamic hypertext mark-up language), making navigation as easy as it gets….

> There is no point in taking every item from the newspaper each night and replicating it on the Web. It's been tried and has failed (although some organisations persist with this outdated strategy). If you put every word on the Web, there is no incentive for people to buy the titles. What's more, many of the key features and much of the unique appeal of a broadsheet do not necessarily translate to the Web. Internet users want bites of information; some will stay and read in greater depth, but many will be off to the next site. ('Introducing *The Independent* Online', 9 November 1999)

Finally, news organisations had understood that the internet was a different medium and would require a different set of resources, different methods, new conventions and new relations. But what of this promise? How radical a change could the internet bring about? Could it be the case, as so many pundits speculated, that an 'information revolution' would transform people's relation to information? Would journalists be necessary anymore? Could the grip of the corporate giants over the mediascape be loosened?

But is it Journalism?

Understanding the fate of journalism in an ever changing technological environment necessitates consideration of what we mean when we refer to 'journalism'. Allan (2006) considers journalism to consist of reasonably stable sets of conventions, citing blogging as one form of online activity that has settled on a set of conventions that constitute journalism, but the fundamental principles of the practice of journalism may or may not be adhered to in blogging. The point, however, is that journalism is not associated with a particular technology, but new technologies tend to be thought of as threats to this practice.

The question of what journalism is is important not just with regard to academic interest – it is also a crucial practical question. For example, as more and more ordinary people can lay claim to the title of 'journalist', as we shall see, the question of who is recognised as a journalist, and therefore entitled to journalistic privilege, becomes increasingly pertinent.

Attempts to define journalism run into difficulties when they are too general. For example, Singer (2003: 144) refers to a journalist as a 'person who gathers (reports) and processes (writes) accurate and important information so it can be disseminated to a wider audience.' Surely such a broad description would include publicists, stock market analysts and gospel writers? But then can a more limited description explain the full range of journalistic practices?

Andrew Marr's (2004: 9) history of journalism marks Daniel Defoe, in the early eighteenth century, as a significant character in the history of journalism for Marr claims he was one of the first journalists who 'believed in going and seeing with his own eyes. He wanted to witness with his own ears… [he] travelled and wrote down and interviewed'. But Marr refers to Defoe as a reporter – that is as a particular type of journalist. Such an understanding of the role of reporters continues to be the case today. David Randall, in his significantly titled *The Universal Journalist* argues that:

> The heroes of journalism are reporters. What they do is find things out. They go in first, amid the chaos of now, battering at closed doors, sometimes taking risks, and capture the beginnings of the truth. And if they do not do that, who will? Editors? Commentators? There is only one alternative to reporters: accepting the authorized version. (Randall, 2000: 1)

There is, then, an argument that reporters perform a particular task within journalism, on which other journalistic forms depend. But if these descriptions define reporters, what are journalists?

Karen Sanders (2003: 9) makes the distinction between literature and journalism, arguing that the latter is distinctive because it 'has an exterior reference, a reference to the world of events about which it provides information to others'. However, it is not just this 'reference to the world of events' that defines journalism, because historians, political writers and sociologists write with such reference points.

For Michael Schudson (2001: 159) there is a presentational or stylistic element that distinguishes journalism – it is a particular way of presenting information; it is not 'only a… style of prose but the self conscious articulation of rules with moral force that direct how that prose shall be written and provide a standard of condemnation when the writing does not measure up.'

We can perhaps draw these insights together with G. Stuart Adam's (1993) attempts to spell out a coherent definition of the practice of journalism. He suggests that:

A preliminary definition might go like this: Journalism is an invention or a form of expression used to report and comment in the public media on the events and ideas of the here and now. There are at least five elements in such a definition: (1) a form of expression that is an invention; (2) reports of ideas and events; (3) comments on them; (4) the public circulation of them; and (5) the here and now. (Adam, 1993: 11)

For Adam journalism is a cultural practice that is driven by what he refers to as the 'Journalistic Imagination' which is 'the primary method of framing experience and forming the public consciousness of the here and now. Its principles are immanent, more or less, in every journalist and in every journalistic institution' (Adam, 1993: 45).

What Adam adds to the mix here is the concept of the public. The journalist interfaces with the public, and it is for this reason that she must ensure that she follows proven principles of journalism. So, journalism is not just a style of writing but a mode of address that refers to the citizens that make up a public.

In *The Elements of Journalism*, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel argue that the practice of journalism aims to provide 'independent, reliable, accurate and comprehensive information that citizens require to be free' (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2003: 11). To do this they propose concrete commitments of journalists to the truth, to citizens, to verification, to independence from those they cover, to monitor power, to provide a forum for public criticism, to be interesting and relevant, to be comprehensive and proportional and to exercise their personal conscience (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2003: 13). Elsewhere Kovach (2005) adds that 'Journalism does more than keep us informed – journalism enables us as citizens to have our voices heard in the chambers of power and allows us to monitor and moderate the sources of power that shape our lives'.

The journalist John Lloyd (2004) has argued at length that such failings reflect a deep problem with the media, in which journalistic standards have dropped significantly. According to Lloyd the need to dispassionately report facts has been replaced by journalists 'acting as an opposition' because the political parties had become too close to each other. As a consequence of this 'The division between news and comment has tended to erode and the habit of comment has become general', and newspapers have come to privilege 'reportage which is suffused with moral or other judgements' (Lloyd, 2004: 16). We can see then, that many of the charges levelled at internet-based journalism are not restricted to journalism that takes place via a particular medium. Rather they are perceived problems with the practice of journalism as such.

However, the criticisms of Lloyd and others tend to be based on a liberal conception of journalistic professionalism. Against this, a number of critical theorists have argued that 'professional' journalism plays an ideological role, by socially constructing the world in accord with a hegemonic worldview. The work of Stuart Hall et al. (1978)

and of the Glasgow Media Group (1976) was pioneering in demonstrating that, as the Glasgow Group put it, 'the news is not a neutral product. For [it] is a cultural artefact; it is a sequence of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society'. This occurs, according to Hall and colleagues, because of a 'systematically structured over-accessing by the media of those in powerful and privileged institutional positions. The media thus tend, faithfully and impartially, to reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order' (Hall et al. 1978: 58).

The liberal denial of the 'bias of neutrality' stems from a particular self-understanding of journalists, described by Mark Deuze (2005a) as the 'occupational ideology of journalism' or what Aldridge and Evetts (2003: 547) refer to as a 'powerful occupational mythology'. This is to say that the self-understanding of journalists doesn't necessary tell the whole story. Against this dominant, liberal form of journalism there has for centuries been a tradition of radical journalism. James Curran (2003) has conducted one of the most important scholarly enquiries documenting this tradition. This tradition of journalism has often taken the side of the weak but has also tended to adopt a colloquial, ironic and irreverent tone. The appeal of the radical press' tone can be seen in its adoption by today's tabloid newspapers. It was not, however, just the tone of the radical press that was different. So too was its subject matter and its form of organisation – to this day radical media projects are organised on a non-commercial basis, working relations are non-hierarchical and the separation between reader and writer is reduced.

This ethic of commitment to citizens has been influential in the US, where the 'public journalism' movement started. One of the key advocates of public journalism, Jay Rosen (1999) explains that journalism is a practice that is inherently linked to democracy and the public sphere, and is framed by standards and ethics of production. For Rosen, the journalist should have a deep connection to her public, to citizens. In many public journalism projects the journalist would write with citizens in focus groups, which meant that journalism took place as a collective or collaborative effort.

This focus on the journalists' loyalty to citizens leads us to consider advocacy or campaigning journalism. This form of journalism is tied to investigative journalism, and requires a much more active, adversarial journalism than simply reporting the 'facts as they are'. Campaigning journalists, such as the late Paul Foot, take sides on issues, selecting stories and writing them from a particular perspective. For instance, the British journalist Martin Bell called for a 'journalism of attachment' that takes the side of the weak. Such an approach does not mean that one need abandon journalistic principles. On the contrary, the argument of campaigning journalists is that they cover those too weak to attract attention from the routine journalists.

Table 1.1 Shared journalistic principles across states

Accuracy
Protection of sources
Opposition to discrimination on the basis of race, religion or sex
Independence
Fairness and the separation of fact and value
The commitment to the public/citizenry

Pilger (2004) cites the American journalist T.D. Allman to explain how campaigning journalism corrects the hidden biases of so called 'objective' reporting of the facts: 'Genuinely objective journalism… not only gets the facts right, it gets the meaning of events right'. As such the campaigning journalist's role consists in 'rescuing "objectivity" from its common abuse as a cover for official lies' (Pilger, 2005: xiv). So, the campaigning journalist does not abandon objectivity but contests the objectivity of other journalists. As the US columnist and founder of the Institute for Public Accuracy, Norman Solomon (2006) explains in response to an Associate Press item that 'objectively' reported that 'Poor nutrition contributes to the deaths of some 5.6 million children every year':

> We're encouraged to see high-quality journalism as dispassionate, so that professionals do their jobs without advocating. But passive acceptance of murderous priorities in our midst is a form of de facto advocacy.

As the philosopher Herbert Marcuse put it 40 years before:

> if a newscaster reports the torture and murder of civil rights workers in the same unemotional tone he uses to describes the stock-market or the weather… then such objectivity is spurious – more, it offends against humanity and truth by… refraining from accusation where accusation is in the facts themselves. (Marcuse, 1969: 98)

A number of scholars have considered the centrality of cultural context on the development of particular norms of journalism within specific states, such as the objectivity norm that emerges in US newspapers (Schiller, 1981; Schudson, 2001). In contrast to the US experience, in the UK the objectivity norm was not led by newspaper journalists, but by television journalists.

Outside the UK and US, Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) point out that today journalists in southern Europe and Latin America have maintained their traditions of advocacy. They suggest that 'in contrast with the Anglo-American model of professional neutrality, journalism in southern Europe and Latin America tends to emphasize commentary from a distinct political perspective' (Hallin and

Papathanassopoulos, 2002: 177), whilst publicly espousing the ideals of neutral professionalism. In Italy the press did not break its ties to political parties until the mid-1990s, a change which television has yet to go through. Jean Chalaby (1996) has made a similar argument that 'objective' journalism is an Anglo-American invention. She notes that the particular practices of modern journalism, such as interviewing and reporting facts, were developed in the US, and contrasted with the opinionated, commentary-based journalism of Europe. However, she also suggests that these 'Anglo-American' journalistic norms are being adopted around the world.

We see from the codes of conduct and codes of ethics of journalistic associations and media organisations around the world that the Anglo-American mode is becoming dominant. The Qatari television news station Al Jazeera's Code of Ethics demands that journalists, 'Adhere to the journalistic values of honesty, courage, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity giving no priority to commercial or political considerations over professional ones'. They also aim to 'present diverse points of view and opinions without bias or partiality' and to 'distinguish between news material, opinion and analysis to avoid the pitfalls of speculation and propaganda'.

Likewise, a survey of codes of conduct from states as diverse as India, Malaysia, Britain, Qatar, Russia and Indonesia shows clear similarities in the understanding of the behaviour of journalists. All such codes recognise the principles outlined in Table 1.1 (see page 12).

There are of course many cases where the Anglo-American model of journalism is not adhered to in the UK and US, and there are a number of divergences in the guidelines that reflect national particularities. In Malaysia, for example, besides the usual clauses on neutrality and truth, the Cannons of Journalism prepared by the Malaysian Press Institute incorporates adherence to the principles of Rukunegara (the basis of the Malaysian state), which includes contributing to nation-building and upholding the standards of 'social morality'. The Press Council of India's extensive Norms of Journalistic Conduct stresses that journalists 'exercise due restraint and caution in presenting any news, comment or information which is likely to jeopardise, endanger or harm the paramount interests of the state and society'. In Indonesia, the Alliance of Independent Journalists' Code of Ethics stipulates that 'A journalist does not present news, which graphically portrays indecency, cruelty, physical or sexual violence'.

Beyond Definition?

It seems, then, that commentators who bemoan innovations in technology as being disruptive to journalism would not be able to point to a single shared definition of what journalism actually is. There are indeed many forms of journalism that

change across time, technology, culture and space. Although there certainly are shared principles of journalism, or of journalistic ideology, it is normal for there to be a diverse range of specific practices. Indeed, we are faced with a problem in terms of how we can evaluate digital journalism when a single evaluative mechanism for journalism of any kind is missing. This problem is compounded in an internet environment that transcends national journalistic cultures.

In this book we show how digital technologies expand the range of possibilities afforded to journalists. Blogging, Twittering, Facebooking, Googling and the full range of communicative techniques are merely tools of journalism. They are part of the toolkit. It may seem strange that the range of voices, the amount of information and the methods of communication available should be regarded as problems for journalists, but they are seen this way only when they are not understood, only when they are seen as obstacles rather than aids. If journalists piece stories together out of bits of information, what better tools are there than ones whose very nature is in the processing and distribution of bits!

Journalists' use of technologies for news gathering has historically strengthened journalistic practice. Rather than ridicule or ignore new technological innovations journalists must face them and consider not just current common uses but also how to use them to best develop journalistic practices. In the next chapter we will consider some of the key issues in online journalism.